Changing ICSO Business Models

Diversify, Adapt and Innovate
Thank You!

The International Civil Society Centre thanks all members of the New ICSO Business Models Working Group for their commitment and outstanding contributions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
In 2013, our *Riding the Wave* report identified key global trends likely to cause disruption in international civil society organisations (ICSOs) in the years ahead and highlighted the need for most ICSOs to change or update their business models in order to achieve their mission in the years ahead. This follow-up report identifies what changes likely need to be made to existing ICSO business models to remain viable and identifies other business models that are likely to become much more widely adopted in our sector in the years to come. It concludes with key recommendations for ICSO leaders seeking to adapt their business models to this changing global context.

This report is one of the outcomes of a project initiated by the International Civil Society Centre on *New ICSO Business Models*. The project was guided by a working group of experts and leaders drawn from across the sector and beyond. The report is intended primarily for ICSO leaders as a contribution to debate and action within the sector, but may also be of relevance to leaders in the public or private sectors who are interested in engaging more closely with ICSOs.

Based on the findings of our earlier report on key disruptors and their consequences for ICSOs, this report identifies six main implications for ICSO business models:

- **Widening participation and engagement**: To enable a new generation of active citizens to be involved as participants, not only as donors or beneficiaries

- **Streamlining global governance**: To enable an effectively coordinated response to the growing range of interconnected global issues and become more agile in seizing opportunities to influence the key global debates

- **Building flexibility and responsiveness**: To adapt to the growing diversity of programme contexts and rising expectations of accountability to local partners and communities

- **Developing effective networks**: To respond more effectively to rising global and national challenges

- **Embracing new technology**: To respond to emerging opportunities and aspirations for direct connections arising from the spread of communications technologies and global communications

- **Leveraging the brand**: To contribute expertise and networks to wider cross-sectoral partnerships to deliver specific outcomes to scale or use the brand to endorse or promote the work of others
Looking across the ICSO sector, we identified three primary business models that are used widely:

**Project support**  
Mobilising funds and expertise behind specific local or wider projects, either in the context of long-term programmes or humanitarian intervention.

**Child sponsorship**  
Enabling connections between a specific child in a community and an individual donor who provides ongoing support to the child and community.

**Campaigning**  
Attracting a wide range of individuals and/or organisations to support a specific international campaign or a wider campaigning mission as supporters or members.

We explored a wide range of other evolving business models from within the sector and beyond and identified two models that we believe have the potential to become mainstream business models for major ICSOs in the future:

**Online brokerage**  
Building online links between people around the world who are concerned about an international issue and the people, projects, and campaigns that are seeking to address that issue.

**Social enterprise**  
Providing goods or services aligned to the mission of the ICSO that are funded primarily by payments from the people to whom the service is provided.
The pace of change to ICSO business models is hard to predict. In some contexts, the disruptions identified are likely to render established models no longer viable within a few years. In other contexts, change may be evolutionary over a longer period. For ICSOs wishing to stay ahead in this transition, we identified six main recommendations:

1. **Strengthen market analysis**  
   Become passionate about seeking out data and insights from the market on trends that are likely to affect you in the years to come and plan how to respond

2. **Focus on added value**  
   Take a hard look at each main stage of your core business processes and the costs involved and find out whether each stage is seen to offer significant added value by partners, donors or supporters in your key markets

3. **Test new models**  
   Become adept at regularly testing and evaluating new business models outside your mainstream business processes

4. **Develop networks and consortia**  
   Upgrade your ability to engage in flexible international networks and consortia, bringing together organisations with complementary skills and networks to achieve specific shared objectives

5. **Accelerate speed of innovation**  
   Transform your ability to make quick decisions to try things out and take calculated risks without having to agree on global policy changes or build consensus on new models at all levels

6. **Make strategic use of unrestricted funds and reserves**  
   Invest in developing new and innovative ways of working, and drive down the proportion of unrestricted funds used to finance organisational overheads or top up underfunded projects or campaigns

We foresee that the leading ICSOs of the future are likely to have traded control over specific programmes and campaigns for wider influence on the global agendas that relate to their mission, and become adept at creating new forms of partnership with other key players in the public and private sectors and in civil society that are making a major contribution to tackling key global issues.

We hope this report will provide ideas and insights that will help ICSOs to make this transition successfully.

*International Civil Society Centre*  
*September 2014*
INTRODUCTION
For decades, business models of international civil society organisations (ICSOs) have been highly successful and fairly uncontested: ICSOs’ services for millions of people worldwide have achieved impressive impact, their advocacy has been influential and many have turned their names into valuable global brands. However, the world is changing with increasing speed and depth - and often in unforeseeable directions.

A growing number of disruptive changes that question well-established ways of thinking and operating can be observed. Signs have been emerging that disruption is affecting the civil society sector, in particular the largest, well-established ICSOs.

In response to this challenge, the International Civil Society Centre brought together in 2013 a group of leading thinkers to explore the implications of disruptive change for the sector. The results of their discussions are captured in our report, Riding the Wave, which concludes that established business models used by ICSOs may be seriously threatened by these changes. Following discussions on this report at our Global Perspectives conference in November 2013, the Centre initiated a follow-up project to explore the emerging disruptions further and consider how ICSOs need to adapt existing business models and/or adopt new models to achieve their mission in the years ahead.

A working group on New ICSO Business Models was convened by the Centre in early 2014 to guide this project, bringing together leaders from across the sector and beyond (see Annex for a list of members). The working group drew on existing resources on business models and business model change from inside and outside the civil society sector (see Annex for main references) and commissioned a project undertaken by Masters students at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. These and other inputs were brought together in a three-day workshop in Berlin in June 2014.

This report summarises the key findings from this work. It is organised in four main sections: Disruptors and Implications, Adapting Existing Models, Emerging Business Models, Call to Action.
Our interpretation of business models

ICSO business models describe how an organisation pursues its mission by conducting specific actions and generating income to sustain its operations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Income</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A clear and coherent social purpose, defining the framework for actions and income generation mission and values</td>
<td>A set of activities designed to optimise the organisation’s potential to achieve its mission and provide a sound basis for income generation</td>
<td>Sources of income to fund those activities, in line with the organisation’s mission and values</td>
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</table>

A successful business model will align these together in sustainable ways to achieve the mission of the organisation, as outlined below.

For the purposes of this report, we are focusing on the primary business models that ICSOs use to achieve their mission, not the business models that federations use to fund their secretariats.

We use the term business model in this report as the most widely understood description and in the knowledge that it needs to be interpreted differently for non-profit organisations from its conventional use in commercial companies.
DISRUPTORS AND IMPLICATIONS
The disruptors
Our Riding the Wave report published last year highlighted three broad sources of disruption for ICSOs:

Planetary disruption
With humanity continuing to overstep planetary boundaries, we expect to see two major consequences for the work of ICSOs:

• **Growing humanitarian challenge**: The growing frequency and severity of natural disasters and conflicts arising from resource shortages is expected to create growing demand for humanitarian responses. ICSOs must increasingly focus on finding ways of building the capacity and resilience of affected populations.

• **Convergence of ICSO missions**: Missions of environmental, development and humanitarian ICSOs are converging around shared sustainable development goals with a growing range of issues on which they need to work together.

Political disruption
The political space and nature of civil society is changing. New political constraints on civil society are being introduced in some countries and international institutions, alongside the rise of social movements and networks and the changing balance of power around the world. We expect to see three major consequences for the work of ICSOs:

• **Shrinking political space**: A need for growing sophistication in navigating the shrinking political space for civil society in many countries, both maximising what can be achieved within those constraints and promoting and defending local and national civil society partners.

• **New agendas of emerging economies**: A need – and a splendid opportunity – to build constituencies of supporters in emerging economies, to become a more legitimate voice on global issues and to influence the international policies of their governments in ways that support civil society space.

• **Rise of social movements**: A need to respond to the rise of loosely networked social movements, an opportunity to learn from them, respond to their agendas and support them in achieving positive social change.

Technological disruption
The rapid spread of information technology and global communications is now reaching out across countries at all stages of development and all income groups. This is revolutionising access to information, opening up radical new ways of linking people across continents with shared business, social or political interests, and opening up new ways of financing social and economic activities.
As a result, the traditional role of ICSOs as intermediaries between funders and projects is coming under increasing pressure in three main ways:

**Individual donors to projects linking directly**
There are growing opportunities for individual donors and projects to link up directly, without going through an ICSO as an intermediary.

**Major donors directly with linking national civil society organisations (CSOs)**
Large institutional donors (both governments and foundations) are increasingly open to working directly with CSOs, without going through an ICSO as an intermediary, and to contracting with private sector companies as well as ICSOs. These are provoking ICSOs to think much more clearly about where and how they add value, and delivering that added value in cost-effective ways.

**New social movements mobilising independently**
New social and political movements are using the Internet and social media to mobilise rapidly behind campaigns and reach out to global media. This is challenging the role of traditional national and international CSOs as agents of social change. Campaigning ICSOs are being challenged to find new ways of engaging with active citizens in loose and fast changing networks, where the citizens are less inclined to trust large institutions, including big civil society organisations.
Implications

These three broad areas of disruption are linking together to influence our ICSO business models in a wide range of different ways. These links are illustrated in the diagram below.

### Drivers of Change in ICSO Business Models

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Effects for ICSOs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planetary</strong></td>
<td>GROWING HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CONVERGENCE OF ICSO MISSIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>MORE COMPLEX POLITICAL SPACE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ENGAGEMENT WITH EMERGING ECONOMIES</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESPONDING TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technological</strong></td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL DONORS LINKING DIRECTLY TO PROJECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAJOR DONORS LINKING DIRECTLY TO NATIONAL CSOS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SOCIAL MOVEMENTS BY-PASSING TRADITIONAL CSOS</td>
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### Implications for ICSO Business Models

- **Widen participation and engagement**
- **Streamline Global Governance**
- **Build flexibility and responsiveness**
- **Develop effective networks**
- **Embrace new technology**
- **Leverage the brand**

**Widen participation and engagement**

We see a new generation of active citizens emerging, both among donors/members and among beneficiary communities, who wish to make choices about who they work with, what they support and how they participate. In a growing range of contexts, projects and campaigns are being structured to mobilise small scale payments or actions from a wide range of people, either among intended beneficiaries or supporters. These often take advantage of social media and online services to reach out to broader audiences and/or to collect micropayments, both simply and cost effectively. Increasingly, we believe people will want to be engaged with ICSOs as participants, rather than donors or beneficiaries.
Streamline global governance
There are hundreds of thousands of CSOs working at local and national level, but very few are active globally. Most of the leading global ICSOs have adopted a federal structure, with most of the power held at national level ICSOs: This can often inhibit the ICSO in influencing relevant global agendas. We believe that ICSOs need to organise themselves much more effectively at global level in order to fulfil their unique mandate of helping shape the global response to the planetary and political disruptors identified above. Without effective global governance and viable global business models that can be adapted to national and local conditions, ICSOs will not be able to play their full global role.

Build flexibility and responsiveness
At the same time as ICSOs are challenged to become more effective at the global level, we see them being put under pressure to become more responsive to changing local priorities, to become more flexible to work in different ways in different local contexts and to become more accountable at local level. This is creating growing pressure on large ICSOs to explore more decentralised and devolved structures with larger decision making powers at local level. Strengthening ICSOs’ global role while at the same time improving their local responsiveness requires a well-balanced allocation of roles, responsibilities and powers at global and local levels.

Develop effective networks
On their own, even the largest ICSOs are rarely strong enough to successfully defend their interests and pursue their mission under adverse conditions. Both the shrinking space for civil society in many countries and the need for better coordinated intervention at global level demand more effective and efficient networking. This requires the preparedness to compromise and share responsibilities with others.

Embrace new technology
We expect that the spread of communications technology and more active citizens will increasingly provoke a rethink of the role of large ICSOs, focusing their work on their distinctive added value and radically simplifying their business models, with parts of their current roles being outsourced or taken on by new types of partners or by donors and recipients who wish to connect directly. At the same time, technological developments are adding a wide range of new options for ICSOs to link up with donors, recipients and activists.

Leverage the brand
Until recently, most large ICSOs have focused on strengthening control of their brand and using it only in situations where they are directly managing or contracting the work or the campaign. This maintains strong control, but limits the reach of the ICSO. In order to become more agile in a faster changing context and to take initiatives to scale, we see a growing range of ICSOs exploring new ways to leverage their brand, contributing their expertise and networks to wider cross-sector partnerships to deliver specific outcomes to scale or using their brand to endorse or promote the work of others, without having full control of the process.
The impact of these trends on existing ICSO business models will vary in different contexts and affect some sectors of civil society faster than others. At times, the implications will conflict with each other. For example, many leading ICSOs are currently wrestling with how best to strike the balance between democratising their organisations in order to increase legitimacy, while seeking to be much more agile in response to emerging opportunities. However, we believe a different combination of these trends will provoke significant change in the business models used by ICSOs in the years to come, and successful ICSOs are likely to need to adapt and diversify their business models to remain relevant and viable.

The table below highlights some of the changes in key aspects of ICSO business models that we identified as likely to flow from these implications.

### ILLUSTRATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING MODELS

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ESTABLISHED</th>
<th>EMERGING</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WAYS OF WORKING</strong></td>
<td>ICSO as full service intermediary</td>
<td>ICSO takes more specific intermediary role where they can add value and/or radically reduce their cost base to compete with new actors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ICSO designs programmes</td>
<td>Shared design and ownership of programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts control content</td>
<td>Crowdsourcing content with shared knowledge generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTNERSHIPS</strong></td>
<td>Discrete and separate roles for ICSO, donor and beneficiary</td>
<td>Fusion/overlap of roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discrete and separate roles for ICSOs, businesses and governments</td>
<td>Growing range of working collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main interactions are face to face</td>
<td>Main interactions are online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FUNDING</strong></td>
<td>One dominant funding source</td>
<td>Diverse funding sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scarcity thinking (what can we do with the funds we have?)</td>
<td>Leverage thinking (what can we leverage with the funds we have?)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROFILE AND BRAND</strong></td>
<td>Few people control voice of organisation</td>
<td>Many voices aligned to common values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand as assurance of quality of own services (closed)</td>
<td>Brand as assurance of quality of network of providers (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CULTURE</strong></td>
<td>Meet demand</td>
<td>Grow engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build on continuity</td>
<td>Embrace disruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
<td>Complex, hierarchical structure</td>
<td>Shared leadership responsibility, with clear local and global roles and decision rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan and move together</td>
<td>Provide space for experimentation</td>
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ADAPTING EXISTING BUSINESS MODELS
Each ICSO has a slightly different business model, but our work identified three primary business models that are used widely in the larger ICSOs:

- Project support (covering both long-term programmes and humanitarian response)
- Child sponsorship
- Campaigning (including engaging members and supporters)

Many leading ICSOs work with more than one business model, but there is usually one or two that account for the vast majority of their work.

**Project support**

This model focuses on developing or identifying a suitable project aligned to the ICSO’s mission and then seeking funding from donors to fund the project. The model is used widely by leading ICSOs from across the sector, including for work on development, humanitarian, environmental, human rights and anti-corruption issues.

The project is usually a local project managed by a local partner, but it may be directly managed by the ICSO (especially in humanitarian crises), and it may be a national or even international project.

Donors may be either large institutions (aid donor agencies, foundations, companies etc.) who fund part or all of the project, usually on a contractual basis, or they may be many individuals who make a small contribution towards the project or programme in exchange for regular reports on progress.

Conventionally, the ICSO will charge a share of the funds as a contribution to its project vetting and preparation and to indirect management and monitoring costs. In some cases, the funder is also willing to fund wider work to disseminate the results more widely and promote broader replication. For individual donors, some of their funding may also be used to cover the costs of recruiting and reporting to them.

We identified three main pressures arising for this model:

- More active citizens in the affected communities (including among some marginalised groups) who wish to play a greater role in how their project is designed and managed and expect greater accountability of the ICSO (and local partner) to use the funds to deliver the intended benefits.

- Increasingly professional local and national partners who have the capacity, skills and contacts to work directly with major donors, without the need for an ICSO as intermediary and major donors who are increasingly focusing on supporting national CSOs that can demonstrate a clear constituency of support in the country (e.g., through reach, membership, supporters) and less on project delivery ICSOs that have no clear public support base.
More active donors who wish a closer engagement with the project, or evidence of community participation or to receive reports directly from the project. With broadening access to the Internet and mobile technologies and the rising quality of language translation software, new options are opening up to enable this direct contact, and donors may be less willing to pay for the infrastructure associated with the conventional channels of communications managed by the ICSO.

The combined effect of these pressures is squeezing ICSOs between donors and communities with higher expectations, but less willingness to fund the costs associated with conventional ICSO processes for linking them up.

In response to these pressures, we identified four main ways in which ICSOs can adapt their existing business model for project support:

**Alternative models**
Building alternative models of project support, where the ICSO can take on a variety of different roles, depending on the interests and capabilities of the local partner and the donor, and focusing on where the ICSO can best add value to the relationship. In some cases, this may mean the ICSO stepping back from managing the funds on behalf of the donor and taking on a more specialist advisory, service provider or fund manager role. In some cases, this may be funded directly by the national CSO partner receiving the services.

**Moving decisions closer to local partners**
Some ICSOs are moving more international decision-making from global or national HQs in developed countries to locations in the developing world that are closer to their local partners and the people they are seeking to serve. This can extend beyond regionalisation to include global hubs for research, policy and campaigning work located in relevant developing countries or regional offices.

**Specific purpose consortia**
We see a range of examples where ICSOs are participating in global, regional or national consortia of leading actors to take proven successful approaches to solving specific problems to scale, usually for a finite period of joint action. This requires the ICSO to be willing to contribute their brand, expertise and contacts into a shared venture and to be willing to compromise on policies, processes and standards. If well planned, governed and managed, these can achieve breakthroughs in scale. See the International Trachoma Initiative case study for an example of this type of initiative.

**Creating new ways of connecting**
A range of ICSOs are developing new and innovative approaches, tools and training methods to enable their project partners to report and interact directly with donors online, with or without safeguards and monitoring, with the ICSO stepping back from managing and filtering this interaction.
The International Trachoma Initiative was started in 1998 by the International Coalition for Trachoma Control (ICTC) in response to a WHO call to eliminate trachoma around the world by 2020.

It has evolved into a multi-country initiative bringing together host governments, Pfizer (providing donated drugs and other support), national and international civil society organisations and UN agencies working on blindness issues and funders to align around a common approach to tackling trachoma around the world.

A roadmap was created to show how elimination of trachoma could be achieved by 2020. It was recognised that the prevalence of trachoma needed to be mapped urgently in half of the developing world and DFID responded to this by providing support in the form of a grant of £10.6 million.

ITI formed an advisory group and participating NGOs agreed that they could work together to get the mapping completed, with Sightsavers operating as the lead agency. Common approaches to the work were adopted by all agencies, including the standardisation of methodologies, shared mHealth tools, shared quality standards and standard operational and financial reporting.

Through working together in this way, the participating agencies have been able to scale up their work much faster – in the last two years, the initiative has mapped over 1,100 districts: This compares favourably with the 12 to 15 years taken to map 1,100 districts previously. Key factors for success in this consortium approach have been the buy in to the vision by the participating agencies at Board level, a willingness to compromise in adapting existing methods and tools into a common approach and the use of shared technology platforms.

This collaborative, standardised approach has now been adopted for implementation projects for trachoma elimination. The consortium is aiming for a standardised approach for M&E (monitoring and evaluation) in all aspects of SAFE implementation (SAFE is the elimination approach for trachoma: surgery, antibiotics, face washing and environment).

This approach has also been encouraged by the availability of large grants from DFID, USAID and other aid agencies. For example: The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust has pledged £42.8 million to combating blinding trachoma in Commonwealth countries in Africa, and DFID is investing £39 million to help support the elimination of trachoma. Both programmes are over five years and are being managed by Sightsavers on behalf of ICTC.

The shared approach has required the participating agencies to be willing to subsume their own brands under the broader initiative and has enabled all the participating organisations to make more rapid progress towards this aspect of their mission.
Child sponsorship

This model focuses on improving the wellbeing of children by enabling connections between a specific child in a community (whose needs align to the ICSO’s mission) and an individual donor who provides ongoing support to the child and community. There are also variants of this model used by some ICSOs focusing on other disadvantaged community members or on whole communities.

The funds contribute to projects designed to benefit not only the individual child but also other vulnerable children and families in the wider community. Projects are usually managed by a local partner or may be directly managed by the ICSO.

Donors are individuals or families who commit to funding relatively small amounts on a regular basis over several years and receive regular reports on the progress of the child and community they are sponsoring.

The ICSO will charge a significant share of the sponsorship funds as a contribution to its programme vetting, design and community engagement to cover the costs of recruiting and reporting to sponsors and to indirect management and monitoring costs. In some cases, the sponsor will be invited to make a higher value contribution to cover these costs.

We identified four main pressures arising for this model:

- Spread of technology opening up new methods and channels for direct communication between the sponsor and the sponsored children, families and communities. This is challenging the traditional intermediary role of the ICSO and opening up options for links to be established without going through the ICSO as an intermediary, or for direct links between the sponsor and the community once the relationship is established, with the prospect that sponsors may be less willing to fund the ICSO to provide these services in the conventional way. This is raising important new privacy and child protection issues for the ICSOs involved.

- More active citizens in the affected communities who wish to play a greater role in how community support projects are designed and managed and expect greater accountability of the ICSO (and local partner) to use the funds to deliver the intended benefits.

- The maturing of the sponsorship markets in most of the established wealthy countries, with little opportunity for further market growth in these countries.

- More active sponsors who wish for closer engagement with the community they are supporting or a greater say in how their funds are being spent and are no longer content just to receive periodic updates through the ICSO.
In response to these pressures, we identified three ways in which ICSO’s can adapt their existing business models for sponsorship:

**New methods of communication**
Between sponsors and the children, families and communities they are supporting: Most leading sponsorship ICSOs are now experimenting with alternative means of communication between sponsors and the individuals or communities they support (including testing use of texts, photos, videos and social media) and exploring appropriate ways of enabling direct contact, without creating protection risks for vulnerable children and adults. The challenge is to develop methods and channels of communication that require radically less staff time from the ICSO to enable marketing and servicing costs of the ICSO to be reduced.

**Diversifying sources of sponsors**
ICSOs using this model are seeking to develop new sponsorship markets among the growing middle classes in emerging economies. There have been some significant successes in Asia and Latin America, also requiring adapting to sponsors in these regions who may expect a different level or type of engagement with the individuals or communities they are sponsoring.

**Community-based sponsorship**
Some ICSOs are seeking to develop explicit shared sponsorship of communities rather than specific individuals in order to enable sponsored communities to play a more active role in shaping the relationship and to seek to align the sponsor with the wider interests of the community. Some ICSOs, especially faith-based ICSOs, are experimenting with community to community sponsorship models.
The case study below illustrates an example of how a leading ICSO is adapting its traditional child sponsorship model.

**WORLD VISION’S CHILD SPONSORSHIP FOR A NEW GENERATION**

Over 3.2 million child sponsors from 35 countries support World Vision’s programmes in 55 countries, working with partners to improve well-being outcomes in the lives of vulnerable children. Along with the child-focused community programmes, sponsorship enables personal connections for encouragement and learning. Sponsors’ contributions provide about half the resource base of World Vision programmes globally.

As people become more connected online and through mobile devices, supporters have changing expectations. Perceptions of the transparency and authenticity of organisations are shaped by expectations for on-demand experiences and sharing through social media. Research shows a growing distrust of large institutions, particularly among younger people. The disruption of global digital and social media is not only changing supporters. Increasingly, children in programme communities are online in Internet cafes, homes and schools across the developing world. Their reality has changed too.

In response, World Vision is adapting its approach to child sponsorship. They are redefining child sponsorship to be more effective for children’s well-being, more engaging for supporters and more efficient. The foundation of this effort is child safe engagement in the use of digital communications and social media. In 2010, they studied the risks, responsibilities and opportunities for child protection in digital communications and social media and then implemented up-to-date child protection standards, along with resources to equip children and their families to engage safely in digitized online environments. Most importantly, World Vision’s emphasis on child and youth empowerment increases skills to lift their voices as agents of change.

Building on the foundation of child protection and empowerment, World Vision are creating new sponsor and child/community digital engagement platforms. While the traditional sponsorship experience has been paper-based and focused mainly on one sponsor and one child, their future sponsorship experience will empower children and communities to tell their own stories, increasingly through photos and videos. These new ways of connecting build trust and understanding. The enhanced experience also enables sharing with social networks to promote the cause: improving the well-being of the world’s vulnerable children.
Campaigning

This model focuses on attracting large numbers of individuals to support either a specific international campaign or a wider campaigning mission. It is widely used by ICSOs whose primary focus is campaigning, but also increasingly used by ICSOs who are seeking to build campaigning work on their programme experience.

The work is usually built around specific campaigns aligned to the mission of the ICSO, with ICSOs often participating in a joint campaign with partners with good links to the affected populations or with other like-minded international organisations.

Individuals wishing to support a campaign may do so as supporters or as members (membership may or may not involve a say in governance of the ICSO), and this will often involve financial contributions to specific campaigns or a regular donation to support the ICSO’s work in general. Supporters will often also be invited to participate in the campaign through petitions, e-mail campaigns and public events or through local action in their own community.

For campaigning ICSOs, the contributions of individual supporters are used to fund the research and activities of the campaign, with a significant share of campaign or membership contributions funding the wider costs of developing new campaigns, finding new supporters and indirect management costs. In many cases, the contributions of individuals are complemented by grant funding from foundations, companies or governments.

We identified four main pressures arising for this model:

Social movements
Loosely organised and spontaneous social movements, often enabled by the power of social media, are playing an increasingly important role in political and social change. They have the potential to move fast in response to changing events and to mobilise large numbers of people very quickly. In some situations, the established CSOs and ICSOs working on the same issues have been left behind by the speed and scale of social movements provoking social change.

Flexible networking
Younger people are increasingly looking at issues of affiliation in new and more flexible ways, engaging with a constantly evolving range of issues and networks according to their current interests. They may be less inclined to join ICSOs as members or supporters in the traditional manner or to commit to regular financial contributions.

Localism
We see campaigning agendas becoming more diverse, with people concerned about global issues increasingly seeking to engage with them in ways or with organisations or networks that are specific to their local area or country. This is creating growing pressures for global campaigns, which we believe will increasingly need to be adapted to national contexts to be successful and offer autonomy in how they are pursued in different countries by local actors.

Representativeness
ICSOs working on global issues whose supporters or members are predominantly in the established wealthy nations are increasingly facing challenges to their legitimacy from people and politicians in emerging regions of the world.
In response to these pressures, we identified five ways in which ICSO’s can adapt their existing business models for campaigning and membership:

**Campaigning networks**
ICSOs can seek to broaden support for their cause or for specific campaigns through creating or co-creating campaigns around specific short term actions, often with a separate campaign identity and brand, and spread virally through social media. When successful, these can develop support from a wide diversity of campaigning organisations and movements and can engage millions of people around the world very quickly. See the case study on WWF Earth Hour for an example of this form of campaign.

**Issue-based affiliation**
Campaigning ICSOs can seek supporters or members on the basis of engagement with specific issues or campaigns, rather than seeking members or supporters who commit to supporting the mission of the ICSO in general. This is also opening up new categories of membership, for example, companies and foundations who wish to support a specific campaign.

**Southern-led campaigns**
Some ICSOs may wish to experiment with new ways of developing global campaigns to ensure that they are selected by, and responsive to, the priorities of their partners or members in the Global South. This may include having specific global or regional campaigns developed and led from a base in the Global South.

**Flexible membership models**
ICSOs can explore the potential for flexible membership models, enabling members to select from a number of different categories of membership, with different benefits and expectations, in order to provide for more flexible forms of engagement.

**Service providers**
In the future, some ICSOs may chose to provide support and services to national and local organisations and movements who wish to run national or local campaigns on relevant issues. These may include offering a menu of services including software, tools and pre-arranged framework agreements with channel controllers (e.g., telecoms, media), with income secured through small commissions or donations from local campaigning organisations and/or their participants.
Earth Hour was created in 2007, on the initiative of WWF Australia, to create the symbolic act of ‘lights off’ around the world, a single moment of inspiration for people to unite behind a common purpose – to express solidarity for action on climate change.

What started off in Sydney in 2007 is now celebrated in more than 7,000 cities and towns and 162 countries and territories on every continent and has embraced a diverse range of actions aimed at highlighting or tackling climate change.

In a recent review on the learning from Earth Hour, WWF identified the following key points:

- The importance of having a strong leader that has the vision and creativity to inspire. But this leadership always needs to be complemented by those who can provide a strong business case for the project and ensure that the initiative is financially viable and sustainable.

- A simple and single message that works across cultures and allows people to adapt to their local and national needs and helps them feel empowered.

- Introduction of new concepts such as Earth Hour will create tensions within the organisation. There were deep discussions and mixed opinions on whether the ‘symbolic’ gesture was helpful to achieve WWF conservation’s mission.

- Growth of the Earth Hour brand initiated much debate on the use of the WWF brand and how and when to associate the ‘panda’ with Earth Hour. Given the open-source nature of Earth Hour, it meant that WWF was willing to relinquish some control to ensure greater engagement and empowerment of people globally.

- It’s important to constantly evolve the initiative to prevent fatigue – Earth Hour went beyond the hour by launching campaigns such as ‘I Will if You Will’ and the Earth Hour City Challenge; Earth Hour delivered solid conservation outcomes for WWF Russia, Argentina and several other countries.

- As part of the third stage, WWF has introduced a crowdfunding element. While still in its infancy, Earth Hour crowdfunding worked well in 2014 as a proof of concept and managed to attract donors from 52 countries. While not able to fulfil all projects, it has shown the possibility of borderless fundraising.

- As mentioned above, the strength of Earth Hour is enabling people from all horizons and across the globe to adapt Earth Hour to their particular needs. In Indonesia and Australia, Earth Hour is following the ‘community model’ by creating communities of interest and steering them to a concrete theme like climate change or sustainability.
EMERGING BUSINESS MODELS
We explored a wide range of potential future ICSO business models, drawing on ideas from other sectors as well as the civil society sector, and identified two models that we believe have the potential to become core business models for major ICSOs in the future.

Online brokerage models
We see rapid growth of a range of new business models focused on linking up online people who are concerned about a global issue with people, projects and campaigns that are seeking to address that issue. We have called these online brokerage models. This growth is being encouraged not only by changes in communications technologies and tools, but also by donors who are seeking a direct relationship with a specific local or national project or campaign. At the heart of these models are CSOs who see opportunities to connect people in new ways and who fund their services by charging a small fee or commission or seeking a donation in return for making successful links.

All major ICSOs are now reaching out to supporters online as well as offline, and some are now experimenting with reaching out to beneficiaries online in specific project or campaign contexts. The distinctive difference about online brokers is that they use technology to link up people and projects, usually with remote vetting and monitoring, enabling them to connect people at a much lower cost than traditional models operated by ICSOs. Online brokers will typically charge a 10-15% commission for their services (less for those who do not offer any vetting), which is a much lower rate than conventional models.

While the proportion of funding for global issues channelled through online brokers is still a small percentage of the total, we expect this model to grow fast in the years to come and take a significant share in some important segments of the market.

We see the following trends as underlying the rapid growth in the online broker model:

Spread of communications technology
With most communities around the world now able to access the Internet in affordable ways, there are new opportunities emerging to form links with like-minded people around the world online. While language barriers remain significant, the rate of improvement of translation software is likely to make this less and less of an issue in the years to come.

Active online participants
Through social media, people around the world are becoming much more used to putting their details online and participating in the social networks of like-minded people. Online brokering is a natural extension of this trend.

Distrust of large institutions
With growing distrust of large institutions, some people (in both developed and developing countries) will become more likely to look for ways of connecting directly with those they are seeking to help and less likely to entrust their funds to large ICSOs whom they see as institutions, taking a large share of the funding provided for their own costs.
There is a growing range of online brokers responding to these trends, covering both programmes and campaigning. The case study on Globalgiving provides an outline of one of these brokers.

GLOBALGIVING.COM

Globalgiving.com is an online platform linking community organisations and projects around the world with people and organisations who would like to support them to scale up their work.

Founded in 2001, it has now secured funding from nearly 400,000 individuals and 100 companies, raising over US$140 million for over 10,000 projects in over 150 countries. Around 3,000 projects are now active on the platform at any one time.

Organisations seeking to be involved with Globalgiving are provided with online training on how to present and report on their work in appropriate ways, and their proposals are put through a remote vetting process, the final stage of which is to secure at least 40 donations totalling at least $5,000 in their first calendar month of being listed on the platform. This test ensures that they understood the training on how to engage real people and helps to offset the costs of vetting by Globalgiving. They are also required to submit a report on progress every 3-4 months.

Globalgiving provides ongoing training for the organisations on their platform. They assess them through a performance dashboard, benchmarked against their peers with specific feedback on how to improve. Most of the measurements relate to how well each organisation listens to community feedback and learns from their actions. Their performance determines their eligibility for financial bonuses, matches and access to Fortune 500 corporate employee giving. These signals encourage organisations to behave rationally in the pursuit of more resources and allow organisations maximum flexibility in pursuing their missions.

After early challenges in marketing through traditional channels to find funders, Globalgiving switched in 2009 to building conversations through social media and only engaging with people when they have shown an interest in becoming funders. They provide a money back guarantee to any funders who are not satisfied with how their donation has been used.

Globalgiving seeks to design its business around lean thinking and promoting constant innovation by their staff. It raises 40% of its funds through a 15% commission on funds raised. The donor is invited to top off their donation to enable all of their funds to go to the project, and in practice, donors give an average of 7%, which means that the commission charged to the project is only 8% on average. Today, 40% of Globalgiving’s income comes from this source.

In addition, Globalgiving builds relationships with global companies to manage giving programmes for their employees, for which the companies pay fees. The income from these programmes provides the other 60% of Globalgiving’s income.

Globalgiving has been self-financing through these two sources since 2010.
We identified the following implications of this emerging new model for established ICSOs:

**Reducing the costs of intermediation**
We expect to see established ICSOs testing radical new ways of working that are much less labour intensive and require much less management and physical infrastructure, focusing on where they are clearly seen to be adding value. For some segments of the market, this may result in a new ‘intermediary light’ model based on lean and agile structures and processes and radically reduce ICSO costs (these may need to be halved to compete effectively with new actors).

**Focus on value added**
The challenge from the new online brokers is likely to provoke established ICSOs to look much more carefully at where they are seen by donors and implementing partners to be adding value. One of ICSOs’ future roles may be providing support services and expertise to national CSOs. Under such a model, project partners may have to take on a bigger role in promoting and reporting on their own work in ways that attract and retain donor support, and donors may need to be willing to accept a greater degree of risk in return for more of their funds reaching those they are seeking to help.

**Use of new media to attract supporters**
Over the coming years, we will see new media becoming the primary channel for recruiting new supporters, often attracted by crowd funding opportunities to engage with a project or campaign they relate to, rather than funding the work of the ICSO. As a result, genuinely unrestricted funding may become harder and harder to secure, putting additional pressure on core costs of the ICSOs.

**Partnerships with online brokers**
Established ICSOs may decide to establish their own online brokerage, either themselves or in a strategic partnership or merger with an existing online broker, and to allow this to ‘compete’ with their established business, attracting donors and projects who do not value the benefits of a traditional ‘full service’ model.
Social enterprise models

There is a wide variety of definitions of social enterprise. In this report, we interpret this as providing goods or services, aligned to the mission of the ICSO, that are funded primarily by payments from the people to whom the ICSO is providing the goods or services.

This model is best suited to situations where the intended beneficiary is able to generate an income or other direct benefit from the goods or services provided, from which they make small scale payments for the service. It is already a well-established model amongst local and national CSOs in some contexts (e.g. inputs for farmers or small businesses), and by ICSOs for selected specific purposes (most notably micro-lending).

The CSO or ICSO will normally fund its work through taking modest commissions on the payments for the goods or services provided, although in many cases this is supplemented by grants or donations from third parties. Some major companies and commercial entrepreneurs have become enthusiastic supporters and investors in this approach.

A variant on this model provides goods or services to people who wish to support the mission or work of the ICSO, and are happy to purchase goods or services from the ICSO rather than commercial sources. The ICSO earns an income from commissions or surplus generated through this trading, which it applies to its mission. Examples of this include Oxfam shops, or green energy provided through Greenpeace.

While social enterprise is in some respects an established model, it is not yet a core business model for most major ICSOs. We have included it under this section of the report because we see the prospect of this model being extended to a much wider range of contexts in future, due to the following trends:

Beneficiaries becoming customers
As noted above, we see a changing relationship emerging between CSOs and the people they are seeking to serve, under which they are seen increasingly as participants and not as beneficiaries. In this context, they are often seen as customers or clients.

Micropayments
New payment technologies and the spread of mobile phones are making it viable for the first time to charge micropayments without the need for human intervention or the direct involvement of banks. This is opening up a wide range of new options for ICSOs to charge for services, especially the growing range of those services that are available online.

Private sector engagement
Until recently, most large private sector businesses had little interest in reaching poor communities, as unprofitable markets. However, a growing range of private sector organisations are seeking out new business models that make it profitable for them to serve poorer communities, and in some regulated industries (e.g. energy providers, oil drilling) there are growing regulatory requirements to meet community needs in areas they are seeking to operate in. This is creating openings for new partnerships between ICSOs and the private sector, either in project collaboration where they have complementary skills or networks, or with the ICSO acting as a monitor or certifier of responsible behaviour by the private sector companies involved.
We identified three main implications of the widening of this model for established ICSOs:

**Broadening chargeable services**
In response to more active and informed citizens and communities, some CSOs are exploring new ways of working, providing services tailored to the needs of those they are seeking to serve, and charging for those services at affordable prices. This is leading some CSOs to rethink traditional models under which no charges are made for their services, for example through running or funding affordable fee paying schools or ambulance services, or low cost mobile phone services, or providing online information services for farmers funded by micropayments.

**Joint ventures with the private sector**
The growing interest of the private sector in reaching out to poorer communities is creating new opportunities for CSOs with trusted relationships with poor communities to form partnerships with private sector businesses, who are prepared to fund the CSO on a commission or fee for service basis to provide services or to help them access hard to reach communities. These relationships can carry significant risks for the CSO, but can also open up new ways of providing and funding services to more people.

**New skills/experience needed**
Widening the social enterprise model will require ICSO staff to produce both social value and commercial revenue. However there can be a fundamental mismatch of culture between the core business of an ICSO and what a social enterprise must do to survive, and this needs to be balanced carefully. The majority of staff who are attracted to work in ICSOs may lack the expertise or motivation to build viable social enterprises. Success in this model may require recruiting new skills and developing separate processes to enable the social enterprise to thrive.
Other emerging models

In our discussions, we identified three further business models which may be taken up more extensively by some ICSOs in the future:

Commercial services
Some ICSOs are developing successful commercial businesses not directly related to their core mission or target groups, and using the profits generated from those services to fund their core work. While this is an important source for a small number of ICSOs, we did not see clear global trends that would lead to this becoming a core business model for many ICSOs.

Public service contracting
A growing range of governments in both industrialised and developing countries are contracting out the provision of selected services (e.g. fostering and adoption, specific health services) to specialist CSOs. This may become an important source of income for some national CSOs. In areas where scale and global expertise are of importance this may open up a significant field of international engagement for ICSOs.

Investing reserves
Some ICSOs have significant reserves, and are exploring how these might be invested in specific strategic initiatives to protect and develop the ICSO’s capacity to achieve its mission, for example, entering new markets, or developing new business models. These initiatives are often linked to loans or investments rather than grants, with the expectation that funds will be returned to reserves when the strategic initiatives is generating its own income.
CALL TO ACTION
As the pace of change in many areas of concern to ICSOs accelerates, their existing business models will be increasingly challenged. Disruptors may provoke sudden changes rendering established models no longer viable within a few years. In other contexts, change may be evolutionary over a longer period. In order to stay ahead in this transition, ICSOs should consider the six recommendations outlined below.

To deliver on these recommendations, many ICSOs will need to undertake far-reaching changes to their governance, management and culture. They may also be required to be much more outward looking, searching for new partners to work with at global and national levels.

**Strengthen market analysis**

Under the pressures of normal operational and financial issues, ICSOs can often be slow to spot and act on emerging trends in the markets that affect them. Perspectives on emerging trends are often coloured by opinions on what leaders would like to happen or feel ought to happen, sometimes crowding out the search for data and insights on what is actually happening. We believe the leading ICSOs of the future will be passionate about seeking out data and insights on trends that are likely to affect them in the years to come and planning how to respond to the opportunities and threats that arise.

**Key questions for ICSO leaders:**

a. What proportion of the time of our Board is spent reviewing emerging market trends or seeking outside expert perspectives on their key markets? How can this be expanded in productive ways?

b. What do we spend on market research, and does this extend beyond brand awareness and share of existing donor markets? How might market research be productively broadened to yield strategic insights into emerging international trends?

c. How much time are senior managers expected to spend externally in exploring emerging trends, and how is time spent doing this recognised within your ICSO?

**Focus on added value**

Established ICSOs can often assume that their current ways of working, built up over many years, continue to provide added value for partners, donors and supporters. This report argues that established perceptions of added value are being challenged in a wide range of ways. We propose that it is time for leading ICSOs to take a hard look at each main stage of their core business processes and the costs involved and review whether each of these stages is seen to offer significant added value to partners, donors or supporters in their key markets, compared with other current or emerging options that may be available to them.

**Key questions for ICSO leaders:**

a. Do we know the direct and indirect unit costs associated with each stage of our business processes and track whether they are rising or falling? How might we track this more clearly and regularly?

b. How should we periodically test the views of our partners, donors and members/supporters on the value for money of each stage of the process, from their perspective?

c. How can we better scan inside and outside our sector for emerging business models that may provide more cost-effective ways of delivering value?
Test new models
Most leading ICSOs are good at exploring ways of refining their offer to strengthen their effectiveness and efficiency, through amending existing business processes. However, disruptive change is rarely successfully managed through existing teams and processes, especially in large and complex organisations. We believe the leading ICSOs of the future will need to become adept at regularly testing and evaluating new business models outside their mainstream business processes, free from the assumptions and indirect costs associated with the core business. In some cases, these may involve bringing in new skills and engaging with unconventional partners from other sectors, who can bring fresh thinking to ways of working and challenge established assumptions.

Key questions for ICSO leaders:

a. How often do we test radical new ways of engaging with partners, donors or members/supporters outside our mainstream processes and core business locations?

b. How do we seek out potential new strategic partners with complementary skills?

c. Do we have clear criteria for filtering ideas and set clear staged targets and objectives aligned to phased investment? How could these be clarified and strengthened?

Develop networks and consortia
Many ICSOs are good at participating in loose forums to share ideas and insights relating to their work. However, to strengthen their capacity to work in more flexible and responsive ways, we believe ICSOs will need to upgrade their ability to engage in flexible networks and consortia to achieve specific shared objectives in line with their mission and to manage the risks involved.

Key questions for ICSO leaders:

a. How are our programme and campaign leaders encouraged to seek out international partners with complementary skills and constituencies of supporters to co-invest on specific programme and campaigns, rather than trying to run them alone?

b. How do we develop or refine clear partnership principles and standards to guide programme and campaign leaders in negotiating those partnerships and managing the risks involved?

c. How do the senior leadership and Board monitor the progress and success of key international partnership initiatives and celebrate the successful ones? How is the value of these partnerships assessed?
Accelerate speed of innovation

This report argues that the successful ICSOs of the future will be nimble – able to test and roll out new ways of working quickly and able to respond rapidly to emerging opportunities and threats. For many ICSOs, this will mean transforming their ability to make quick decisions to try things out and take calculated risks, without having to work through rounds of policy proposals, or build consensus around alternative models across all levels of governance. It may also mean redefining their approach to information and communications technologies, to approach them as fundamental elements of new business models, rather than means of improving the efficiency of existing processes.

Key questions for ICSO leaders

a. How can we change our governance mechanisms to enable us to move fast to respond effectively to emerging opportunities and threats?

b. How do we encourage our affiliates to try out radical new approaches, celebrate their successes and promote their wider adoption across relevant parts of our federation?

c. How do we encourage our best emerging leaders to develop radical new ideas, give them the space to pursue the best ones and recognise them within the organisation for bold piloting, whether it succeeds or not? Do we have allocated innovation funds to which our people can apply?

Make strategic use of unrestricted funds and reserves

This report identifies a number of trends that are likely to continue to reduce the proportion of ICSO funding that is unrestricted. As these trends continue, we believe that Boards will need to make more strategic use of unrestricted funds and reserves for investing in their future: developing new and innovative initiatives and ways of working, driving down the proportion of unrestricted funds that are used to finance organisational overheads or topping up existing underfunded projects.

Key questions for ICSO leaders:

a. How can we develop or refine effective processes for our Board to make active choices about how unrestricted funds and reserves are invested strategically (not only marginal decisions around the existing uses of those funds)?:

b. Is the proportion of our unrestricted funds being used to finance indirect costs growing or reducing? How can we make more strategic use of these funds?

c. What proportion of our unrestricted funds should be used for developing new markets and ways of working? How are these investments managed and by whom?
The following table summarises the key implications for governance, management and culture of the recommendations for ICSOs in this report.

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<th>GOVERNANCE</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>CULTURE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STRENGTHEN MARKET ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td>Regular review of market data and insights</td>
<td>Constant search for market intelligence</td>
<td>External orientation</td>
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<td>Broaden expertise of key markets in Board</td>
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<td><strong>FOCUS ON ADDED VALUE</strong></td>
<td>Understand and be guided by what stakeholders really value</td>
<td>Focus on better outcomes, not current ways of doing things</td>
<td>Customer/partner focus</td>
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<td><strong>TEST NEW MODELS</strong></td>
<td>Develop parameters for new ventures</td>
<td>Create opportunities for working outside normal HQ culture and procedures</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial spirit</td>
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<td>Develop new skills required or partner with those who have them</td>
<td>Readiness to accept calculated risks</td>
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<td>Celebrate successes and learn from failures</td>
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<td><strong>DEVELOP NETWORK AND CONSORTIUM WORKING</strong></td>
<td>Engage with current and potential strategic partners</td>
<td>Constant search for potential new collaborators</td>
<td>Focus on eco-system not organisation</td>
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<td>Developing crowdsourcing expertise</td>
<td>Promote mission over other organisational interests</td>
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<td>Value partnership with and learning from partners</td>
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<td><strong>ACCELERATE SPEED OF INNOVATION</strong></td>
<td>Simplify governance structures, secure global rather than multi-national mindset of Board members</td>
<td>Protect the rebel innovators</td>
<td>Innovation is seen as key to achieving the mission</td>
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<td>Manage risk rather than seeking to minimise it</td>
<td>Excite staff about new ways of working</td>
<td>Results are more important than process</td>
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<td>Delegate powers within broad principles and limits</td>
<td>Create virtual flexible teams</td>
<td>Embrace change</td>
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<td>Promote links across and around management structures</td>
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<td>Selective consultation, rapid decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MAKE STRATEGIC USE OF UNRESTRICTED FUNDS AND RESERVES</strong></td>
<td>Make strategic choices on use of unrestricted funds</td>
<td>Drive down use of unrestricted funds on overheads and supporting existing projects</td>
<td>Constant search for new ways of financing work</td>
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<td>Decide when and how to invest reserves for long-term benefit</td>
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<td>Preparedness to accept and manage risk</td>
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In conclusion...

The leading global ICSOs of the future will be those that are effective in identifying the risks and opportunities for their existing business models and quick and efficient in adapting them or adopting new ones to remain relevant and competitive in this changing global context.

They are likely to have traded control over specific programmes and campaigns for wider influence on the global agendas that relate to their mission, creating new forms of partnership with other key players in the public and private sectors and in civil society that are making a major contribution to tackling key global issues.

For those that seize this opportunity, this is an exciting prospect.
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The global action platform for ICSOs

International civil society organisations (ICSOs) play a crucial role in the fight for a sustainable and more equitable world. With their programmes all over the world, ICSOs have a unique knowledge base, exceptional reach and significant influence. As globalisation progresses, challenges and opportunities increasingly demand a response at the global level. ICSOs are in a key strategic position to contribute and they carry a special responsibility to deliver.

For ICSOs to grasp the opportunity and fulfil the obligation to co-shape a better world they need to change. As expectations are changing and new competitors enter their fields of work, ICSOs need to redefine their role and business models. To navigate change ICSOs need to become more agile and better prepared to embrace and adapt to change.

The International Civil Society Centre helps the world’s leading ICSOs maximise their impact for a sustainable and more equitable world.

The Centre:
• Scans the horizon for fundamental and disruptive changes and exciting opportunities;
• Develops strategies for ICSOs to successfully navigate change;
• Enables learning and cooperation among ICSOs and their key stakeholders;
• Supports ICSOs with developing effective and efficient global leadership, governance and management;
• Promotes robust accountability to strengthen ICSOs’ effectiveness and legitimacy.

The Centre is a not-for-profit organisation working with the leading ICSOs, predominantly at the senior leadership level. The Centre is fully owned by the organisations it serves. We strive to set high standards in management, governance and strategy and for transparency and accountability across our sector.

The Centre is fully owned by the organisations it serves. They help shape our strategic direction and programmes, ensuring that we embrace and reflect the needs of the sector. To date, twelve ICSOs have acquired shares in the Centre:

- Amnesty International
- CBM International
- ChildFund Alliance
- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Oxfam International
- Plan International
- Sightsavers International
- SOS Children’s Villages Intl.
- Transparency International
- VSO International
- World Vision International
- WWF International
The International Civil Society Centre helps the world’s leading international civil society organisations maximise their impact for a sustainable and more equitable world.