





International
Civil Society
Centre

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OWNERS

The Centre is owned by 15 of the largest international civil society organisations (ICSOs), who work across environmental, human rights, social justice and humanitarian issues. Our core clientele spans the largest and most influential ICISOs. We also forge partnerships with other organisations and platforms from civil society as well as academia, media and social business innovating for positive change.



OUR MISSION IS TO STRENGTHEN THE IMPACT AND RESILIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND TO SUPPORT PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR WORLD FOR THE BETTER.

Our vision and guiding star are the Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at ending all forms of poverty, achieving social justice, and tackling climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Together with our owners, we've initiated and incubated several collaborations, such as Accountable Now, the Leave No One Behind partnership, the Civic Charter community and the Joining Forces coalition of child-focused agencies. All have shown valuable impact both in terms of tackling the big issues, and in how civil society can work together.

However, the world has plenty more global challenges, with some critical trends being rising populism, digital transformation, climate change, and an increase in global inequality. Extending beyond borders, these problems are larger than individual organisations or governments can tackle alone, meaning we need to find collective, intersectional responses.

We detect areas for collaboration through formats like our Scanning the Horizon community, Vision Works, and the Innovators Forum, which identify and address relevant trends affecting civil society's work, now and in the future.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CIVIL SOCIETY"?

"Civil society" encompasses a wide variety of organised and non-organised actors. It spans movements, activists, service-delivery organisations, donors and philanthropists, as well as media, academia, social business, and more. Replacing terms like "non-governmental" and "non-profit" organisations, "civil society" seeks to justly represent these actors' different aims, mandates and ways of working.

The Centre's main clientele are the largest and most influential international civil society organisations, often organised in federated structures with global reach. Despite diverse work on issues like poverty alleviation, social justice, environment or human rights, they share many challenges and opportunities. Gathering them for mutual learning and joint action is the core of our work. These organisations are the shareholders and owners of the Centre. We also strive to involve individuals and organisations beyond the civil society sector. We believe partnerships based on mutual learnings are key to achieving fundamental positive change in the world.

OUR MISSION



ROLES

BUILDING ON OUR WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE, WE WILL TAKE ON THREE SPECIFIC ROLES IN THE COMING YEARS.



CONVENOR

We hold workshops and conferences where civil society practitioners can connect, collaborate and co-create, challenging conventional thinking and bringing the best and freshest ideas to the fore.

INNOVATOR

We seek out the latest innovations and analyse how they can help ICSSOs achieve greater impact; while scanning for future developments that could determine civil society's relevance.

PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATION

Building on our events and connections, we develop projects and partnerships that tackle common problems and bring impact that no organisation could achieve alone.



CONVENOR

WE HOLD WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES WHERE CIVIL SOCIETY PRACTITIONERS CAN CONNECT, COLLABORATE AND CO-CREATE, CHALLENGING CONVENTIONAL THINKING AND BRINGING THE BEST AND FRESHEST IDEAS TO THE FORE.



VISION WORKS

CEOs and chairs of ICSOs from around the world tackle common challenges and define joint goals on issues of strategic importance for their organisations and the sector as a whole.



GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

At our largest annual conference, leaders from civil society, politics and business come together to explore and network around civil trends and challenges.



GLOBAL HEADS OF DIVISION

Directors of ICSO divisions – for example policy, programme, or human resources – come together to share best practices and investigate opportunities for joint action.

A woman with dark hair and a gold earring is shown in profile, looking towards the right. She is wearing a red patterned garment. In front of her is an open laptop computer resting on a red patterned bag. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building. A large red semi-transparent shape is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text for the 'INNOVATOR' section.

INNOVATOR

WE SEEK OUT THE LATEST INNOVATIONS AND ANALYSE HOW THEY CAN HELP ICSOS ACHIEVE GREATER IMPACT; WHILE SCANNING FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS THAT COULD DETERMINE CIVIL SOCIETY'S RELEVANCE.

SCANNING THE HORIZON

A platform for exploring global trends affecting ICSOs.

INNOVATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY

Mapping and showcasing promising responses to big challenges.

BE THE CHANGE

A report on the culture of change in civil society organisations.

RIDING THE WAVE

A report on how to prepare organisations for disruptive change.



PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATION

BUILDING ON OUR EVENTS AND
CONNECTIONS, WE DEVELOP PROJECTS
AND PARTNERSHIPS THAT TACKLE COMMON
PROBLEMS AND BRING IMPACT THAT NO
ORGANISATION COULD ACHIEVE ALONE.

ICSOS IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

Addressing effects of populism and division in society, and looking at how to improve legitimacy and trust while defending the values underpinning global solidarity work.

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Leading ICSOs and their local partners collaborate for a truly inclusive SDG implementation to make marginalised voices heard and count.

TALENT IN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Creation of opportunities for exchange and development for the new generation in civil society work.

An aerial photograph of a large group of small, colorful boats on a deep blue-green ocean. A larger white vessel is visible on the right side. A yellow banner with a cartoon character and the text 'HEART FOR SEA' is visible on one of the smaller boats. The background is a solid teal color.

QUESTIONS

BIG

THE FUTURE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Identifying global trends affecting the work of civil society is the basis of our collaborative work. We scan for disruptions that lay ahead, analyse them to understand their impact, and strategise with the sector to respond.

In our Scanning the Horizon platform, futurists, strategists, trend analysts and research specialists form a cross-sector community of experts and practitioners. The aim is to share insights, explore key trends, and develop relevant strategies together. The platform also enables mutual learning and the pooling of resources. Together, members of the platform host webinars alongside experts and civil society practitioners, and produce analysis on cross-cutting topics.

POPULISM

Today, news and media tend to report on antagonistic views in order to drive traffic. The discourse is often binary and leads the public to presume a black-and-white choice, and to take a "side". This is fuelled and exacerbated by a fragmented new-media environment, with "echo chambers" reinforcing prejudices through deliberately misleading stories funnelled to a particular target audience. The landscape of social media gives air to divisive opinions that fuel polarisation and are then picked up and re-transmitted by mainstream media.

International civil society organisations are not immune to this. Although often cited as trustworthy (for example in Edelman's "Trust Barometer"), there is nevertheless a current environment of scepticism towards global institutions. This has given actors opposed to progressive ideas an opportunity to call for less investment in global development, and launch attacks on organised civil society. More disturbingly, civil society has been deliberately targeted in recent years, and remains vulnerable to explicit misinformation and disinformation campaigns in many countries.

To tackle these trends together we will pool ideas with others in the sector to revolutionise communication and messaging, revise our way of engaging with citizens to regain our legitimacy, or "our license to operate", and develop stronger solidarity mechanisms countering the attacks on our underlying values.

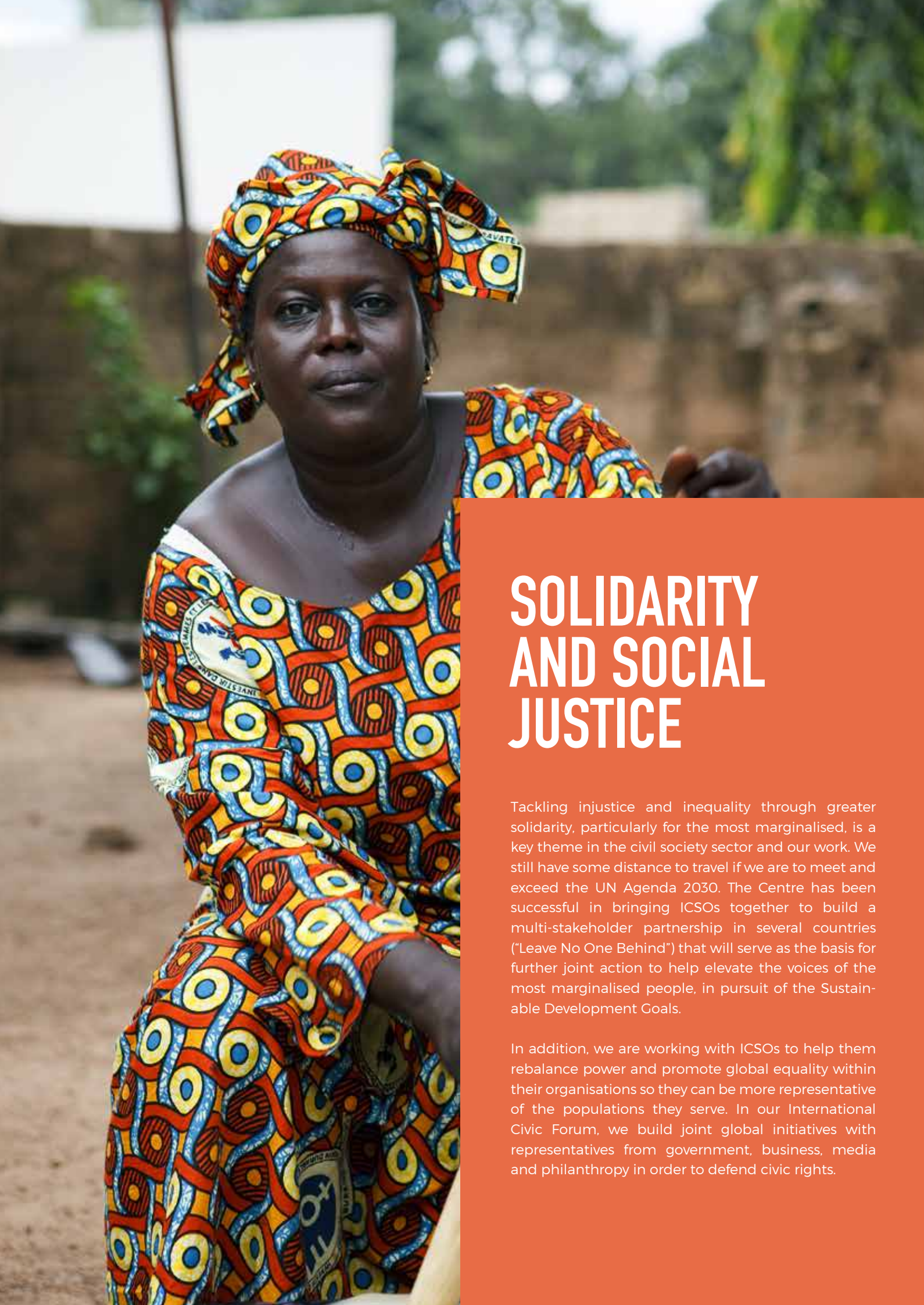
SHIFTING POWER

As global contexts and priorities change, many civil society organisations are challenged to look at their own operational models and adapt. Geopolitical shifts and capacity growth in the Global South necessitate new ways of creating meaningful partnerships and localising development and humanitarian work.

Civil society organisations are constantly challenged to adapt their processes to rapidly changing environments, to continuously maintain legitimacy, partnerships and citizen engagement, all while staying mission-driven. Agility and adaptability are necessary – but many tendencies work against these qualities, including the complexities of the organisations themselves. Governance, structures and processes need constant review, especially if local expertise and empowerment are to be taken into account.

The Centre offers space for reflection on global trends and power shifts to other communities. Our discussion platform "Disrupt & Innovate", based on the publication "The Hedgehog and the Beetle", provides advice on adapting governance and navigating confederated structures. In these discussions the triangle of "Power – Governance – Mission" forms a useful framework for collective learning and operational enhancement.





SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Tackling injustice and inequality through greater solidarity, particularly for the most marginalised, is a key theme in the civil society sector and our work. We still have some distance to travel if we are to meet and exceed the UN Agenda 2030. The Centre has been successful in bringing ICSSOs together to build a multi-stakeholder partnership in several countries ("Leave No One Behind") that will serve as the basis for further joint action to help elevate the voices of the most marginalised people, in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, we are working with ICSSOs to help them rebalance power and promote global equality within their organisations so they can be more representative of the populations they serve. In our International Civic Forum, we build joint global initiatives with representatives from government, business, media and philanthropy in order to defend civic rights.

DIGITAL DISRUPTION

People working in civil society are well aware of the speed of technological innovation and its disruptive potential. That's why we have made digitisation a cross-cutting theme in several of our convening events. We aim to understand the power of these developments to upend conventional wisdom, so we can harness their potential benefits.

Our work is to scope out possible interventions that offer the greatest benefits for ICSSOs. We aim to bring insight and expertise for developing digital tools into the sector, and to create opportunities organisations can embrace. In partnership with academic and technological innovators we provide a platform for discussions on the social impact of digital technologies. A "Blockchain for Social Good" conference in early 2019 is our launchpad for similar initiatives on digital trends.



OUR PROJECTS



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Initiated by a dozen of the world's largest international civil society organisations, the influential Leave No One Behind partnership brings together actors from local to international level, to forge a more participative and inclusive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The coalition aims to fill knowledge gaps on marginalisation (making voices heard) and to advocate for evidence-based policy making at national and global level (making voices count).

Our mapping has found that governments often lack knowledge about people living at the margins of society and are thus unable to adequately address their needs. At the same time, civil society organisations command a wealth of knowledge on marginalised communities, as they interact with them on a day-to-day basis. That's why a majority of our owners decided to jointly collect and share data, bringing it to the attention of decision-makers to enable evidence-driven policy making.

Our pilot project launched in five countries: Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal and Vietnam. Based on learnings, we will build on our pilot with a four-year project from March 2019, to scale up to 20 countries by 2022.



INNOVATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY

To their advantage, many ICSSOs constantly innovate and experiment with new approaches. However, there is a significant opportunity for organisations to benefit more from the lessons others have learned or are in the process of addressing.

To fill this gap we provide a global space where innovation can be showcased, analysed and discussed.


The Innovation in Civil Society report is an annual, interactive multimedia format that shares such insights and analyses, on innovations related to pressing themes.

As a facilitator and recognised thought leader in the sector, the Centre convenes ICSSOs with new strategic partners, leading trendsetters, experimenters and implementers on local and global level to provoke thoughtful analysis and practices that can trigger responsive action.





GET INVOLVED!

 All our events and projects

 Frequent webinars


 Our newsletter

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Photography

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In order of appearance:

1. Cover: Children with laptops

Credit: @VSO/Amos Gumulira

Latif Hussein and other pupils concentrate on their tablets during the Unlocking Talent Through Technology class session at Ngwenya Primary School in Lilongwe, Malawi

2. Abigail in class

Credit: cbm/argum/Einberger.

Abigail Mukuka (18) was born with spina bifida. She goes to a school in Lusaka, Zambia and wants to be a nurse someday. Here she is sitting in her wheelchair at school surrounded by her four best friends: (from left to right) Rejoice, Abby, Agness und Taliya

3. Ladies among tall green plants

Credit: Pierre-Yves Babelon / Shutterstock.com

4. Care work in DRC

Credit: March 2013, Jake Lyell/CARE

Caption: CARE DRC Food Security Manager, Joseph Kakuru, talks with IDPs in the Kishusha-Rubaya Camp of Masisi Territory, North Kivu Province in Eastern DRC, where CARE works to help survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and to provide emergency assistance to people displaced by conflict

5. At Global Perspectives 2018 the foundations for a new global movement are laid - Yes! for Humanity. Co-founder Fouzy Mathey (right) is pictured at the event in discussion

6. At our Future Scenarios session at Global Perspectives 2018, participants seek to establish the characteristics of a CSO in 2030

7. Participants discuss the future of Civic Space at Global Perspectives 2016

8. A lady with a laptop

Credit: Riccardo Mayer / shutterstock.com

9. A Peruvian lady receiving information

Credit: Alma Suarez @Proética, PERU

10. Heart for Sea

Credit: Arnaud Vittet / Greenpeace

"Heart for Sea" in Teluk Patani

11. Woman with megaphone

Credit: John Gomez / shutterstock.com

12. A lady sits and looks at the camera

Credit: Hector Conesa / Shutterstock.com

13. A crowd films with smartphones

Credit: Ververidis Vasilis / shutterstock.com

14. A lady smiles in the market

Credit: Benny Marty / shutterstock.com

15. Back of a woman in a field of wheat

Credit: Darren Baker / Shutterstock.com



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