

CISU's strategy 2026-2030

1 The change CISU contributes to

CISU STRENGTHENS CIVIL SOCIETY TO BE:

» **strong**

A **strong civil society** builds robust and sustainable organisations that mobilise resources from a range of sources.

» **diverse**

A **diverse civil society** represents and is accountable towards people and communities and their strive for political, economical, and social change.

» **globally connected**

A **globally connected civil society** works together in partnership and engages their members, constituency, and a broader public to act in solidarity and address local and global issues.

2 Why

It strengthens democratic, rights-based, sustainable development when people organise and act on issues that matter to them and in solidarity with people locally and globally.



Civil society organisations in Denmark: Member organisations and grant holders

3 How

CISU works for the Danish civil society organisations and the partnerships

CISU strengthens civil society by bringing organisations together to learn, collaborate, and increase their ability to promote citizen-driven influence.

CISU strengthens civil society by being a vocal advocate for the enabling environment for civil society, and its role and impact in the world.

CISU strengthens civil society by further developing CISU's own funding approaches, with a continual belief in the added value of partnerships and collaboration between civil society across the world.

PARTNERSHIPS

Civil society organisations outside Denmark in CISU partnerships



CISU'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IS FOCUSED ON THE DANISH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND THE PARTNERSHIPS

4 CISU's commitments in 2026-2030

CISU AS A CONNECTOR OF LEARNING AND NETWORKS

Ongoing learning and collaboration is key to greater impact.

- » CISU will connect civil society to exchange experiences and knowledge and build bridges to private sector, knowledge institutions, and other sectors of society.
- » CISU will establish learning mechanisms that allows us to learn from members, partners and global trends, analyse and condense this learning and share it in member base, the partnerships and with global stakeholders
- » CISU will enhance representation and accessibility of the entire partnership in our activities.

CISU AS AN ACKNOWLEDGED AND VISIBLE ACTOR IN DENMARK

Recognition, acknowledgement and visibility is essential to stronger civil societies in Denmark and globally.

- » CISU will foster a community of actors that engages the broad public in Denmark on global issues.
- » CISU will use our collective power to advocate for necessary changes in the enabling environment that supports a strong, diverse, globally connected civil society.
- » CISU will speak up in alliance with civil society across the world in defense of civic space.

CISU AS A CHAMPION OF REIMAGINING PARTNERSHIPS

CISU's privileged position obliges us to be ambitious in partnership and funding mechanisms to support locally led development.

- » CISU will further develop on how the partnerships can best make use of the added value of each partner's contributions.
- » CISU will ensure that funding for engagement of the broad public in Denmark facilitates global equity, and a strengthened role for Danish civil society to mobilize for global solidarity
- » CISU will stimulate new funding approaches of partnerships and funding supports local decision making and co-creation.

Context for priorities

CISU wants to be a connector of learning and networks because:

Globally, civil society, freedom, democracy and human rights are under attack.

However, all around the world capable civil societies are flourishing and finding new ways and directions.

Civil societies that are much stronger on analysis, mobilisation, action, voice, and new modes of operation and organisation.

The future strong alliances between civil society will be driven by global south forces.

Innovation and locally led initiatives will increase in magnitude, quality and scale.

The potential of future global civil societies demands joint learning on how to boost initiative, organisation, resilience, representation and accountability and build strong civil societies.

CISU wants to be an acknowledged and visible actor in Denmark because:

Civil society in Denmark involved in global issues have increased, in numbers and in diversity.

New organisations, diasporas and new groups in society develop new approaches to a globally connected civil society.

At the same time, the political framework for civil society via official strategies is less clear. Structures for civil society influencing on Danish development policy is diminishing.

There is an increasing pressure in Denmark also on which type of civil society that can operate on which issues. This undermines the popular support for CISU member organisations and on development cooperation at large.

The increase of Danish actors involved in engaging the public in Denmark on global issues however tell a different story of a more globally engaged Danish society. There is rich potential in harnessing this.

Civil societies globally and in Denmark play crucial roles in facilitating just and fair societies. This collaboration has been taking place for decades, but this joint work of globally connected civil society is now more needed than ever.

Civil society is in a position where we have to fight for support and legitimacy around our cause, and the work that we do. While many of our allies are strong in their locality, the collective power behind CISU can play a strong role influencing the Danish society.

CISU wants to be a champion of reimagining partnerships because:

Development funding is decreasing globally. Global challenges are on the increase. Potential global threats need to be invested in to be dealt with.

CISU believes in the power of people to organise around the issues that affect them. Solutions are often most sustainable when locally anchored.

CISUs fund modalities are under pressure due to decreasing global funding and active civil societies in Denmark and internationally. The task at hand is to focus on what enables an independent, diverse and globally connected civil society that can address the global challenges.

Global civil society voices are leading an effort to reimagine the "aid sector" and replace it with a more fit-for-purpose interconnectedness of actors and funding streams.

CISU operates with a high level of trust in our systems, both from main donors and internally from grant holders.

Member organisations and partnerships have proven approaches where locally led development and partnerships across borders are not opposites but rather are seen as mutually benefitting forces.

At the same time, the current setup of partnerships is also being contested as a hindrance to reforming away from a colonial aid sector.

Time is ripe for testing new funding streams, and in new setups strengthen the roles of both Danish civil society actors and the global partners they work with.

CISU's core narrative

WHO ARE WE?

CISU - Civil Society in Development - is an association of 300 Danish civil society organisations engaged globally.

CISU works with capacity development, networking, framework conditions and knowledge sharing to ensure that CISU's member organisations remain relevant and ambitious partners in global partnerships.

In Denmark, CISU and its member organisations work to raise awareness of global issues and engage the public in a shared world.



THE WORLD AROUND US

Democracy, human rights and the civic space are under pressure in many parts of the world due to a shift towards autocracy, arbitrariness and the suppression of rights.

The planet, its animals, plants and people are being affected by unpredictable climate events. Climate change causes destruction, while human-made conflicts drive people to flee and into desperation.

Our planet, our climate and our shared world need the diverse voices of civil society. We need to stand together and, through a wide range of approaches, work to address the biodiversity, climate, democratic and equity crises we face.

Global solidarity, understanding and organisation—the kind that CISU's member organisations are committed to—are urgently needed.



WHAT DO WE WANT?

CISU's member organisations build partnerships with local civil society organisations, ensuring local ownership and leadership.

These partnerships put people at the forefront of their own efforts to create a better future for themselves and their communities, while promoting rights, peace, climate resilience and democracy.

Civil society organisations enable people to come together and speak out on issues that matter to them. Freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are strengthened as foundations for democratic, rights-based social development.

Organised civil society strengthens individual engagement in a shared world and helps us take better care of ourselves, each other and future generations. At the same time, a strong civil society helps hold those in power to account and supports the building and maintenance of democratic societies.



CISU works for a world in which everyone has rights and opportunities.

CISU works for a world with a fair distribution of resources and benefits.

CISU works for a world where everyone has the freedom to organise and build democratic communities.

CISU works for strong civil societies in Denmark and the Global South.

CISU's vision and mission

Vision

Strong civil society organisations and associations working to secure human rights, promote global justice and sustainability, and counteract the roots of poverty.

Mission

CISU supports the national and global efforts of Danish organisations for a fair and sustainable world. CISU is a platform for exchange of experience and knowledge-sharing. We build capacity, promote mutual learning and innovation, and strengthen popular participation in development work. We administer public funding and work to ensure the availability of resources for a multitude of organisations and initiatives. CISU promotes the common interests of its member organisations and the space for civil society work.

CISU's values

- **Diversity**

We will ensure a wide array of approaches to civil society work because different methodologies and types of stakeholders are the hallmark of a thriving civil society.

- **Transparency**

We will strive for transparency in all our actions and decisionmaking.

- **Accountability**

We will take responsibility for our own actions and decisions, and we expect others to do the same.

- **Participation**

We will offer everyone an equal opportunity to participate, because everyone has something valuable to contribute.

- **Respect**

We will work with people on their own terms, supporting them in pursuing their own goals. We welcome challenges to our viewpoints and opinions, always learning along the way.

- **Cooperation**

We cooperate with a wide range of stakeholders, because this is an inspiring, necessary and constructive path to sustainable results.

- **Volunteerism**

We will create space for voluntary involvement in civil society, because people's free will and volunteerism drives engagement in civil society work.