

# Work with social movements and informal civil society through CISUs grants

**WHY** The past years has seen a rise in social movements and protests across the world. There is an increasing attention towards working with these actors as societal change also comes through their push. Their actions often have a strong impact through the media and press leading to political action. Social movements also change the people that are part of the movement and creates activists.

At the **community level**, informal structures can also be key **partners** to actually influence people's practices. In other words, change also happens through other actors than the relatively well-organised NGOs and local CBOs. **This tool paper seeks to point out how you can work with them with CISU grants.**

## WHAT are social movements and informal civil society?

No one size fits-all definition, but:

- ▶ **Informal civil society** are not formally registered, do not have bank accounts. Can be a community group, and some may have a board, and some may have organised their leadership in another way.
- ▶ **Social movement** is when more actors work in an alliance or network towards a shared purpose, representing more than one community or group.

**Types** of both social movements and informal civil society: a thematic gatherings of activists, e.g. environmental and climate activists, mobilisations around political protests.

But they can also be child and youth groups, village saving and loans association, farmers' groups, community health workers' network. Or think of a thematic gatherings of activists, e.g. environmental and climate activists, mobilisations around political protests.

## WHO should read this:

If you already work with informally organised civil society trying to find workable ways to transfer funds

If you want to work closer with community-based groups and social movements that are informally organised.

Number of protests

600

400

200

Number of protests

2011

2014

2017

Arab Spring  
Occupy Wall Street

Ukrainian  
revolution

Anti-Trump  
protests

Mass Anti-Government  
Protests across  
37 Countries

Middle East  
and north Africa

Asia

North America

Sub-Saharan Africa

Europe

Rest of World

## HOW

### Wise strategies for your collaboration with social movements and informal civil society

The below could for example be outcomes or outputs that you include in your intervention when you apply with CISU.

- ▶ Work with and support **mentorship and leadership capacity building**. Think also in terms of decision-making structures and systems to improve a democratic process, or an inclusive process as well as balancing and actionable approach.
- ▶ **Invest in safeguarding, security** and be aware of your responsibility for the actors in the front lines.
- ▶ Your **solidarity is everything** – lobbying and formal, public statements can influence UN and your own governments – but clear it with those you are supporting in their interest.
- ▶ **Financing spaces and places** to meet can ensure the right people get together to coordinate.
- ▶ **Documentation is necessary** for sharing tactics, reporting abuses, getting media.
- ▶ Support a focus that ensures social movements to **maintain a stronghold among grassroots**.
- ▶ Support to **digital security** and digital **capacity**.
- ▶ When it comes to monitoring, a **focus on the outcomes** rather than counting participants and activities is a better option (e.g. outcome harvesting as approach) - CISU has no formal demands to how you will monitor – just that you explain your approach.

# The main challenges are administrative

– here is how you can overcome some of them when you have a CISU grant

Your partner can easily be a social movement or informal civil society without registration or bank account – you just need to work around it. And you need to consider risk and risk management and invest time to develop good risk management mechanisms.

Your bank is key – and CISU encourages that you speak to your bank about the risks and challenges involved with your partner not being able to register in the country of operation and lack of bank account.

### Optimal would be to work through a third party that handles money on behalf of the partners without a bank account.

This option is good when handling larger amounts, but only if such an organisation is available, willing and all partners have trust in the organisation, and a written agreement between the partners is possible. This could be a larger Danish NGO or INGO based in the country. Or even an organisation that does not belong to civil society (see our Guidelines for the Civil Society Fund, p. 14)

### When larger amounts

If not possible with the third party option, you do need to speak to your bank about solutions if you need to transfer large amounts. Make sure that you have all the documentation at hand: agreements, contracts, budgets, etc.

### When smaller amounts

Lack of bank account can result in

- ▶ **Transfers through agencies** – be aware of security and safety if you do this since you will be carrying cash. Some may be watching activities in these agencies. Your insurance may have a max cash amount they can cover. Inform your bank that you are doing this, so they know why you are taking out cash. If your bank states that you are not allowed to withdraw the cash, make sure that you send them your grant contract with CISU and other donors. Discuss in the organisation who will be transferring, and thus signing for the transfer personally. The Danish authorities do track foreign transfer through Western Union, Forex, Dahabshell, etc. This means that you as an individual signing for a transfer can be called to meetings explaining the transfers. So, make sure that all documentation is at hand at all times, and that the people making the transfers are aware of this. The same goes for the partners in the receiving end. It is key that the persons picking up the transfer, are covered by an insurance, are encouraged to take a taxi, for example.
- ▶ **Moving cash across borders** – find out how much money you are allowed to carry, both in relation to the country you are leaving and the country you are entering - and don't exceed. Ensure that all the travelers involved are covered by travel insurance where cash amounts are included. Get signatures if cash is handed to individuals according to the agreed upon activities (meeting costs, materials, etc.), or get actual receipts.
- ▶ **Danish partner takes out cash locally from the bank and hands over cash to a local partner**. This option is possible only when Danish partner is in country of operation and the money is withdrawn from the organisation's bank account (not a personal account).

### Sometimes you don't need to transfer money to support

Ensuring that social movements do not have to deal with compliance and funds management can also be supportive as this type of work is time-consuming and maybe not a key skill of informal civil society. Explain in your application why you apply the below approaches – CISU asks you for justifications, so provide this.

- ▶ You can **pay invoices directly** from the Danish organisation or through a third party.
- ▶ If you have another local partner involved, **develop small-scale sub-granting schemes**, like a campaigns' fund or micro-grants that would be available to activist groups to apply for. Such schemes need to be developed so that there is a clear strategy that links this type of activity to the purpose of the intervention. The funds will also need to be included in local audits – so consider what can work locally.
- ▶ **Covering campaign and activity costs directly** either through the Danish CSO or through another CSO based in the same country/region.

### Further alternatives

Support to individuals. Make sure that the systems used for transfers to individuals have been approved by authorities or have a large customer group, for example mobile transfers. For mobile transfer systems, make sure you have written procedures about how to ensure that the correct individual receives the money. Other agents can be companies facilitating remittances.

- ▶ Ask the Danish or Nordic representation in the partner country if they could be helpful with advice on transferring systems in the country.
- ▶ Is blockchain an avenue for you?
- ▶ Use CISU to discuss solutions. We do assess new solutions upon your request.

### Read more

Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021:  
Study on Danish Support to Informally Organised Civil Society and Social Movements in Developing Countries (main source for this 2-pager)

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2017):  
Global Activism in Flux

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2019):  
After Protest: Pathways Beyond Mass Mobilization

Center for Strategic and International Studies (2020):  
The Age of Mass Protests