BUILDING PEOPLE POVER

HOW TO STAND WITH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS for the Copenhagen People Power Conference 2023. Developed by ActionAid Denmark - based on roundtables with over 100 participating actors. To be further developed during the conference.

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GET IN TOUCH



INTRODUCTION

For several years ActionAid has explored the kind of support social movements need from external actors based on their capacity, goals and where they are in their life cycle. We have done so based on new and established research, learning from like-minded organisations and direct engagement with social movements. People power movements have been one of the most powerful drivers of positive change worldwide over the past century: social movements educate, mobilise, empower, protest, and renew what it means to be a citizen.¹ However, authoritarian regimes are becoming better and smarter at working together to shut down civil resistance. Mobilisations don't necessarily lead to change.

If we want movements to succeed, we need to provide them with better international networks, support and solidarity. There are increasing numbers of stakeholders that have entered the field of movement support (civil society organisations (CSOs), donors, politicians, governments, multilateral institutions, etc.). We find it vital to engage in continued exploration and conversation on best practices and challenges to better understand the support stakeholders can provide to movements.

With that in mind, ActionAid Denmark, together with a multitude of expert partners, is hosting the <u>People Power Conference</u>², in Copenhagen on the 28th and 29th of September, 2023. This global conference aims to deepen our understanding of the power and potential of social movements in the fight for climate justice, democracy & digital rights and peace & security. It will explore the importance of people and movements striving for a just world, where everyone can enjoy their fundamental human rights and offer concrete ways in which allies can best support social movements.

The conference will explore how social movements can be supported in the following areas:

- I. Institutional and Strategic Funding
- **II.** Solidarity and Protection by Decision Makers
- III. Solidarity by Civil Society Organisations
- **IV.** Capacity Strengthening

It is clear that the increasing interest in supporting social movements³ is related to the broader agenda of supporting locally-led development. In 2022 a long list of large bilateral donors and key foundations signed the <u>Donor Statement on Supporting Locally Led Development</u>⁴, which outlines three key commitments: 1) Shift and share power, 2) Work to channel high quality funding as directly as possible, and 3) Publicly advocate for locally led development. However, a key question which has received less attention so far, is what type of "local"? There is a risk that donors and foundations will simply replicate power dynamics and definitions of formal civil society organizations from the global North, which exclude activists and movements who represent broad constituencies and drive change locally.

There are plenty of findings from academic research on what works when supporting movements. Research suggests that support for <u>training activists and organizers is one of the</u>

¹ Hardy Merriman, *We Need People Power to Address a World in Peril,* (Washington: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict and ActionAid Denmark, 2023).

² www.ms.dk/en/people-power

³ Jonathan Hulland and Payal Patel, Ten Considerations for Human Rights Funders Engaging with Social Movements in 2019, (Inside Philanthropy, 2019).

⁴ https://www.usaid.gov/localization/donor-statement-on-supporting-locally-led-development

<u>most consistently positive forms of external movement support</u>⁵. Secondly, research shows that movements can be helped by external support to allied organizations, e.g. independent media, political parties and labour unions and therefore supporting the ecosystem around the movement matters. Lastly, research concludes that the local actors are the main reason for success, and external support, while important, is always secondary to local actors⁶.

This document highlights recommendations relating to movement support in the four aforementioned areas drawing from existing research and the expertise of organisations, entities or movements that attended a series of online roundtable dialogues hosted by ActionAid Denmark in August and September 2023.

This document will serve as an input to the Copenhagen People Power Conference and is therefore not a final product in and of itself but an important basis for further exploration and discussion, which will take place at the conference. With representatives from over 60 countries representing movements, governments, multilateral institutions, politicians, companies, CSOs, academia and media, the conference will be a space for dialogue across sectors to find better solutions together. The aim is therefore to further qualify, detail and add to the recommendations in this document at the Copenhagen People Power Conference, which will result in a final report and continued events and dialogue with the purpose of external stakeholders becoming even better allies of social movements in the long run. Thank you for joining us on this important journey.

⁵ https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/external-support-for-nonviolent-campaigns/

⁶ Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail*, (Washington: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021)

I. INSTITUTIONAL AND STRATEGIC FUNDING

The donor community plays a critical role in the support of social movements. Some of the most recurrent themes include the importance of multi-year operational support, reducing administrative and reporting requirements for movement grantees, so that they are appropriate for movement work, managing risk and ensuring coordination among donors. Direct support to social movements and grassroots organizing took up an average of 3% of all human rights funding from 2011-2019⁷, so it is in many ways a new and underfinanced area.

Each donor has to go through its own learning process of how to become a better ally, and how to establish the most effective ways of supporting. Some base their work on a typology of movement growth and phases⁸. Some have specialized movement analytical tools⁹ and M&E frameworks. However, there are learning materials out there to assist us on the journey. One of the most recent resources from 2023 is the <u>Toolkit: Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries</u>¹⁰ developed by the OECD DAC Donor working group on civil society. Also, Danida published a study in 2021 on how Denmark can better support informally organised civil society and social movements in developing countries¹¹.

We recommend the following:

FLEXIBILITY

Flexible donor funding has been identified as intrinsic in supporting social movements to navigate complex environments.¹²

- Donors need to be flexible when it comes to: 1) Expediting approval processes and planning outside of the normal planning cycle 2) flexible reporting requirements 3) streamlining accounting procedures 4) Establishing clear criteria to assess financial risks and 5) In the restrictions around where funds can be used and for what13.
- As a concrete example, donors should invest in building administration systems that can bear the burden of audit processes to ensure that movements are not restricted by requirements for receipts. As few funders can do this, intermediaries and community-based funders are valuable and should be included as a possible funding modality approach.
- There is a need to fund home-grown solutions that are able to channel tailored resources and support to different forms of citizen action at the grassroots level in settings with authoritarian regimes and severely limited civic space.
- Donors should strive to implement grantmaking practices that reflect local contexts and legislation. This includes the provision of funding to non-registered movements in contexts where it is difficult to register.

⁷ Benjamin Naimark-Rowse, Dollars and Dissent Donor Support for Grassroots Organizing and Nonviolent Movements, (Washington: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021) compiled from the 2011-2019 trend from the HRFN/Candid "Advancing Human Rights Dataset

⁸ Hardy Merriman, Patrick Quirk and Ash Jain, *Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave: A playbook for countering the authoritarian threat*, (Washington: Atlantic Council and International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2023).

⁹ American Jewish World Service, *Understanding Social Movements- Tools and Resources*, <u>https://ajws.org/our-impact/measuring-success/understanding-social-movements-tools-and-resources/</u> (Accessed: 20 September 2023).

¹⁰ OECD, Best Practices in Development Co-operation, (2023)

¹¹ https://um.dk/en/danida/results/eval/eval_reports/study-on-danish-support-to-informally

¹² Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail,* (Washington: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021).

¹³ OECD, Toolkit for Implementing the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, (2023).

HANDLING RISKS

Minimising Risks for Activists

- Intermediary funding organizations can play a key role in moving more and better resources for movements. This includes support that aims at proactively building the infrastructure, resources, networks, relationships, and processes to be prepared for emerging crises.
- Support through intermediaries can help to protect movements from the risk of cooption from donors and can maintain independence in real terms and in perception.
- Donors and recipients should prioritize trust as a foundational principle in their philanthropic relationship as movements need a level of protection and support.
- Donors need to listen to and elevate early warning signals from local organisers' analysis of potential risks as well as strategies to prevent the escalation of the crises.
- Due diligence must be taken by donors to ensure that funds go to the core leaders of movements instead of those that masquerade involvement.
- Donors should support movements in the battles they identify and share strategies and tactics together with guides for risk analysis and protection mechanisms.
- Communication methods must not compromise the safety of the movements.

Managing Risks for Donors

- When supporting social movements, it is particularly important to articulate values and communicate limitations and ambitions. Supporting movements can be highly political as many movements by nature are set to challenge the status quo and powerful institutions.
- Dedicate staff with adequate capacity, expertise and interest in movement work and consider relying on intermediaries for partnership and administrative management.
- Acknowledge and address the problem of "risk transfer", whereby donors want to work with movements but simply pass on the risk to others.
 - Assist frontline activists and movements in mapping and managing their own risks in a way that is meaningful to them (i.e. not in standard donor tools).
 - Provide adequate support to manage risks, where possible. Agree on roles and responsibilities between donors, intermediary organizations and other specialized partners. Acknowledge where it is not possible to provide support.
 - Intermediary organizations can be risk averse due to their own internal priorities, policies and compliance systems, but also due to the compliance requirements from the donors. Donors should accept and incentivize appropriate levels of risk-taking through support for intermediary organizations that take on risks on behalf of donors.
 - The latest Danida study suggests that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports its partners in more robust risk management mechanisms and mitigation strategies as an illustration of the donor's willingness to support the calculated risk that comes when supporting social movements.¹⁴

¹⁴ Skytte & Warburg, Study on Danish support to informally organised civil society and social movements in developing countries, (Denmark: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

DONOR COORDINATION, COLLABORATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Research shows that coordination among donors of external support is critical and can increase impact.¹⁵ Furthermore, uncoordinated external support to movements can cause harm.¹⁶

- Identify what processes, spaces, and structures must be developed to increase knowledge sharing, collaboration, and synergies for movement support in specific contexts.
- Knowledge sharing among movement-support funders and organisations consist of sharing information, discussing details and engaging in honest dialogue about tensions, differences and approaches. This requires high levels of trust.
- There is a need to establish funder's networks that create a wider ecosystem for supporting movements, with inspiration from existing networks providing this support in adjacent fields. Examples of existing spaces are the Lifeline Consortium, Human Rights Funders Network, Peace and Security Funders Network and the Building Responses Together network.
- The improvement of collaboration around pooled funds or strategies for support should be a priority across donor gatherings.
- Diversity in approach reduces the risk of 'group think' where all donors shift to new ways of working or support and focus energy on the same areas of work.
- Standardised reporting protocols are needed to provide data and insight into whether funding has gone to social movements and its efficacy. Donors should be responsible for compiling this data to ensure that grantees are not burdened.
- Further knowledge exchange is needed in the area of operational elements of supporting social movements and how money is moved on the ground.
- To avoid a shallow analysis when deducing common lessons from social movement support it is important to acknowledge that there are multiple variables relating to movements eg. geographical region, political context, culture, and cause.
- As mentioned above, supporting grassroots organising is a small percentage of all human rights funding and there tends to be a lack of understanding among many CSOs about what movements are. As a result, other actors can view movements as competition for resources and as "new players" that lack legitimacy. It is recommended that donors take on an active role in building bridges between movements/grassroots organisers and traditional civil society actors.

¹⁵ Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail*, (Washington: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021).

¹⁶ Benjamin Naimark-Rowse, *Dollars and Dissent Donor Support for Grassroots Organizing and Nonviolent Movements,* (Washington: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021).

II. SOLIDARITY AND PROTECTION BY DECISION MAKERS

Research has shown that support from decision-makers strengthens the legitimacy and reputation of social movements at local, national and international levels.¹⁷ This is especially urgent when movements are vilified and delegitimised by local and national governments due to being voices of dissent and speaking truth to power. Decision-makers can take concrete actions to show solidarity with social movements, as outlined in the following recommendations:

SOLIDARITY

- Governments should create a healthy civic space for youth and social movements to thrive. This involves developing a clear legal framework of social movement protection through the promotion of the freedom of expression and assembly and free media that can hold state actors accountable for issues activists face. Substantial pressure should also be put on regimes that violate these freedoms.18
- Governments should withdraw state support from autocrats to challenge the legitimacy of the regime's recent actions and deny it practical material or other assistance. This is exemplified by France's withdrawal of support for the Ben Ali government in Tunisia, and the United States' withdrawal of support from the Pinochet regime in Chile.19
- As consistency with movement support is important, decision-makers should make long-term commitments and support human rights and minorities across the board both in their national-, foreign- and aid policies.
- Decision makers must support social movements without co-opting their voices but rather amplifying the voices of movements. For example, visiting dignitaries can give the same priority to meetings with civil society including social movements as they do with foreign government officials.20
- When decision-makers share messages of support for activists facing crackdowns by authoritarian regimes on social media, hope can be sparked for the population affected.
- It is imperative that Embassy staff are aware of events on the ground and are in contact with grassroots actors as the timely expression of solidarity is impactful.
- Decision-makers can express in-person solidarity by marching in protests and pride parades at risk and supporting court cases through the attendance of embassy representatives.
- Social movements should be invited to participate in international fora so activists have a platform to speak directly to decision-makers. This will add to decision makers' knowledge of what is being defended, the core essence of the movement and the struggles they face. It will also ensure that information from the grassroots and movements is fed into human rights monitoring mechanisms.

¹⁷ Hardy Merriman, Patrick Quirk and Ash Jain, Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave: A playbook for countering the authoritarian threat, (Washington: Atlantic Council and International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2023).

¹⁸ Hardy Merriman, Patrick Quirk and Ash Jain, *Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave: A playbook for countering the authoritarian threat,* (Washington: Atlantic Council and International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2023).

¹⁹ Hardy Merriman, Patrick Quirk and Ash Jain, *Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave: A playbook for countering the authoritarian threat,* (Washington: Atlantic Council and International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2023).

²⁰ Hardy Merriman, Patrick Quirk and Ash Jain, *Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave: A playbook for countering the authoritarian threat,* (Washington: Atlantic Council and International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2023).

- General comments from the UN Human Rights Committee and other human rights specialists can facilitate public discussion and impact judicial decisions on human rights abuses.
- Social movements should be allowed to maintain their independence and be critical of political decisions while still receiving solidarity from decision-makers.
- Support should be given to people with activist backgrounds entering the political system to bridge the movements and institutional responses.

PROTECTION

- Governments should blacklist companies that use spyware to monitor civil society and social movements.
- Governments should build a system to protect social movements and the CSOs that support them from digital attacks by actors nationally or abroad.
- Politicians and governments should provide safety for social movement actors by issuing visas for temporary relocation to those who have been threatened.21
- When state protection is absent for social movements facing attacks, representatives of local embassies can offer safe spaces in the embassy or UN offices.22
- Multilateral institutions should pass resolutions about situations where freedoms are suppressed to put pressure on oppressive governments.
- Governments and other actors engaged in the internet infrastructure should commit resources to improve internet resilience and expand and develop solutions to counter internet shutdowns or get online access during electricity cuts, exams periods and humanitarian crises.23
- Tech platforms should build better escalation mechanisms to work with human rights defenders and social movements, especially regarding content moderation, account compromise and protection of accounts during political crackdowns. Tech platforms should also be more transparent regarding government requests to these platforms, especially the kind of information that is requested and if it is related to human rights or social movements and actions taken by them.

²¹ Global Focus, *Civic Space Recommendations to Danish Actors,* (Denmark: Global Focus, 2019).

²² Global Focus, *Civic Space Recommendations to Danish Actors,* (Denmark: Global Focus, 2019).

²³ Global Focus, Together for an Equal, Just and Democratic Digital World, (Denmark: Global Focus, 2022).

III. SOLIDARITY BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society organisations are key to providing successful support to social movements through solidarity. Solidarity from civil society should be transformative, meaning that it is not transactional or symbolic.²⁴ This requires CSOs to transfer power to the movements at the center of the struggle so that decisions respect the recommendations and wishes of the most directly impacted communities.²⁵ Social movements can be supported through solidarity from CSOs through the following actions:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS:

- The 'Do No Harm' principle should be central to CSO's solidarity with social movements.
- It is important to use the terminology and slogans of the people who created the movement instead of imposing CSO language to maintain the essence of the movement.
- The logos of CSOs should not be included in social movements' work and credit should not be claimed for the work completed at the grassroots level.
- CSOs should not be the loudest in the room when supporting social movements and should play a listening and facilitating role. Instead of speaking for social movements, CSOs should amplify activists' voices internationally in times when social movements will face attacks for speaking up.
- CSOs can build pressure on key targets internationally through statements to embassies and regional and international bodies and gathering in protest in front of the embassies of the oppressive regime.26
- CSOs should not NGOise social movements through reporting requirements as this can damage the organic state of the movement and can result in security risks for activists.
- The relationship between social movements and CSOs should be viewed as symbiotic. CSOs can help social movements in overcoming obstacles that they typically face due to their absence of formal registration (eg. requesting a meeting with decision-makers often requires papers). Conversely, social movements can surmount barriers that CSOs that are constrained by legal requirements cannot (eg. supporting a political candidate).
- CSOs can protect social movement representatives by enhancing rapid response mechanisms and providing safe spaces, especially during the contraction phase where there is increased fear, suspicion and attempts to infiltrate the movements.
- It is important that CSOs assist in monitoring human rights violations and documenting crackdowns as social movements often do not have time to gather data when participating in work on the ground.
- Programmes should be based on context as opposed to donor requests. As the issues tackled by social movements are dynamic, CSOs should listen to movements to understand what they need in their specific and changing contexts.

²⁴ ActionAid Denmark, Building a Movement Mindset: A Guide for Civil Society Organisations, (Copenhagen: ActionAid Denmark, 2023).

²⁵ Solidarity Is, *Principles of Transformative Solidarity Practice*, https://solidarityis.org/our-work/toolsresources/principles-of-transformative-solidarity-practice/ (accessed: 1 September 2023).
²⁶MOVE, *How we Support Social Movements*, (Denmark: ActionAid, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:

- Social movements should look at CSOs not only as an entity but as individuals that they can collaborate with and build person-to-person relationships that can drive sustainable change.
- Movements should build a clear picture of their values, aims and morals and communicate which of these are non-negotiable. Therefore, if CSOs raise concerns, they can find a solution on some points without compromising their core values.

IV. CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Research has highlighted the importance of educational, skill-building and training efforts in external support to social movements.²⁷ It has been found that "training seems to effectively support nonviolent campaigns more consistently than any other form of assistance".²⁸ While we could address many different aspects of capacity strengthening, we have decided to focus on a few areas that are of particular interest during these times. We recommend the following:

WHEN DO WE SUPPORT, WHY AND HOW?

- Movements should be supported throughout their lifecycle and not just at their peak. Capacity strengthening support should be designed so it is targeted to the various stages of the life cycle. For example, see the <u>GOLD programme</u>²⁹.
- Support should be provided based on the movements' own analysis of where they are in their lifecycle and what types of support are useful to them. For example, see this <u>Cycle Matrix³⁰</u> and the Beautiful Trouble <u>Movement Compass Tool³¹</u>.
- For capacity strengthening to be effective, CSOs must hire staff with knowledge and experience in organising and movement building.³² In some cases, the most useful support may be to provide mentorship arrangements from other movement leaders.
- There needs to be deliberate coordination between actors like CSOs, activists, donors and supporters to ensure that campaigns are accompanied through their journey and remain locally rooted but globally connected.
- New knowledge should be developed and shared through specific case analysis and research collaboration to highlight what social movements recognise as the most effective support for their goals in their experience.
- Providing tools for how to organise people, build leadership, assess and develop security plans and develop strong campaigns and creative actions has proven successful. This can be through self-paced online courses, webinars and workshops, or skill-building sessions and in-person trainings.³³
- Tactics and strategies for civil disobedience and creative activism should be translated and circulated online on secure channels to help people organise and mobilise. The

²⁷ Hardy Merriman, Patrick Quirk and Ash Jain, *Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave: A playbook for countering the authoritarian threat*, (Washington: Atlantic Council and International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2023).

²⁸ Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail,* (Washington: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021), p.5.

²⁹ ActionAid, <u>https://gold-actionaidlearning.talentlms.com/</u> (accessed: 15 September 2023).

³⁰ Movement Net Lab, <u>https://networkweaver.com/product/toolkit-for-self-organizing/</u> (see Worksheet – Making Waves, Riding the Cycle: The Movement Cycle).

³¹ Beautiful Trouble, <u>https://beautifultrouble.org/compass</u>, (accessed: 15 September 2023).

³² ActionAid Denmark, Building a Movement Mindset: A Guide for Civil Society Organisations, (Copenhagen: ActionAid Denmark, 2023).

³³ ActionAid Denmark, Building a Movement Mindset: A Guide for Civil Society Organisations, (Copenhagen: ActionAid Denmark, 2023).

Activist Collective <u>Beautiful Trouble free online toolbox</u>³⁴ is an excellent example of the sharing of tools for non-violent creative activism and movement building. Tools have been translated into nine languages and can quickly be collected and distributed upon request.

- Long-term mentors should be assigned to movements to help the movement expand, nurture new leaders, survive short-term losses and develop a culture that reflects their identity and goals.³⁵
- CSOs should invest in emotional literacy to provide psychological support for social movements through the development and application of tools and skills for weathering repression.³⁶
- CSOs should select movements to work with that align with their mission, expertise, values and available resources with the objectives and characteristics of the movement.³⁷
- Materials and programs should be developed and adapted in collaboration with local activities to ensure that language, media and form are accessible.

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

- Efforts should be put towards building a global community of capacity strengtheners for social movements. This includes facilitating the culture and habits of knowledge sharing that are not tied to specific project deliverables. An example of this could be the supporting convenings that enable organisations to learn from each other.
- Agility and flexibility are needed from CSOs and donors to ensure that work with the same activists can be continued. Movements should be thought of as "processes" rather than "projects" where the work doesn't start or end in January/December.
- It is important to map the specializations and type of work that each capacity provider organisation is doing to facilitate collaboration to avoid replication.
- There is a need to develop research with case studies from the perspective of capacity strengtheners.
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning should be movement-building oriented and focus on cases, curious and thick descriptions of changes in relations and changes within, told in formats that cater for storytelling that engages, rather than solely focusing on numbers of activists trained or activities held.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

These recommendations provide a starting point for how external stakeholders can best support social movements through funding, capacity strengthening and solidarity. During the Copenhagen People Power Conference, representatives of social movements, governments, multilateral institutions, politicians, companies, CSOs, academia and media, will continue this conversation. Together they will link and test the recommendations in relation to concrete examples, lived experiences, geopolitical contexts and local realities.

³⁴ Beautiful Trouble, <u>https://beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/</u>, (Accessed: 25 September 2023).

³⁵ ActionAid Denmark, Building a Movement Mindset: A Guide for Civil Society Organisations, (Copenhagen: ActionAid Denmark, 2023).

³⁶ Phil Wilmot, Sustaining Social Movements, (Global Platforms- ActionAid, 2020).

³⁷ ActionAid Denmark, Building a Movement Mindset: A Guide for Civil Society Organisations, (Copenhagen: ActionAid Denmark, 2023).