



ForumCiv, Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa

Building long-term partnership in
Eastern and Southern Africa





The case study on **ForumCiv** is part of a series contributing to a larger research on intermediary organizations. [You can find all the details here.](#)

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FORUMCIV is identified as a locally registered organization whose primary goal is regranting, created through the support of a single donor.*



*We have identified 4 different models on how intermediary organizations work. [To learn more, visit us](#)



01. How did they start?

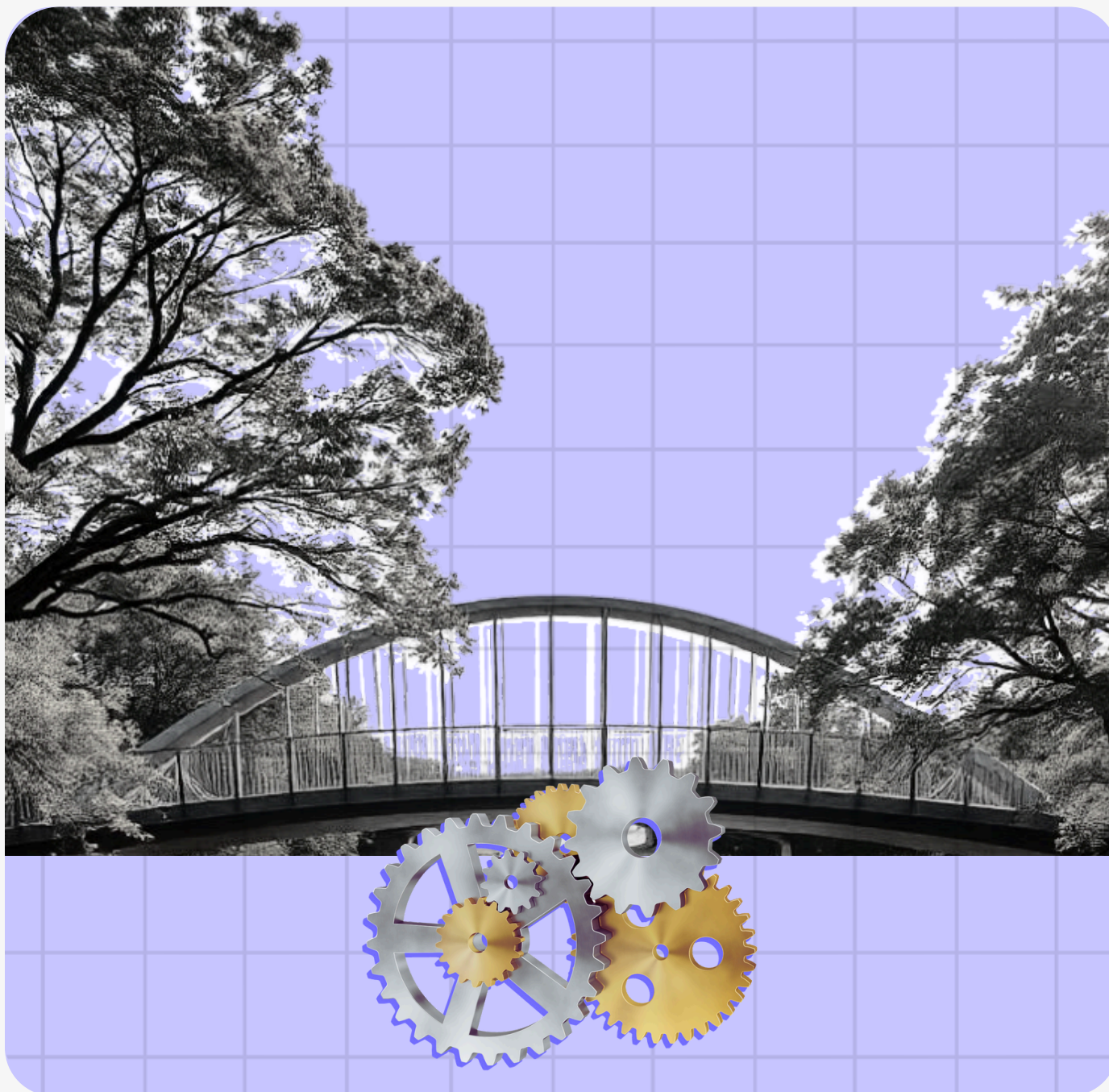


Founded in 1995, ForumCiv is Sweden's largest civil society platform, encompassing around 200 organizations. Main funding came from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). It has a global presence with six offices, including a **strategic office in Kenya established in 2008, which became a regional hub for Eastern and Southern Africa in 2017.** This change responded to a strategy of localization, in which the regional office is locally led and governed, receiving support from the global office when needed (going “glocal”). The regional hub for Eastern and Southern Africa coordinates sub-granting, develops new programs and partnerships, and engages with local and international donors. Its activities focus on strengthening civil society, promoting democracy and human rights, ensuring gender equality, and advocating for environment and climate justice across the region.

*In this case study, any mention of ForumCiv refers to the Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa. More information on this organization is available [here](#).



02. How do they define themselves?



Jackson Obare, regional manager, shares that ForumCiv is a “long-term partner **that creates alliances**” with local **organizations and changemakers**. They perceive themselves as an intermediary organization that **manages regranting, capacity facilitation, and innovation**. Their role goes beyond financial management, as the organization sees itself as an integral part of civil society and fulfills multiple roles in the pursuit of its priorities. ForumCiv also receives funding to do direct implementation. This dual role gives them a unique insight into the challenges organizations receiving funding face when implementing, reporting, and adapting to new challenges.



03. How does ForumCiv work in Just and Equitable Governance?

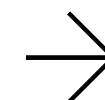
ForumCiv's regional office for Eastern and Southern Africa and its grantee partners work in four main areas: a) human rights and democracy, b) gender equality and equity, c) environment and climate change, and d) migration and development. **They seek to identify and address the interconnected challenges on these topics, basing their actions on the particularities that exist at the local, subnational and national level.** Even though their activities and strategies are diverse, **advocacy is at the heart of their work.** They aim to influence decision-making processes and shape more inclusive and just policies in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Furthermore, ForumCiv advances just and equitable governance by **implementing a community-based approach that aims to recover and expand the existing capacities and knowledge of the communities** to address the challenges they identify as priorities. This is the base of the methodological approach they use in all their interventions, called the Right(s) Way Forward Methodology (RWF). **The RWF aims to integrate gender, environmental, and human rights perspectives in all actions** by implementing community workshops to discuss and address how these topics are cross-cutting. More details in this approach are discussed in Section 3 below.





Moreover, accountability is a core element of their actions, including how they report on their activities and funding and how their grantee partners report on their activities and outcomes. They emphasize vertical accountability among organizations and to the beneficiaries. Transparency is prioritized, particularly internally and towards their allies, partners, and grantees. They have established mechanisms so that anyone within the grantee partners and beneficiary communities can report actions that undermine transparency or accountability or contradict the organization's principles.



04. How do they fund?



THE RIGHT(S) WAY FORWARD (RWF) METHODOLOGY

ForumCiv has a community-based approach when it comes to funding. To identify the priorities and challenges in specific communities, they implement the Right(s) Way Forward (RWF) Methodology. The RWF “is an adaptable and flexible process which follows a tried, tested and proven methodology of exercises and concepts to create sustainable, community-driven change” (ForumCiv, n.d.). The RWF Methodology entails two phases. The first one, called Community Mobilization, is intended for the community to come together and outline their prioritized challenges, as well as the change they want to achieve in a specific period, all reflected in a Community Action Plan (CAP). The second phase, called Dialogue for Change, aims to increase interaction, knowledge exchange, and dialogue among the different stakeholders to further the joint agreements presented in the CAP. Furthermore, RWF fosters local ownership, tailoring solutions to community-defined challenges, and encouraging mobilization for positive change. Local partners are trained in the RWF methodology to promote vertical accountability and empower community advocacy.

*More details of the Right(s) Way Forward Methodology [here](#)



IDENTIFYING GRANTEE PARTNERS

The RWF methodology allows ForumCiv to identify communities' needs. This identification is a prerequisite for fund allocation. Because the RWF dictates the funding logic, ForumCiv does not engage in open calls. Instead, the **RWF methodology promotes co-creation processes, leading ForumCiv to work hand in hand with local organizations and communities to identify and propose possible solutions.** Moreover, program officers, who work closely in the territories, assist in structuring ideas for effective implementation, serving as a bridge between the local organizations and ForumCiv. This approach ensures that small grassroots organizations that are unfamiliar with traditional application processes are not excluded from granting opportunities. In this line, because of their localized knowledge, current grantee partners are key allies in identifying new networks and organizations whose visions and priorities align with those of ForumCiv.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

A committee is at the core of the grant decision-making process. This committee comprises representatives from various departments, such as finance and quality assurance, sourced from both local and international ForumCiv offices. Their diverse expertise enables a thorough evaluation of applications against donor requirements and organizational goals. Their assessment is based in several criteria: relevance of the proposed action, efficiency, effectiveness to address the challenge, cost-effectiveness, feasibility, sustainability and impact, and partnership and mutual learning. **Geographical dispersion is also considered, aiming to avoid concentration in Nairobi.** Based on the assessment, feedback is shared with the local organizations. **Program officers, who also assist in the initial processes for new partners, aid organizations in making adjustments.** They also maintain an open channel of communication between the local community and the committee. Only two proposals over the last five years have been declined, underscoring the effectiveness of the feedback process and ForumCiv receptiveness to different and alternative proposals in the regions.



SUPPORT BEYOND FUNDING

ForumCiv supports capacity strengthening, which is customized to meet the needs and requirements of each grantee partner. Initial assessment allows ForumCiv to identify strengthening strategies, which are complemented by the grantee partners requests. In this sense, for many grassroots organizations, efforts are focused on creating robust policies and internal structures that enable continuous growth and goal achievement. Additionally, ForumCiv facilitates networking opportunities for grantee partners, such as multi-sectoral forums where local organizations can connect with the private sector, local governments, and other civil society organizations. Through their support for organizational growth, ForumCiv aims to nurture long-term partnerships with their grantees



05. Who do they fund?



ForumCiv strategically supports a variety of organizations with a focus on ensuring geographical spread to prevent the concentration of resources solely in Nairobi. This includes prioritizing organizations that operate in marginalized areas and cater to underserved communities such as indigenous populations, youth, and gender non-conforming individuals. Currently, **ForumCiv's Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa supports 33 organizations in Kenya and five in Tanzania.** By fostering partnerships with these groups, ForumCiv promotes equity and inclusivity across different regions. Grants are awarded to a wide range of project proposals, from one to five years, and grant amounts ranging from US\$20,000 to US\$420,000. They utilize a tiered funding system designed to scale support based on an organization's development, allowing groups to progress from grassroots to national recognition. Tier I is the highest level, and Tier IV is the lowest:



TIER I

Organizations working at national level, which have reached capacities to do re-granting themselves. Five grantee partners fit this category.

TIER II

Small organizations that count with governance, accounting, and administrative systems, but still require further support to expand their work nationally.

TIER III

Nascent organizations that have never received any significant funding from any donor nor have they received activity-based funding. ForumCiv identifies and provide tools for them to strengthen their capacity and then provides funding. They are mostly grassroots organizations, and they require support to develop internal policies and structures.

TIER IV

Individuals considered change makers. Advocacy-based grants.

Furthermore, ForumCiv encourages innovative approaches among their partners, exemplified by their support for organizations utilizing art for social change and educational entertainment. Such initiatives, initially supported through technical assistance rather than direct funding, have demonstrated significant growth, securing multiple donors over time due to their proven impact and ForumCiv's endorsements.



06. Who funds ForumCiv?



ForumCiv is primarily funded by Sida. Additional funding comes from various donors including the European Union, the Ford Foundation (supporting social activism), and the Hewlett Foundation (focusing on social accountability in Kenya and Tanzania). **The organization's governance structure balances global oversight with localized autonomy.** At its core is a secretariat based in Stockholm that informs its board about global trends and strategic decisions while allowing regional offices, like the one in Kenya, significant operational independence. These regional offices have the capacity to receive direct funding, emphasizing ForumCiv's commitment to empowering local decision making and adapting to regional needs. Moreover, ForumCiv allocates its resources into four categories: personnel costs, operational costs, office costs, and sub-granting. Notably, percentages allocated to each of the categories vary yearly. For example, in 2021, sub-granting represented 37% of their budget, whereas personnel cost 35%.



07. Challenges

Jackson Obare, regional manager, reflected on how the global political and environmental challenges influence the operations and objectives that organizations such as ForumCiv aim for.

GEOPOLITICAL AND POLITICAL SHIFTS

Changes in donor countries' political landscapes, especially with shifts toward right-wing, nationalist policies, reduce international aid and impact funding availability for global community projects. Conflicts and political unrest in regions like Ukraine and Ethiopia disrupt planned funding and project implementation, leading to stalled or collapsed initiatives.

REGRESSIVE POLICIES RESTRICTING CIVIC SPACE

Tightened regulations and reduced civic freedoms create obstacles for collaboration and policy influence, especially in regions like Nairobi-Kenya, despite its relatively advanced legislative environment.

RESOURCE SHIFT DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

Climate-induced disasters divert funds toward immediate humanitarian aid, decreasing the availability of resources for long-term developmental and environmental projects.

RESTRICTED FUNDING

The increasing trend toward restricted funding limits the operational flexibility of grassroots organizations, challenging effective implementation and adaptation possibilities, when required.

TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCE LIMITATIONS

Insufficient resources to provide communities with technological tools hinder effective participation in digital spaces, crucial for modern development and civic engagement.



08. Recommendations for donors



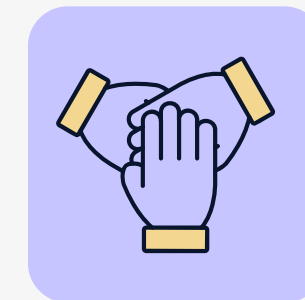
PROMOTE FLEXIBLE FUNDING MODELS

Encourage donors to provide more core support and unrestricted funding, which allows organizations to adapt rapidly to changing contexts and needs at the grassroots level.



INCREASE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

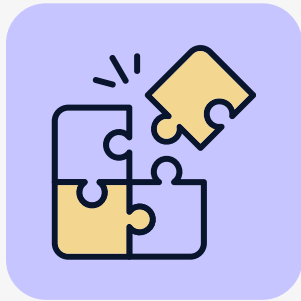
Allocate larger resources for essential infrastructure, such as technological devices at the community level, to enhance operational capacity and outreach.



FOSTER DONOR FLEXIBILITY AND COLLABORATION

Support donors who are adopting flexible approaches to philanthropy that emphasize collaboration over control, thus reducing barriers to funding access and enhancing the effectiveness of philanthropic efforts.





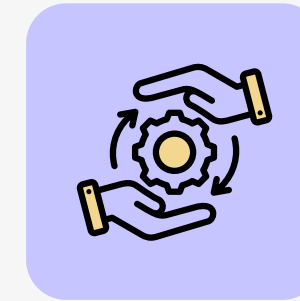
ENHANCE COORDINATION AMONG DONORS

Implement strategies to improve donor coordination to prevent overlapping investments and ensure resources are optimally allocated to create the intended impact without redundancy.



ADDRESS POWER IMBALANCES AND ENCOURAGE CO-CREATION

Work towards balancing power dynamics between donors and recipients by fostering a culture of cooperation and co-creation. This involves aligning donor and partner priorities and recognizing the operational and contextual knowledge of local entities.



SHIFT FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND DECISION-MAKING POWER

Deliberately shift more financial resources and decision-making power to local organizations, enhancing their autonomy and enabling them to make timely decisions based on ground realities. This approach should respect the partnership dynamics, treating local entities as equal stakeholders in development efforts.





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[DETAILS HERE](#)