# FORUS STRATEGY 2021-2025

## A POSITIVE AGENDA FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## A STRATEGY FOR AN EVOLVING NETWORK

This 2021-2025 Strategy was developed throughout 2019 and the beginning of 2020, in a context where uncertainty and instability affected the lives of many in all the countries where Forus members work. While the strategy was in the process of being finalized, the COVID-19 pandemic brought into clear view the global nature of crises, our limited ability to foresee them, and the necessity for global solidarity to offer hope, joint solutions, and to build a new future grounded in a shared conviction that every life matters, regardless of age, gender, nationality, ethnic background, sexual orientation, migrant status or any other identity marker. The limits of the current economic and dominant "development" model, as well as the resulting inequalities between and within societies, are now even more apparent. The COVID-19 pandemic also confronts us with the interlinked nature of the threats facing people and their livelihoods and those which are pushing ecosystems to breaking point in the current climate crisis.

The extent of the consequences of this crisis will not be known for many more months. The impacts on people across the world will unfold and continue to change our societies for years to come. In light of this, civil society will need to rethink and adapt continuously to the changes in context. And more than ever, civil society must exert their power to change things for the better.

The present document reaffirms the role of civil society and set outs a positive agenda for 2021-2025, with the goal of promoting inclusive and sustainable societies, led by Forus as a global network. The Strategy recognizes the strengths of our current ways of working and projects into the future with an approach anchored in our values. With only a decade left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030, we believe that civil society has a crucial role to play in an interconnected world facing increasingly complex global challenges, and the risk of climate catastrophe. We recognize that alliance-building and collaboration will be determining factors to position civil society as a key actor of governance at all levels, to promote human rights, and to build an inclusive and sustainable world.

In the spirit of our participatory ways of working, Forus' 2021-2025 Strategy was developed through a collaborative and consultative process involving Forus members and partners in 2019-2020 (see Annex 1). It builds on findings from external evaluations undertaken in 2018 and 2019, as well as on Forus' members' reflections around the global trends expected to impact on civil society. While this paper sets out the direction of travel until 2025, over this period Forus is committed to pursuing inclusive conversations with members about evolving priorities and needs, to determine the continued pertinence of the network's strategic approach and adapt it where necessary. Forus will seek agile and flexible ways of working, which strengthen civil society's ability to unite around a positive agenda. New members of the network will also have the opportunity to shape its strategic direction, to reflect the broadening diversity of Forus.

**TOGETHER AS A GLOBAL NETWORK OF CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORMS, FORUS WILL LINK DIVERSE COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS TO GLOBAL ACTIONS, AROUND A COMMON AGENDA FOR INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES.**

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF FORUS

Forus is a young network, founded as an informal alliance of national NGO platforms and regional coalitions in 2008 at an international conference in Paris gathering civil society organizations from 82 countries. The network was formalized in 2011 as the International Forum of National NGO Platforms (FIP-IFP), during its First General Assembly in Dakar. 2015 was a landmark year for us, particularly with the organization of the second General Assembly and the adoption of the 2016-2020 Strategy. In 2017, we became an independent organization legally registered in France. In 2018, we renewed our identity and image, and FIP-IFP became Forus. We also developed the strapline **"Connect – Support – Influence"** to guide our action and communication.

Forus has evolved from an informal network of platforms and coalitions, to a globally structured network. **Today, Forus represents 69 National Platforms and 7 Regional Coalitions.**

Our members, partners and allies have enabled Forus to become a recognized and influential network, promoting global governance and key development policies affecting the planet and its people. Our growth as a network was also made possible thanks to partnerships with the European Commission and the French Development Agency. As we launch into a new strategic phase, we intend to build on and celebrate our legacy, continuing to play a pioneering role through the leadership of our members, and expanding the spirit of collaboration and solidarity which guides our action.

Iara PIETRICOVSKY - Forus Chair, ABONG, Brazil.

**2011**
**Forus is formalised
in Dakar, Senegal**

**2018**
**IFP-FIP becomes Forus and adopts
a new visual identity**

**2021-2025**
**A positive agenda for
civil society**

**2008**
**Founded as an
informal network**

**2017**
**IFP-FIP formally registers
in France**

# ACHIEVEMENTS: 2016-2020

In 2019, Forus commissioned an external evaluation of our progress, in the context of the implementation of our 2016-2020 Strategy. Forus was recognised for our successes in reinforcing members' capacities, building new partnerships, strengthening policy and advocacy, and gaining more national and international visibility. Forus made strong progress towards the three objectives of the 2016-2020 strategy as follows:

**Forus strengthened our institutional, organizational and operational capacities:** Forus' organizational and operational capacities were reinforced through a new identity, a stronger Secretariat and governance. Forus expanded its membership base: from 68 members in 2016 to 76 today. New global partnerships were established and Forus supported members in becoming legitimate actors in global advocacy.

**Forus progressed towards becoming an influential international actor and a reference for capacity development of NGOs:** Forus made considerable progress towards becoming a reference for capacity development and learning. Forus supported regional and national partnerships, in a flexible manner to respond to the varying needs of Regional Coalitions and National platforms. Forus motivated CSOs to explore the link between their work and Agenda 2030 and build their advocacy, ensuring the implementation of Agenda 2030 in their regions. More than two thirds of Forus members are active in the monitoring of Agenda 2030. The Leadership Development Program stimulated debate and peer exchange on leadership, social change and the evolving roles of civil society, with women and men leaders of National platforms and Regional Coalitions from over 35 countries. One Leadership Development Program cycle for women leaders allowed deeper understanding to emerge around women's leadership in civil society. The Program also motivated members of Forus to develop capacity building in their regions and countries.

**Forus increased our impact and advocacy work at national, regional and global levels:** Forus launched advocacy initiatives including facilitating participation of members and organizing meetings and events to advocate for increased political accountability and effective engagement of civil society, for example during the High-Level Political Forums (HLPFs), linked to SDG 17 and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes. As such, 90% of Forus members report having been consulted by government officials or parliamentarians on key topics such as the role of civil society. Forus also shaped the Global Initiative as a blueprint for the mobilization, self-organization and increased connectivity of civil society as a key player in a reformed international multilateral system.

# 2. WHO WE ARE
## A NETWORK LED BY ITS MEMBERS & FOR ITS MEMBERS

**Forus is a member-led network of national and regional civil society platforms, united by a vision and mission:**

## OUR VISION

A vibrant global network of credible and effective NPFs and Regional Coalitions making a major collective contribution to Development, Peace, Democracy and Justice. We strongly believe that active and collaborative participation can contribute to influencing local and global negotiations and building a more effective international community for promoting a fair and sustainable world, where the most vulnerable populations have a voice, human rights are respected, and inequalities and injustice are fought.

## OUR MISSION

A world-wide partnership aiming at having a positive impact on poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities, and promotion of social justice and peace around the world. Our mission consists of creating the conditions and capacities for collaborative work among our members, influencing global/international public policies affecting development and democracy, while strengthening the capacity of Regional Coalitions, national platforms and their members to engage at both national and regional/international levels in official negotiations, deliberations and public mobilization.

# OUR MEMBERS

Our members collectively represent over 22,000 organizations including national NGOs, international NGOs and CSOs working on development. They create a space for collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. Our members are at the heart of Forus. They include 69 National platforms and 7 Regional Coalitions. National platforms are umbrella organizations with national-level NGOs and CSOs as members. The National platforms are a platform to provide a common response to development, humanitarian and environmental challenges. They are representative of the diversity of the progressive movement within the country, with a strong expertise on national and international governance and democratic participation. They are also multi-thematic, working on justice, health, gender equality, disaster risk reduction, defense of human rights, climate action and environmental protection, sustainable resources management, etc. National platforms and Regional Coalitions review and update their focus areas on an ongoing basis, to respond to the emerging priorities of their member organizations, and to adapt to new trends and needs.

The **69 national platforms members of Forus** include:

- **27** from **Africa**
- **15** from **Europe**
- **11** from **Latin America**
- **9** from **Asia**
- **4** from **the Pacific**
- **2** from **North America**
- **1** from **North Africa/Middle East**

Clotaire Loubelo Nsiloulou, Council member CCOD, Congo.

# National platforms' core roles include:

- **Pooling of resources:** National platforms pool technical and physical resources including the sharing of information, communications and capacity development resources, allowing members to exchange services and expertise, and benefit from economies of scale.
- **Building joint positions:** National platforms mobilize the expertise of their members or external expertise to build and to promote collective positions. National platforms are particularly well-positioned to defend NGOs' space and identity and promote an enabling environment for civil society.
- **Advocacy and relations with other actors:** On behalf of their members, national platforms are organized to be the main intermediary with national, regional or international public authorities. National platforms can also have a mandate and role in the dialogue and interaction with the media, academics, private sector, trade unions, social movements and opinion leaders in general.

**The 7 regional coalitions members of Forus** constitute a space for national platforms to come together and participate in regional initiatives. The 7 Regional Coalitions cover West Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Pacific. Having similar core missions as the platforms, they play a crucial role to catalyze transnational collaborations and empowering the voice of the sector at regional level. Like National platforms, Regional Coalitions lead and participate in Forus' activities, including through specific working groups, such as the Agenda 2030 Working Group and the Capacity Development Reflection group.

# FORUS IN NUMBERS

## 69
**National Platforms members of Forus**

## 7
**Regional Coalitions**

## 22K+
**Represented NGOs globally**

## 5
**Active in 5 continents**

# A UNIQUE MODEL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION

Forus is a unique global network, bringing together thousands of organizations and networks representing countries and regions across the world, all sharing a positive agenda for inclusive and sustainable societies. As a global network, we acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of our membership, while recognizing the value in speaking collectively and finding a common voice. We work simultaneously at national, regional and international levels, recognizing that each level is important: local change won't be achieved without global change and vice versa. Our ambition is to expand our membership base to ensure better geographical representation and inclusion, while ensuring the quality of engagement and interactions.

## OUR ROLE

In an increasingly challenging and turbulent world for civil society, Forus plays an important role in structuring and strengthening national platforms and Regional Coalitions to amplify their voice both on the local and global stage. We help create the links and strengthen capacities to support members build momentum to generate change. We catalyze civil society action, particularly focused on development NGOs.

Our role is three-fold:
- **We connect** national platforms and Regional Coalitions to build joint actions, learn from each other and fight for an enabling environment for CSOs.
- **We support** and develop the capacities of our members for more effective participation in decision-making processes, using the network's collective intelligence and innovative approaches.
- **We influence** public policies by engaging in official negotiations, deliberations and public mobilizations at national, regional and international levels.

Tereeao Teingiia Kiribati - KANGO, Pacific.

## CONNECT        SUPPORT        INFLUENCE

# OUR LEGITIMACY

Our legitimacy is rooted in our members as the driving force of the network. Forus aims to empower members, including grassroots local organizations, to participate in spaces where their voices can be heard and their causes recognized.

Our work is complementary to the work of other groups and networks and we seek to facilitate dialogue between our members and other key development actors, resulting in relevant and synergetic coalitions. As an international network, the Forus model is based on three levels of civil society coordination: national, regional and international. Our added value is in connecting and working together across these levels.

# OUR VALUES

Our ways of working, both within the network and externally, are underpinned by the following values:

- **Horizontal relationships:** we work to empower members to take lead and join in action towards change, learning from each other's knowledge and experiences. We recognize the interdependencies within civil society and strive towards horizontal relationships.
- **Building trust:** we work as a network of peers, encouraging open and honest dialogue. Trust is an important resource in the network, allowing for both successes and limitations to be discussed. We create safe spaces for discussion for our members.
- **Mutual accountability:** we develop mechanisms for members to hold each other to account as peers, and our governance holds the Secretariat to account. We see accountability as an ongoing process.
- **Inclusion:** Every member has equal power to influence all processes. Our governance bodies are diverse in terms of language, gender and geographical representation. We listen and take into account diverse views, and make decisions in a collective way.
- **Independence of members:** Members' strategies and activities are independent of the influence of Forus' Secretariat and governance. Members remain fully autonomous in defining their strategies and positions.

Rita Leote - Plataforma ONGD, Portugal.
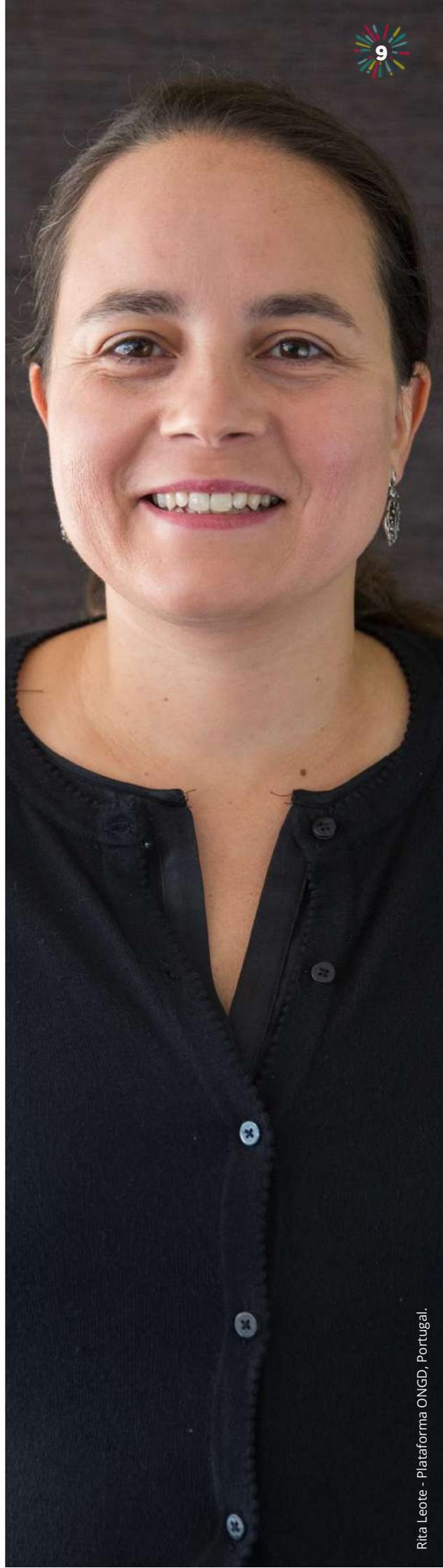
# OUR STRUCTURE

Our structure is designed to allow Forus to have strong leadership by members, and for decision-making to be emerging from governance bodies. We ensure that women and men from across all regions have the opportunity to contribute to Forus' governance, with a geographical and gender balance.

Our structure is composed of a Secretariat and Governance bodies:

- **A General Assembly** is the highest decision-making entity within the Forus network and is held every two years. The General Assembly consists of one representative from each national platform. As associated members, Regional Coalitions participate without an official vote.
- **A Council of 15 members** is renewed by a third every two years. Council members are elected on a regional basis by the members of the General Assembly.
- **An Executive Committee** is elected every two years by the Council, composed by a Chair, three Vice- chairs and a Treasurer.
- **The partially decentralised Secretariat** (Executive Team) consists of 6 staff: the Director, Finance and Administration Manager, Development Manager, Capacity Development & Membership Coordinator, Advocacy Coordinator and Communication Officer.

**I WAS VERY SURPRISED OF HOW DEEP WE WENT INTO UNDERSTANDING OUR WORK THROUGH LOOKING AT GLOBAL EXPERIENCES, SOCIAL CHANGE AND MODELS AND THEORIES OF CHANGE.**

- GLENN FARRED
Leadersip Development Program

# 3. CONTEXT

This section highlights both macro-trends and the specific trends affecting civil society and civic action that are foreseen to be most significant to Forus' work over 2021-2025. Global instability and rising threats to civic space will require a coordinated civil society response, and Forus will adapt our Strategy and actions as new risks and opportunities emerge.

# A CRISIS-PRONE AND VULNERABLE WORLD

The climate emergency is the defining challenge of our time, and its consequences are expected to be severe for the Earth and its inhabitants, particularly the most vulnerable people. Poverty remains an important issue affecting people across the globe, as economic inequality is rising rapidly worldwide. Conflicts are expected to multiply over resource scarcity. Political challenges to democratic governance are also emerging across the world, threatening recent advances for rights and diversity inclusion. Forus anticipates that the following trends will need to be monitored closely to adapt our action:

**Changing balance of global power:**
The global power balance is shifting as the world becomes more multi-polar. Global institutions and multilateral systems appear to be weakening. At the same time, efforts are increasing to shift the power within civil society towards local organizations, reinforced by the localization agenda of the humanitarian sector. While most states have converged around Agenda 2030, in practice many governments are not necessarily aligning their policies or strategies to the SDGs.

The role and influence of civil society, in particular local organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of progress towards SDGs remains insufficient.

**Climate emergency:** The world is living in a climate emergency. The science is clear: $CO_2$ levels are currently the highest for at least the last 3 million years, and the next decade requires us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% to have a chance to limit global warming to 1.5°C.2 While the impacts of climate change will affect everyone, vulnerable populations are most at risk. Combined with other trends such as urbanization, population growth and shifting migration patterns, greater and interlinked stresses will be felt in all aspects of life and society. Considerable increase in climate ambition is needed to mitigate emissions, increase adaptation measures and to deal with loss and damage. Aside from environmental CSOs, civil society has slowly come to terms with the implications of these changes and what it means for their own priorities. For example, in Fiji and Nepal, the civil society sector is coming together to respond to climate-related catastrophes and build disaster risk resilience.

**Crises and instability:** across all regions of the world, people are affected by crises and instability which threaten their livelihoods, their homes and their lives. Factors of instability are many, including violent conflict, health crises, natural disasters, and political instability. Many of these crises require sustained responses to protect human lives. In countries of the Middle East and central and west Africa, conflict, disasters and political instability are often cyclical and prolonged. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted in an unprecedented way the global reach and impact of crises, and the need for solidarity and coordinated responses. The pooling and sharing of resources, as seen between European, Asian and Latin American countries, will be key to face instability and crises. It is also key to recognize how crises have different impacts on different groups, often exacerbating violence against women, and hitting hardest the most vulnerable people in society.

**Decrease in poverty and a rise in inequalities:** While chronic poverty persists globally, economic development has contributed to lifting millions of people out of poverty: people living in extreme poverty has fallen from nearly 1.9 billion in 1990 to about 650 million in 2018[3]. However, the gap between the richest 1% and the other 99% of people continues to rise across the world, and risk being further exacerbated by future crises and runaway climate change. Women remain marginalized and discriminated, with significantly less access to resources than men. Many NGO platforms, from Portugal to South Africa to Brazil have raised the alarm about the inequalities increasingly faced.

To date, governments of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the multilateral development banks have largely driven the development model. International NGOs have only recently questioned and challenged the dominant development approach.

**Rise of populism and the threat to rights**: a global tendency towards the political right-wing, combined with the rise of populism, is threatening democratic rights. This has provided increasing power for the critics of civil society and reduced the opportunities for genuine participation in democratic life by citizens and representatives of civil society. For example, in Brazil, the United States and the Philippines, populists' leaders agenda is accompanied by a backlash on freedoms and rights, particularly targeting indigenous, religious, ethnic and LGBTQI+[4] minorities, as well as women's rights, migrants and refugees.

In the context of mass migration, the threat to asylum seekers is particularly acute, as observed from Europe to Central America.

# NEW RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

We enter our next strategic phase at a particularly challenging time for civil society that will require a positive and ambitious response from Forus. While citizens are mobilizing in new ways across the globe, and attacks to civic space are on the rise, civil society is nonetheless increasingly recognized as a key player in all societal issues. At the same time, the private sector is also increasingly identified as a partner for development. Some of the major trends related to civil society and civic action that will affect progress towards Forus' strategy include:

**Changing civil society space:** civil society in over half of the world's countries is facing serious restrictions on their freedom to engage, express themselves and be heard. With increased surveillance, persecution and even violence against civil society, many CSOs have come under attack, particularly those advocating on behalf of minorities, and for democratic rights. In the aftermath of disasters and crises, fundamental freedoms and rights are often further restricted. Human rights defenders and environmental defenders in Africa, Latin America, Asia and other parts of the world are targeted, as well as CSO representatives. In Mozambique, the Chair of the national NGO platform was assassinated while conducting an election observation mission in 2019. Technology advances have brought increased surveillance and new risks for civic space: for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, access to internet and text messages services has been limited during election periods and social media access has effectively been limited through excessive taxation in Uganda. At the same time, government change is allowing for opening new space for civil society in some countries like The Gambia.

**Civil society influence and recognition:** Civil society networks and platforms are gaining recognition as essential spaces for the convening of the diversity of actors working for social change. Official spaces and formal mechanisms for dialogue with civil society actors are increasingly being opened by international institutions, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the African Development Bank. The growing restrictions on civic space can be interpreted as a backlash against the influence of civil society. While the sector's impact and contribution to change are increasingly visible, obstacles linked to accessing funding limit organizations' ability to engage on the long-term.

**Questioning CSOs' connection to the grassroots**: the ability of organized civil society to represent citizens is questioned due to overlaps of mandates, growth of social movements and declining public engagement with CSOs. Digitalization and social media enable citizens to mobilize and advocate directly for their own and others' rights, without an intermediary. For social action, preference is moving towards the spontaneous, temporary and more disruptive action over long-term institutional engagement. Trust in established structures and their accompanying systems is decreasing. At the same time, CSOs remain an essential player in protecting citizen rights as some of the most trusted organizations in the world. They are also longstanding partners in dialogue with governments and able to engage in long-term advocacy and influence processes.

**Questioning the contributions of the private sector:** the private sector is increasingly identified as a key stakeholder with the potential to contribute towards the SDGs and to more ambitious climate action. Public-private alliance as well as corporate social responsibility programmes are growing. However, many traditional development actors observe a lack of checks and balances to ensure that private sector actions result in tangible progress towards the SDGs and to prevent greenwashing. In many countries such as Guatemala and South Africa, the development of large-scale monoculture and mining activities are stripping vulnerable people of their resources, contributing to poverty, dispossession and environmental destruction. At the same time, small businesses and the informal economy support many people in staying above the poverty line.

**Increasing interconnectedness of people and struggles:** civil society actors working in development, climate, health and human rights are increasingly linking their demands and actions, recognizing that challenges are interlinked, and solutions are mutually reinforcing. Development and humanitarian organizations have increased their commitment to bridge the development-emergency-peace nexus, which is increasingly reflected in the global responses of actors such as multilateral development banks, the European Union and the United Nations. To achieve transformative change, a more coordinated, synergistic civil society movement is required, working with policy-makers to shape systems and policies for a more inclusive and sustainable world. Multi-thematic networks and platforms have a key role to play to bring together diverse actors and create new windows for collaboration. For example, the national NGO platforms from the Czech Republic and Cambodia have come together to identify their common priorities and that of their respective members, identifying joint, mutually beneficial actions.

**Citizens fighting back:** social and youth movements are thriving despite restrictive contexts. Digital media and social networks have provided an opportunity for increased connectivity among citizens and facilitated the work of civil society to mobilize and give voice to millions of people. The #MeToo movement has risen against sexual harassment and assault; European citizens spontaneously mobilized in 2015 to welcome thousands of migrants and refugees; and youth are leading a movement on climate change across the world, inspired by a Swedish teenager, Greta Thunberg. Citizens organized in movements and action groups to successfully claim rights back across the world have included: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (civil society participation), Uruguay (civil society participation), India (LGBTI+ rights), Burkina Faso (women's rights) and Ireland (reproductive rights) etc.



Éva Bördős - HAND, Hungary.

# 4. FORUS STRATEGY FOR 2021-2025

## OUR GOAL

Forus' 2021-2025 Strategy recognises that our strength as a network lies in our diversity, and in our ability to link civil society action from the local to the global level. Forus was founded on the aspirations of CSOs, and particularly national platforms of NGOs, to come together and join forces. The 2021-2025 Strategy will continue taking forward this aspiration for a more connected, supported, and influential civil society. Our work will be organized around three strategic pillars of action: **Connect – Support – Influence**. We will work together, linking community aspirations to global ambitions, strengthening a vibrant global network of effective and influential Regional Coalitions and national platforms. We will strive for transformative change towards more inclusive societies for all people. In the context of the climate change emergency, we will place sustainability at the centre of our action, recognising that changes need to be made at all levels of society including within Forus. Our Strategy is therefore guided by one overall goal, which sets out our ambitious and positive agenda:

**Together as a global network of civil society platforms, Forus will link diverse community aspirations to global actions, around a common agenda for inclusive and sustainable societies.**

This goal is strongly rooted in Forus' overall vision for a more effective international community and for a fair and sustainable world, where the most vulnerable populations have a voice, human rights are respected, and inequalities and injustice are fought. It is anchored in our values, in particular inclusion and horizontality, allowing each person, regardless of gender, age or other identity marker to play a role and shape the network's positive agenda.

Timothy Odion - NNNGO, Nigeria.

# STRATEGY PILLARS

**FORUS' 2021-2025 STRATEGY IS ORGANIZED AROUND THE THREE PILLARS:**

**CONNECT – SUPPORT – INFLUENCE**

**ALL THREE PILLARS ARE INTERCONNECTED AND MUTUALLY REINFORCING, BUILDING ON EACH OTHER.**

## WE WILL MULTIPLY INTERCONNECTIONS AMONG FORUS MEMBERS AND WITH ALLIES TO COLLECTIVELY ACHIEVE GREATER IMPACT.

The **CONNECT Strategy Pillar** encompasses Forus' role as a network to promote and support different levels of connections among civil society actors globally. The promotion of strong links between members based on our shared values, our vision and the search for a common voice to advocate for a fairer and more sustainable world is the basis of our network's ethos. Connecting with allies & partners is an increasingly important aspect of our approach. Our work involves building tools and creating spaces for these connections to grow and flourish.

Inter-national links between CSOs allow our members to break out of traditional silos, to become aware of other contexts, learn from others, find new allies and to reach new audiences.

The diversity of our network means we bring together multiple perspectives from five continents - using our shared values to develop a common agenda. Our approach is inclusive: enabling marginalized and fragile organizations which are under attack to join a wider collective, to share a sense of belonging and to experience support and solidarity. We connect members to amplify their messages, including around urgent actions linked to attacks on civil society , or during emergencies such as during health crises and disasters. We remain committed to translating all our work in at least 3 languages to facilitate inclusion.

### Result areas:

**1.1** Sharing of experiences and peer learning among Forus members and with external partners have increased, leading to improved mutual understanding and learning.

**1.2** Greater collaboration and solidarity within civil society and with external allies are achieved through joint initiatives and partnerships, connecting local, national and global levels.

**1.3** The visibility of the Forus network, and members' activities within and outside the network have increased, leading to greater awareness of the positive role of civil society networks and platforms.

**1.4** Organisational governance, transparency and accountability are reinforced in the Forus network.

### Priority activities:

- Leverage members' priorities, expertise and thematic interests to enhance interaction between members
- Develop joint initiatives between members in the areas of advocacy, campaigning, communications and fundraising, including via new forms of joint collaboration and innovative consortium approaches.
- Enhance two-way communication with and between members of the Forus network.
- Reinforce governance and accountability systems and structures within Forus. Pilot alliances/collaborations with citizen-led movements in key thematic areas such as youth, gender and the environment.
- Develop mutually beneficial and enriching partnerships with civil society organizations, networks, academic institutions and private sector organizations.

## WE WILL STRENGTHEN
## THE CAPACITIES OF OUR MEMBERS TO REPRESENT
## NGOS AND CONVENE DIVERSE CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS.

The **SUPPORT strategy pillar** encompasses Forus' work on developing the capacities of our members and other civil society actors.

Our approach is based on peer-to-peer processes, including peer learning and knowledge exchange, pooling resources in a dynamic and multilingual environment. Focus areas and tools are driven by members' needs and expectations, which we assess on an ongoing basis. We aim to develop our members' technical and operational capacities, as well as their political role. We recognize the importance of fostering strong leadership in civil society, including women's leadership. We encourage member-led capacity development processes, in thematic areas corresponding to their expertise, and innovation to respond to complex challenges. The diversity of our membership allows us to capitalize on a broad range of experience and knowledge on different topics and contexts. We also work with new and emerging platforms and networks in countries where we do not have a member. We highlight success stories, communicate about innovation and share good practices, while seeking multiplier effects through joint work among Forus' members.

## Result areas:

**2.1** Members improve their and their members' competencies, capacities, and technical skills to have measurable and lasting impact on members' constituents and communities.
**2.2** Members effectively convene NGOs, acting as a representative voice of civil society in different fora and defending an influential and accountable civil society.
**2.3** Members' internal functioning and processes are strengthened, towards becoming sustainable entities for the coordination of civil society
**2.4** Emerging civil society platforms and networks are supported by Forus in countries where we do not currently work.

## Priority activities:

- Support the continuous and member-led capacity development of Forus' members in areas based on their priorities.
- Support is political (through joint initiatives and positioning of Forus' governance), technical (including peer learning, exchanges among members, bringing external expertise, etc.) and/or financial (through funding mechanisms that encourage the systematization of the knowledge existing in the network).
- Pilot new funding mechanisms that foster innovation and feed into the collective knowledge of the network, including for rapid response for crises and for emerging national CSO platforms.
- Create tools to showcase and build on members' expertise, increasing visibility and knowledge on the impact of civil society networks, and building the capacities of members and their own members.
- Develop online and face-to-face spaces for member learning, such as the Leadership Development Program, as well as accompanying members in the replication of these spaces to their members.
- Test new and innovative approaches to capacity development with Forus members, especially approaches that tap into member expertise
- Create a knowledge and learning hub for members to share experiences and build connections.

## WE WILL ADVOCATE WITH AND EMPOWER NGOS TO EXERCISE MORE INFLUENCE ON INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND POLICIES.

The **INFLUENCE Strategy Pillar** focuses on Forus' advocacy actions to promote inclusive and sustainable societies around the world. Our advocacy is strongly driven by our shared values and by our members' priorities and expertise. Forus and our members promote civil society as a key actor of international governance, challenging the development model which fosters inequality and threatens ecosystems. We seek strategic alliances outside the Forus network to amplify our messages. Our advocacy is connected to global priorities such as Agenda 2030, and particularly to SDGs 16 and 17. The broad diversity of Forus' membership means that its advocacy also considers priorities linked to regional and national contexts. The role of the Forus network is to ensure that national perspectives and priorities influence the regional and global levels, and vice versa. A main focus of Forus advocacy is to realize a common agenda for positive and transformative change, to create a more sustainable world, and to promote an enabling environment for civil society everywhere. We use our collective leverage across regions and countries to influence key political processes. We are simultaneously active on many different levels, working with community leaders at grassroots levels, government at local and national levels, and with regional and global institutions such as the United Nations.

## Result areas:

**3.1** Civil society voices and an enabling environment for civil society are promoted at national, regional and international levels.

**3.2** Public policies and policy development processes relevant to Agenda 2030, climate change and civil society participation are influenced by Forus and our members.

**3.3** The resourcing of civil society for sustainable development is enhanced by Forus through the development of key positions and effective advocacy informed by high quality, participatory research.

**3.4** Forus contributes to the development of a new, more inclusive multi-stakeholder model of international governance, in which civil society is empowered to participate on an equal footing with other stakeholders.

## Priority activities:

- Develop joint advocacy and communication initiatives which Forus members lead at national, regional and international levels, particularly related to SDGs 16 and 17, and the follow-up and review mechanisms of Agenda 2030.
- Develop advocacy linked to financing for development, access to resources for CSOs and research into financial sustainability models.
- Develop advocacy linked to climate action and environmental sustainability, partnering with and amplifying initiatives from partners Support Forus members to promote an enabling environment for civil society and expand their civic space.
- Advocate for and support the implementation of the 'Global Initiative' with partners and allies as a blueprint for the mobilization, self-organization and increased connectivity of civil society
- Participate in multi-stakeholder partnerships and build joint advocacy and communication initiatives with like-minded progressive allies.
- Map members' expertise and experience in advocacy directed at different international institutions including development banks.
- Contribute to developing a new narrative on the role of civil society, strengthening the image and influence of the sector.

# 5. STAKEHOLDERS

Forus 2021-2025 strategy builds on existing relations and partnerships with stakeholders, while aiming to reach out to a new group of actors. Forus will connect with relevant stakeholders from the national, regional and global levels, supporting deeper links and partnership-building that is aligned with our values. Our allies are the key partners with whom we will develop operational alliances to further our objectives. We also identify the key targets for our advocacy work, and the donors that could contribute to resourcing Forus. While pursuing these alliances, Forus will ensure that we maintain our autonomy and independence as a civil society network.

## ALLIES

Forus' members and their members are the key allies in relation to our work. We will aim to develop greater collaboration between Forus and our members, as well as with their own members. We will work in complementarity with current civil society partners such as CIVICUS, Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD), the TAP Network, Together 2030 and the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE). We will encourage and support our members to work collaboratively with citizen and social movements to deepen our connections to the grassroots level. Forus will pilot an alliance or collaboration with a citizen-led movement in the area of youth, gender and/or climate/environment. Forus will build new partnerships with universities and think tanks, as well as trade unions and cooperatives to support capacity development activities and a more robust evidence base for our advocacy work, including the role of civil society and what constitutes an enabling environment for it.

Roselle Rasay   - CODE, Philipinnes.

# ALLIES

CITIZENS& SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

UNIVERSITIES & THINK TANKS

MEMBERS OF MEMBERS

**FORUS**

**MEMBERS**

OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY

UN AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES

REGIONAL BODIES

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

EU BODIES

PRIVATE SECTOR

DEVELOPMENT BANKS

NATIONAL MEDIA

**DONORS**

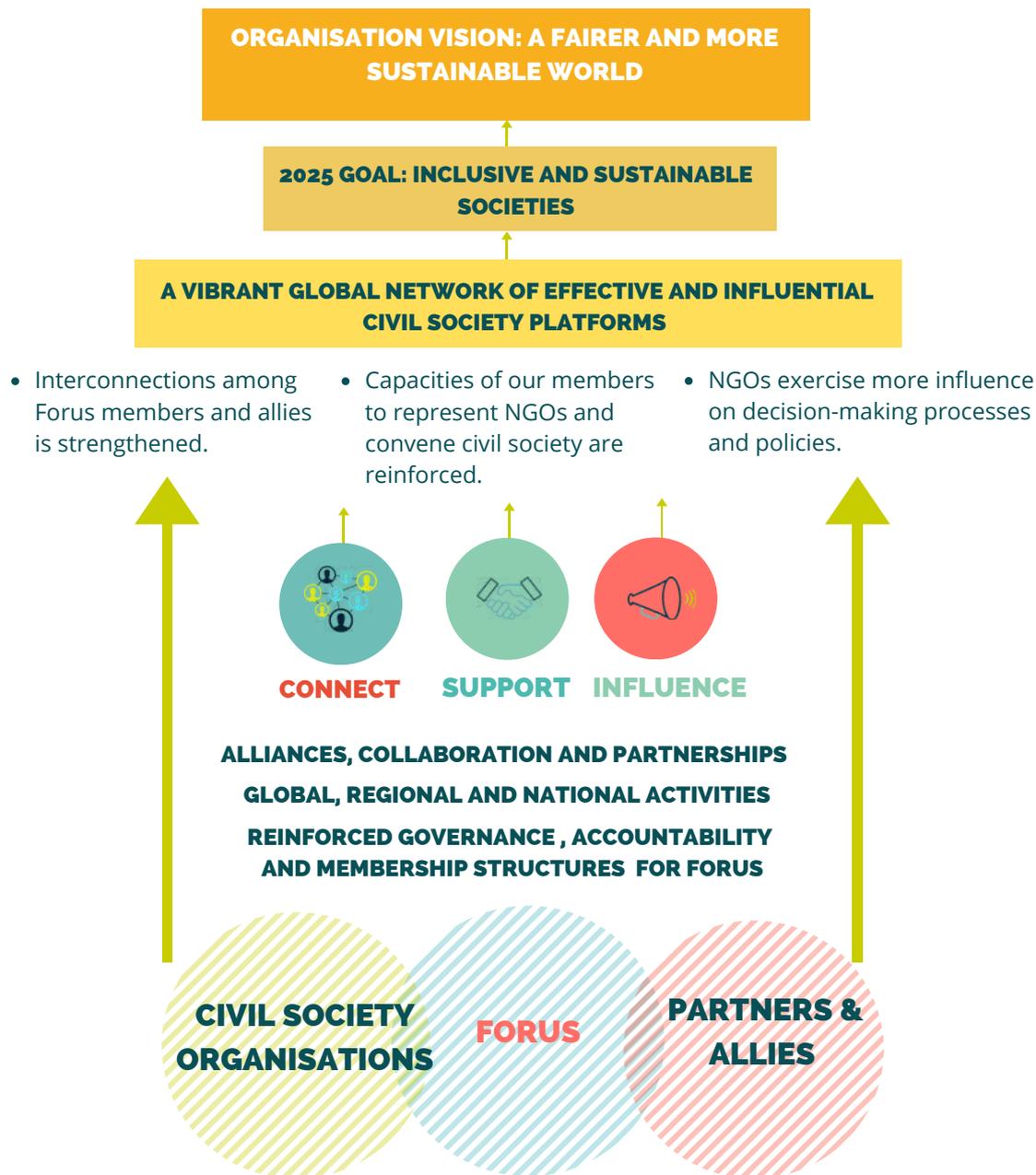INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

NEW

# TARGETS

CURRENT

# TARGETS

Forus network will continue to work with, and influence, national governments, intergovernmental bodies, the United Nations and the European Union, on all aspects of its advocacy agenda. We will enhance our advocacy targeting regional bodies, such as the African Union and the multilateral development banks in the areas where they wield influence such as civil society participation and financing for development. While national media will remain a priority for reaching audiences, Forus and our members will build relations with international media to reinforce our profile and strengthen visibility for our advocacy goals.

Among these stakeholders, Forus identifies the need to consolidate our position and deepen mutual understanding with national governments and the private sector:

- **National governments:** National governments and the EU will both remain key funders and targets of influence for Forus. Efforts will be made, under the leadership of the respective national platforms, to reach out to national governments not currently in discussion with Forus for alliances and funding. This will ensure a diversification of alliances, representative of the global diversity of Forus' membership. It will also ensure that the network's global advocacy targeting the UN system, will be strengthened and reinforced by national level advocacy of Forus members targeting the UN member states. National governments will also be targeted by Forus' and members' advocacy and actions aimed at securing an enabling environment for civil society.
- **Private sector:** We will aim to identify & cultivate new progressive allies amongst trade unions, co-operatives, ethical businesses and foundations so that Forus can exchange experience and expertise with these sectors as well as increasingly achieve our objectives through multi-stakeholder partnerships. We will explore funding possibilities with like-minded ethical businesses, their corporate social responsibility programmes and associated charity foundations. We will seek influencing opportunities with umbrella business associations in areas of common interest such as the SDGs, climate action and human rights. We will seek to generate learning and evidence linked to what works in collaborating with the private sector.

El Sotheary - CCC, Cambodia.

# 6. MONITORING, LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**ORGANISATION VISION: A FAIRER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD**

**2025 GOAL: INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES**

**A VIBRANT GLOBAL NETWORK OF EFFECTIVE AND INFLUENTIAL CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORMS**

- Interconnections among Forus members and allies is strengthened.
- Capacities of our members to represent NGOs and convene civil society are reinforced.
- NGOs exercise more influence on decision-making processes and policies.

**CONNECT**  **SUPPORT**  **INFLUENCE**

**ALLIANCES, COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

**GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**REINFORCED GOVERNANCE , ACCOUNTABILITY AND MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURES  FOR FORUS**

**CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**  **FORUS**  **PARTNERS & ALLIES**

# OUR CONTRIBUTION TO CHANGE

Forus' emerging Theory of Change sets out how we believe change happens, and our contribution to it. At the heart of our Theory is our belief that a vibrant civil society is an essential and enabling ingredient of inclusive and sustainable societies.

Forus' Theory of Change also posits that inclusive and sustainable societies lead to a fairer and more sustainable world.   Forus understands change as a complex, non-linear process. The implementation of the Strategy 2021-2025 will be the result of the actions and synergies between many stakeholders, both within the Forus network and external actors. Forus will aim to understand our own and unique contribution to change, while acknowledging how collective action, alliances and initiatives led by a wide range of civil society actors contribute to implementing a positive agenda.

# MONITORING & ACCOUNTABILITY

As part of our 2021-2025 Strategy, Forus will reinforce our current systems for monitoring & accountability, responding to the growing needs of the network and adopting sector standards. Forus will strive to analyse our impact and deepen our accountability to our members, donors and partners. Forus will assess the progress towards achieving the objectives of the strategy through annual reviews linked to each of the Strategy Pillars.

Our Monitoring & Accountability framework will assess progress against indicators of long-term impact. Monitoring and evaluation exercises will assess progress against these indicators using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The Forus General Assembly organized every 2 years, and the bi-Annual Council meetings are opportunities to share progress updates with members and Forus governance. These meetings lead to collective reflection on challenges, recommendations and adaptations required to enhance Forus impact and effectiveness.

As a network, our primary audience are our members. We will strive to collect regular information from members on their needs, as well as their satisfaction with Forus' activities and services. We will aim to create feedback loops and honest conversations with our members to better understand how we can meet their needs. We will solicit external expertise and research capacity to explore these questions in further depth.

Being member of Forus also comes with responsibilities and obligations. We hold members' accountable for their active engagement in Forus, through paying membership fees and through contributing to the life of the network. Forus will review and implement its Mediation Mechanism to ensure that all members are active contributors to the network.

# LEARNING PRIORITIES

Over 2021-2025, Forus will undertake a learning journey focused on Forus' model and legitimacy, looking at our representativeness, inclusivity, essence and role. We will question, review and assess our model and membership structure through joint exercises and discussions with our members. This learning will provide key information to inform the future direction and shape of the network, ensuring that we constantly adapt to new trends and priorities. Our aim to ensure that Forus' model is the most relevant for our purposes, and that it enables us to play a powerful role within civil society and as a key actor of the international governance system.

# KEY QUESTIONS



REPRESENTATION

FORUS MODEL

ROLE

INCLUSION
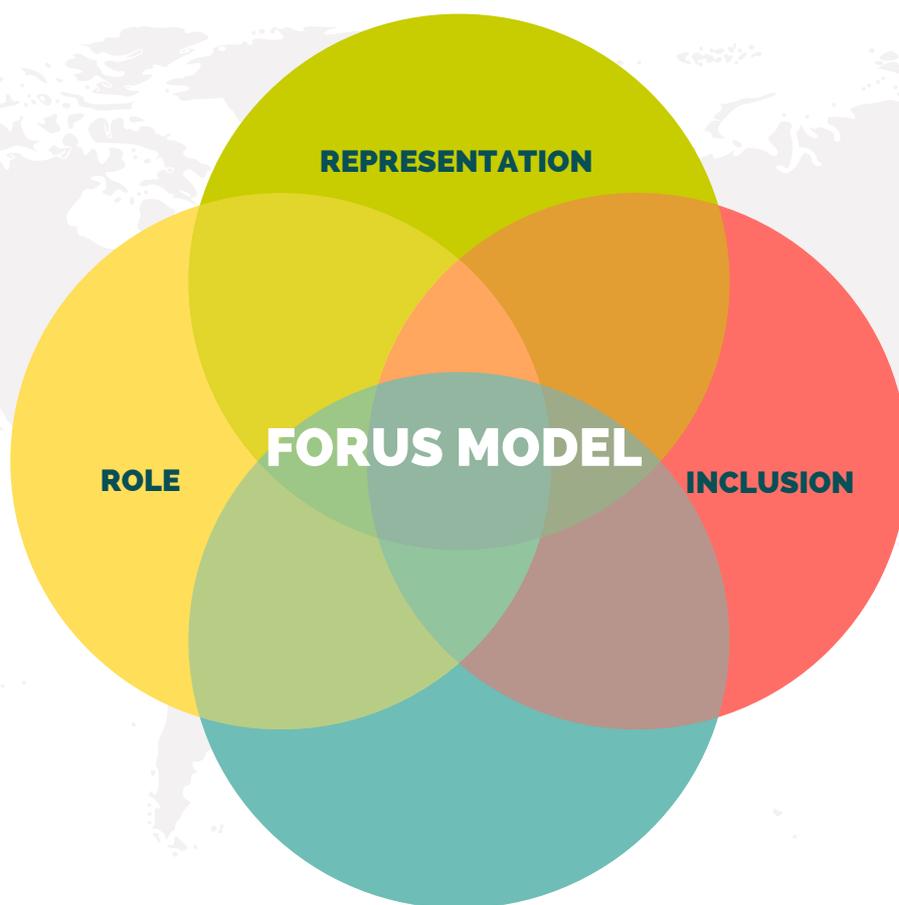
*Forus will build a learning agenda around these learning questions as part of its journey to constantly improve our model, ways of working, and adjust our approaches to a changing world.*

**Find the Forus Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning Framework 2021-2025 below**

# ANNEX 1: RESOURCING FORUS' 2021-2025 STRATEGY

Forus 2021-2025 Strategy reflects the growing expectations and ambitions from members for the network, as well as collective will to support and contribute to the network's activities. Forus and our members share a need for flexible and long-term funding for the implementation of the 2021-2025 Strategy. Funding which can support adaptive and rapid-response programming will be especially essential to the new strategic phase.

The funding context presents substantial challenges. Forus' 2019 study on Funding Civil Society Networks and Organisations "Promising Approaches to financing development in the 21st century" shows that Forus members struggle to find long-term and flexible funding to resource their work, and that the funding of international networks is rarely a priority for donors. Many Forus members are dependent on a single donor, or on a small group of donors.

Based on these trends, a budget to resource the Strategy has been provisionally developed, reaching a minimum 8,3 million euros for the five-year period. This budget will allow a continuation of current activity levels and a managed growth, reflecting the trajectory followed over 2016-2020, as decided by the Council in October 2019. Additional resources will be dedicated for the development of tools and research, for monitoring and learning, as well as for additional staff in the Secretariat. Spending trends and priorities will evolve with the Strategy as well as the new opportunities and needs as they emerge.

Forus' fundraising strategy aims to mobilize funding for all of the components of the 2021-2025 Strategy, including coverage of core costs on administration, human resources and governance. Funding will support both programme and operations, allowing the Secretariat to operate to a high standard. Although Forus' role is not fundraising for its members, the subsidiarity principle will be respected, and funding would be provided to members, to implement national or regional activities foreseen in Forus' strategy 2021-2025.

Several possible sources of funding for 2021-2025 have been identified: Membership fees, bilateral donors such as the governments of France, Monaco, Canada, South Korea and Finland, the European Commission, and private foundations. Forus members' and governance also actively contribute to raising funding and co-funding to finance the Strategy.

# ANNEX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

**THE STRATEGY WAS CREATED THROUGH A COLLABORATIVE, INCLUSIVE AND CONSULTATIVE PROCESS INVOLVING FORUS MEMBERS AND PARTNERS THROUGHOUT 2018 AND 2019.**

## MAY 2019

### OWL RE

*Owl RE consultancy was mandated to support Forus in the strategy development process.*

## FORUS STRATEGIC WEEK 2018

### SANTIAGO, CHILE

*The strategy process was launched at the Forus Strategic Week 2018 (Santiago, Chile, 4-8 September 2018) provided strong inputs for the Forus' future strategic direction and laid the foundations for the new strategy.*

## JUNE 2019

### PARIS

*A face-to-face brainstorming workshop was held in Paris with nine members including Council members and Secretariat staff. The workshop discussed and created priority objectives, scenarios and actions for the new strategy. The members agreed to for a Strategy Task Team to support the strategy process.*

## JUNE AND JULY 2019

### VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

*Together with the Mid-term evaluation of the current Strategy, six regional virtual workshops in English, French and Spanish were held with 37 members across the world. The workshops served to gather feedback on the future desired direction and focus of the new strategy. The evaluation also carried out a survey of members (60 responses) that provided input for the new strategy.*

## AUGUST 2019

### OWL RE

*The Owl RE consultants compiled the findings and feedback into a strategy document that was transformed into a draft strategy. The draft strategy was reviewed by the Executive Committee and the Secretariat Staff before submission to the Strategy Task Team in September 2019.*

## JULY 2019

### NEW YORK

*A face-to-face brainstorming meeting was held in New York with 18 members including Council members and Secretariat staff. The meeting reviewed the findings of the June brainstorming and provided further inputs.*

## NOVEMBER 2019

### FORUS MEMBERS

*The revised draft strategy and a feedback survey was sent to all members of Forus for comments. Following these final inputs, the final strategy was formally validated by the Council in April 2020.*

## OCTOBER 2019

### COUNCIL

*Following input from the Strategy Task Team, the draft strategy was discussed with the Council in October 2019. Following suggestions from the Council, the draft strategy was reviewed in November 2019.*

# ANNEX 3: FORUS MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & LEARNING FRAMEWORK 2021-2025

## SEPTEMBER 2021

## PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

Forus is a network committed to contributing to change towards inclusive and sustainable societies. Forus' Strategy 2021-2025 sets out *A positive Agenda for civil society*. It delivers an important commitment to strengthening monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning in the Forus network.

The MEAL framework sets out how Forus will:

- **Monitor & evaluate** our work, through ongoing data collection and analysis, drawing and responding to critical insights
- **Be accountable** to our members and partners, by using the monitoring and evaluation data to respond to their needs, learn and adapt
- **Learn**, through a culture and process that supports sharing of diverse views, open discussion and dialogue.

## OUR APPROACH TO MEAL

For Forus, being accountable is about relationships – with our members, donors, and external allies. Our approach to MEAL reflects our values:

- **Horizontal relationships**: we work to empower members to take lead and join in action towards change, learning from each other's knowledge and experiences. We recognize the interdependencies within civil society and strive towards respectful horizontal relationships.
- **Building trust**: we work as a network of peers, encouraging open and honest dialogue. Trust is an important resource in the network, allowing for both successes and limitations to be discussed. We create safe spaces for discussion for our members.
- **Mutual accountability**: we develop mechanisms for members to hold each other to account as peers, and our governance holds the Secretariat to account. We see accountability as an ongoing process and recognise the need to continue to develop the capacities of the Secretariat and Forus members in this regard.
- **Inclusion**: Every member has equal power to influence all processes. Our governance bodies are diverse in terms of language, gender, and geographical representation. We listen and take into account diverse views and make decisions in a collective way.
- **Independence of members**: Members' strategies and activities are independent of the influence of Forus' Secretariat and governance. Members remain fully autonomous in defining their strategies and positions.

Our approach is guided by these values and ways of working. We commit to employing participatory methods that put the voices and opinions of our members first. As a membership organisation, it is core to our mandate to ensure that we meet the needs and demands of our members. The MEAL framework is key to Forus' relationships with its members, external partners, and donors. It aims to be a portal to participatory exchange of views. Accountability is built through discussions involving all key stakeholders that can access critical information and share their perspective in an environment of mutual trust. Accountability is also rigorously informed by evaluation and monitoring evidence.

Regarding accountability to our donors, we aim to continue to build long-term quality alliances based on dialogue and trust with our donors that go beyond receiving financial support. We will keep nourishing our network with the technical expertise and views of our donor partners, who share our network's mission and values, as well as the objectives of our Strategy, in order to maximise our collective impact. When we are accountable to our Strategy, we are also accountable to our donors.

# MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES IN FORUS

Forus is committed to rigorously monitoring and evaluating our progress, learning from experience, and holding ourselves accountable with our members in the implementation of the Strategy. MEAL processes are particularly designed to regularly collect member feedback and inputs, as well as enable high-quality reporting on activities, results, and impact. The emphasis is on designing a process to gather key information on Forus' performance and impacts and to facilitate participatory reflections and learning.
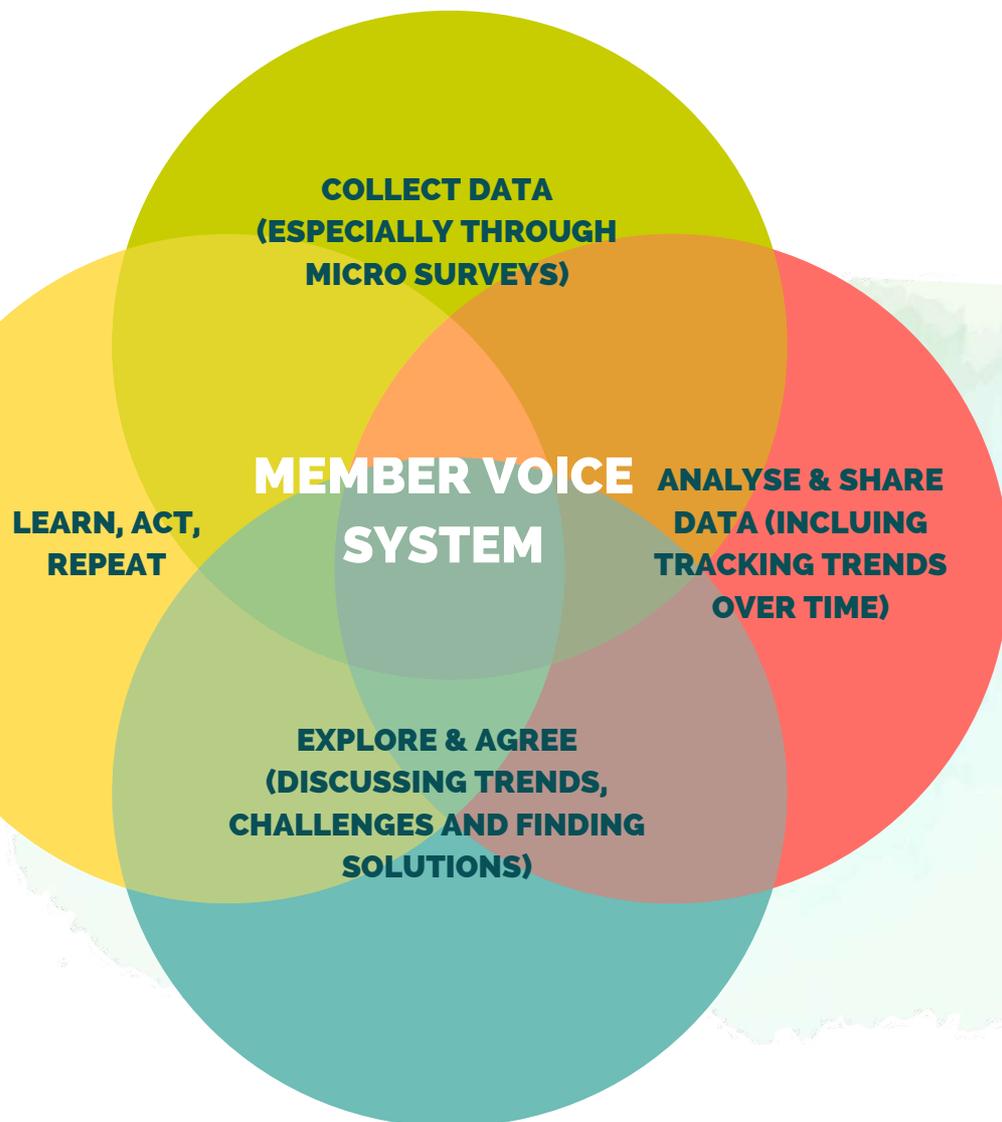
Forus is aiming for a dynamic process which allows for rapid capture and analysis of information and permitting learning and adaptation. Forus will deploy different monitoring and evaluation strategies depending on the type of results being investigated. Progress towards Forus' Strategy results will be tracked and assessed on a regular basis through monitoring of indicators, to understand the efficiency and effectiveness of Forus' approaches. Long-term impact will also be assessed at different intervals through bringing in independent and external evaluators, open discussions focused on learning, and analysis of trends over time based on relevant data and indicators.

Forus is also committed to maintaining an effective knowledge management system for the network by consolidating the existing MEAL systems and processes, implementing and testing innovative tools, and seeking ways so that the knowledge extracted through these systems is available to all members.

## SOME OF THE KEY MEAL PROCESSES IN FORUS INCLUDE:

**a) Member voice system**

In 2021, Forus started implementing new systems to collect, analyse and reflect on members' feedback, with a view to testing and improving them on an ongoing basis, in order to better learn and adapt to its members' needs, expectations, and priorities in a collective and participatory manner. The Forus' member voice system aims to ensure that the critically important voices of its members are regularly heard so as to improve the quality of relationships within the Forus network, as well as the effectiveness and impact of the network. The system is based on collecting feedback data from Forus members through a variety of means, including micro-surveys and larger-scale surveys. The diagram below explains the key components of the system.

**COLLECT DATA (ESPECIALLY THROUGH MICRO SURVEYS)**

**LEARN, ACT, REPEAT**

**MEMBER VOICE SYSTEM**

**ANALYSE & SHARE DATA (INCLUING TRACKING TRENDS OVER TIME)**

**EXPLORE & AGREE (DISCUSSING TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND FINDING SOLUTIONS)**

**Types of questions that are asked to Forus members via the member voice system include:**

- Relationship quality in the Forus network
- Quality of Forus services and resources, including at key touchpoints (events, meetings, etc)
- Outcomes of Forus network

Data from the Member voice system allows Forus to track movement over time in terms of members views and assessment of the relationship dynamics in Forus, the quality of Forus services, and the outcomes of the network. Forus also implements a **"Voices of Forus"** permanent channel that can collect feedback from its members 24/7, including suggestions and complaints.

A cornerstone of the Member voice system is to turn the members' feedback into data, dialogue and solutions. Data from the member voice system is triangulated with other sources of data such as: evaluation data, participation data from key events such as General Assemblies, and web data on social media. This approach that is both data-driven and dialogue based will allow us to measure the heartbeat of the network, improve how we listen to members, and collaboratively develop better ways of working and achieving impact.

**b) Monitoring member engagement in Forus network**

Forus uses the software Springly as its membership database and to collect and analyze key data on member participation and engagement in the Forus network. This also includes tracking Forus communications to its members and analysing click and open rates, to capture insights into how Forus communications are being received and accessed.

In addition, Forus uses a number dialogue-based processes for mutual accountability and reflection, as part of the commitment to strengthening accountability by working together with members. These processes include:

- Reflections during working groups on the dynamics of the network and its common spaces
- Self-assessment exercises and discussions with Forus' governance
- Regular exchanges between the regional coalitions that are members of Forus as a space for mutual accountability

**c) Monitoring the impact of capacity development support**

Forus' capacity development support also includes providing financial support, as part of the larger goal of learning for and from Forus members. Between 2017 and 2021, Forus has partnered with and supported 49 of its national members during four cycles of this support. In 2021, Forus has worked with the consultancy Organisational Development Support (ODS) to assess the previous cycles, with the participation of 32 members, capturing their feedback and learnings. The main recommendations were around additional moments for exchange among Forus' members during the projects' implementation as well as around monitoring the impact of the capacity development support in two levels.

**Forus' approach to monitoring impact during one cycle of capacity development support includes, but is not limited to:**

1. Members apply to receive capacity development support through a project proposal
2. The questions in the project proposal are answerable in a survey and are analysed in a horizontal process driven by a Committee composed by members who volunteered to do so.
3. Members receiving support will answer a baseline survey, validated by Forus' Council. The same set of questions will be answered at the end of the support.
4. Learning and exchange is incorporated midway, with one training on finance management and external communication. In addition, projects will be divided into groups (according to thematic) to exchange on the specific set of indicators developed by each platform to measure impact. Members can decide to change the indicators of their projects based on this conversation, if needed.
5. Members are invited to include all Forus' members in their project activities and to foster links with at least one other Forus' member during the project implementation.
6. Bilateral calls happen every 3 or 4 months between the Secretariat and the member implementing the project.

7. Each project reports in two different moments, once in the middle and once at the end of the project implementation.

8. Learning workshop, at the end of the cycle. The main purpose of this workshop is for members to share insights and evidence on the most significant changes they experienced as a result of the project, to demonstrate how this is attributable to the capacity development programme and to have a moment in the cycle to share and exchange lessons with the entire Forus' membership.

9. Key impact or learnings captured by members is visible in Forus' website for external partners.

Recommendations from the ODS assessment, to be implemented starting from cycle 5, is to measure impact in two levels. The first one is through network-level indicators, which are applicable to all, with the goal of measuring whether this programme is effective in increasing members' capacities. Forus needs to deepen its understanding of the impact of the support as a whole, which is a quite challenging exercise, due to the diverse nature of projects supported. This will be measured through a baseline/endline survey as described above. The second level is through member-led indicators, which are specific to the project and context. Forus will continue considering the multiple worldviews and conceptualizations of impact existing in its network, further encouraging its members to provide evidence-based data on the impact of the different projects.

**d) Risk monitoring**

Forus uses a Risk log to monitor project-specific and overall risks. The risk log is updated during project management meetings. Discussions among Forus Secretariat and with members contribute to assessing both the likelihood of a risk and the severity of impact. Risks that are high-level are escalated to Forus' governance to identify contingency plans and mitigation measures.

# FORUS' LEARNING AGENDA

Over 2021-2025, Forus' learning journey is focused on Forus' model and legitimacy, looking at our representativeness, inclusivity, essence and role. We will question, review and assess our model and membership structure through joint exercises and discussions with our members. This learning will provide key information to inform the future direction and shape of the network, ensuring that we constantly adapt to new trends and priorities. Our aim to ensure that Forus' model is the most relevant to meet our goal, and that it enables us to play a powerful role within civil society and as a key actor of the international governance system.

**Our learning agenda centres on four learning questions:**
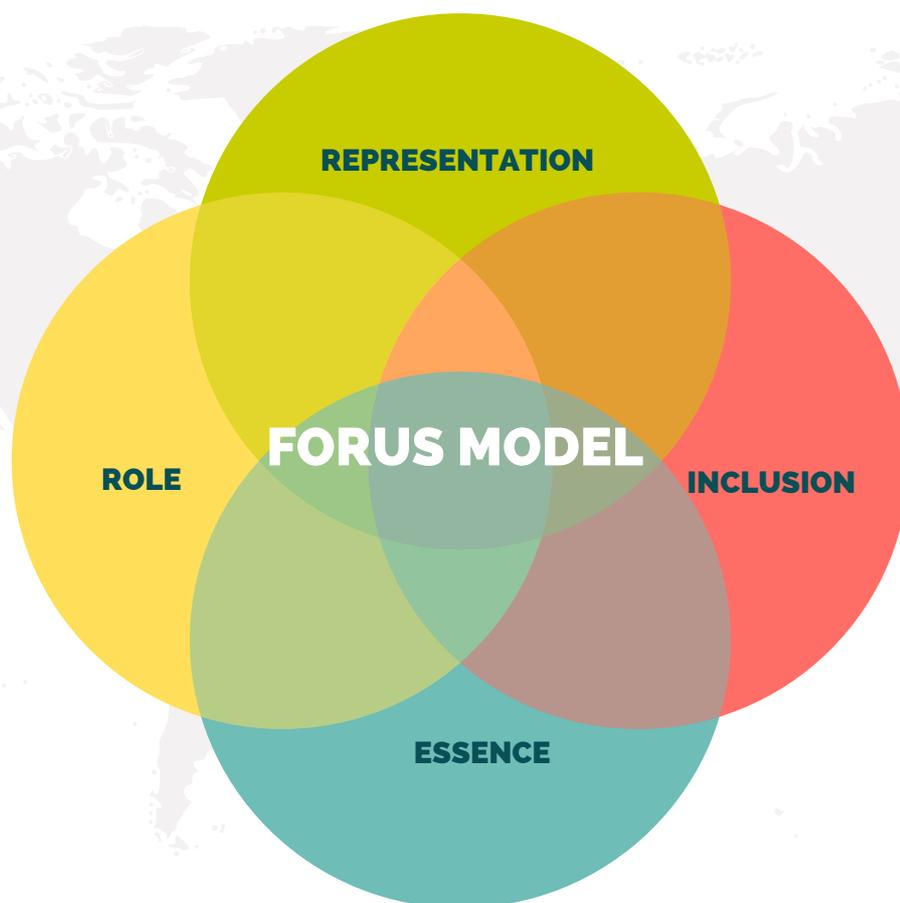


- **Representation**: How can (or should) Forus become more representative of civil society globally?
- **Inclusion**: How can Forus continually become more inclusive, particularly of the most vulnerable and marginalized voices?
- **Essence**: How can Forus strengthen its connection to grassroots movements, including citizen-led actions and social movements?
- **Role**: How can Forus act in more complementary ways vis-à-vis other actors in civil society?

Forus' learning agenda is built around these learning questions. It is not expected that Forus will reach a definitive "answer" for the learning questions, rather they are part of our journey as a network to constantly improve our model, ways of working, and adjust our approaches to a changing world. To operationalise the agenda, Forus will favour a dialogue-based approach, inviting diverse views from within and outside Forus membership. Data generated from Forus' MEAL processes, such as the Member Voice system, will also be provide important insights to reflect on the questions. Spaces for reflection on the learning questions will include:

- Council meetings
- General Assemblies
- Feedback and dialogue spaces on data generated from the Member voice system
- Debriefs and wrap-up discussions following Forus campaigns, key advocacy initiatives and capacity development support cycles

# THEORY OF CHANGE

Forus understands change as a complex, non-linear process. The implementation of the Strategy 2021-2025 will be the result of the actions and synergies between many stakeholders, both within the Forus network and external actors. The transformative change we aim for is captured in the goal of Forus' 2021-2025 Strategy: *"Together as a global network of civil society platforms, Forus will link diverse community aspirations to global actions, around a common agenda for inclusive and sustainable societies".* Over the Strategic period, Forus will aim to understand our own and unique contribution to change, while acknowledging how collective action, alliances and initiatives led by a wide range of civil society actors contribute to implementing a positive agenda.

Forus' Theory of Change identifies the key issues Forus addresses (white), the intended impact (light green) of our pillars of action Connect-Support-Influence (red), the intermediate outcomes (brown) which are pre-conditions to long-term change, and the long-term changes (orange) aimed for in order to achieve our goal (blue). All three pillars of Forus' work are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, building on each other. Through these three strategic pillars of action, Forus makes a contribution towards more inclusive societies for all people, recognising that changes need to be made at all levels of society including within Forus.

# FORUS THEORY OF CHANGE

**A fairer and more sustainable world**

| Diverse civil society voices are influential in policy and decision-making spaces | Civil society and grassroots actors act to protect and promote the rights of people and the planet | Strong international cooperation to implement Agenda 2030 |
|---|---|---|

| More structured and interconnected civil society | Civil society collaborates with governments, grassroots actors and other stakeholders | Civic space is sustained or thriving | Better monitoring of Agenda 2030 |
|---|---|---|---|

| Civil society groups are cooperating | Better access to knowledge / research | Better capacities of civil society to sustain their work | Better ability of civil society to influence decision-makers | Public is better informed |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| CONNECT | SUPPORT | INFLUENCE |
|---|---|---|

| Civil society voices are fragmented | Knowledge & data spread globally and access is difficult | Capacities & resources of marginalised people and groups are limited | Civic space is shrinking | Poorly informed public |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Forus' Theory of Change is therefore based on 3 pillars of change:**

- **The CONNECT Strategy Pillar** encompasses Forus' role as a network to promote and support different levels of connections among civil society actors globally, as well as with allies and partners. Change is achieved when actors can join forces and speak in a common voice for a fairer and more sustainable world. Diversity and inclusion are key to this common voice being truly representative and legitimate, and for transformative change.

- **The SUPPORT strategy Pillar** encompasses Forus' work on developing the capacities of our members and other civil society actors, through peer-to-peer processes, including peer learning and knowledge exchange, pooling resources in a diverse and dynamic environment. Change is achieved when the capacities of civil society organisations are strengthened and consolidated, and when the learning and development processes are empowering, though participatory, and horizontal approaches.

- **The INFLUENCE Strategy Pillar** focuses on Forus' advocacy actions to promote inclusive and sustainable societies around the world. By influencing decision-makers, policy-makers, influential organisations and public opinion through research, policy recommendations, advocacy, media & campaigns, Forus contributes to better, people-centred public policies. Our work on SDG 16 and 17 contributes to civil society voices being more systematically included in policy-making and decision-making fora, for more sustainable impact.

**The assumptions underlying our Theory of Change include:**

- Governments and other powerful actors are willing to collaborate with civil society.
- Activists and grassroots actors are willing to form partnerships with civil society.
- Civil society organisations can access the resources to sustainably implement their work.
- Public pressure, information and awareness can contribute to strengthening the civic space and enabling environment for civil society.
- All of the above are determined and driven by the quality of relationships between the different stakeholders.

The MEAL processes and learning agenda described in this framework will serve to continuously interrogate and review the Theory of Change.

- Council meetings
- General Assemblies
- Feedback and dialogue spaces on data generated from the Member voice system
- Debriefs and wrap-up discussions following Forus campaigns, key advocacy initiatives and capacity development support cycles

# PROGRESS INDICATORS & TARGETS

The table below highlights the key indicators & targets for each result area of Forus' strategy, under the three pillars Connect, Support and Influence. The indicators will be measured in order to assess Forus' progress and be accountable to the objectives of the Strategy. Nonetheless, Forus' MEAL aims to employ a flexible and adaptive approach, rather than the more rigid logical framework-based approach. As much as possible, Forus' MEAL will draw on definitions and measures of impact that are defined by members. The impact conceptualisations and indicators that are developed by members for their own monitoring will be harvested as much as possible. Thus, Forus aims to capture the impact indicators developed by members in the framework of capacity development support and to facilitate peer dialogue and learning spaces to share these indicators among members implementing similar projects. This will allow a picture of collective impact to emerge over the Strategy period.

| Pilar / Result | Indicator | Baseline Value (2020 or 2021) | Target value (2025) | Monitoring process / Means of verification |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pillar CONNECT** | | | | |
| **Result 1.1** Sharing of experiences and peer learning among Forus members and with external partners have increased, leading to improved mutual understanding and learning. | 1) Level of participation of Forus members in working groups and peer learning events | 70% (2020 engagement data) | 80% | Event attendance lists Webinars Monitoring tool Springly |
| | 2) Percentage of Forus members that find Forus' peer learning opportunities and events valuable | 87% (2021 membership survey) | 90% | Member voice system |
| | 3) Number of members who have direct interactions with other members of Forus | No baseline available | 80% | Member Voice System Member-to-member communication tool |
| | 4) Participation in spaces that bring together Forus members and external partners. | 76% (2021 Membership Survey) | 80% | Member Voice System Capacity development support monitoring Webinar monitoring tool Member projects reports |
| **Result 1.2.** Greater collaboration and solidarity within civil society and with external allies are achieved through joint initiatives and partnerships, connecting local, national and global levels. | 1) # of joint initiatives with other CSO networks/other partners | 6 (2020) external initiatives in which Forus engages | At least 50% of the initiatives joined are sustained over several years and # of new/external allies has doubled over the strategy period. | Comms monitoring Campaigns & Initiatives Tracking Tool |
| | 2) Percentage of Forus members that report increased ability to convene and represent CSOs in their countries | 60% | At least 70% of members | Member Voice System |
| | 3) # of members reporting that their membership of Forus has created opportunities for new partnerships and collaborations | 51% (2021 membership survey) | At least 70% | Member Voice System |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Result 1.3.** The visibility of the Forus network, and members' activities within and outside the network have increased, leading to greater awareness of the positive role of civil society networks and platforms. | 1) Increased references to Forus in the media | 40 references per year (2020) | +10% year on year | Media tracker |
| | 2) Increased reach of campaigns & in the # of members and other CSO networks actively engaged in them/ contributing to them | # of members engaged 30 (2020) <br> # Other CSOs involved 30 (2020) | -Increase of 50% of member engagement by 2025 <br> -Increase of 25% of other CSOs involved by 2025 | Campaigns & Initiatives Tracking Tool <br> Website and social media data and statistics |
| | 3) Increased engagement with Forus online presence | # of impressions of social media posts linked to campaigns/initiatives: 193k (2020) | Increase of 50% of impressions, retweets, social media posts | Web statistics |
| **Result 1.4** Organisational governance, transparency and accountability are reinforced in the Forus network. | 1) # of meetings of Forus' governance bodies | 9 per year (ExCom) <br> 2 per year (Council) <br> 1 every 3 years (GA) | 9 per year (ExCom) <br> 2 per year (Council) <br> At least 1 every 3 years (GA) | SharePoint |
| | 2) Percentage of Forus Council members that are women (permanent and alternate) | 37% (2021) | 50% | Council members list |
| | 3) # of reports on activities and accountability actions shared with the membership | No baseline available | At least 3 per year | Springly |
| | 4) Percentage of Forus members that are comfortable questioning Forus in cases of disagreement | 79% (2021 survey) | 100% | Member Voice System |
| **SUPPORT Pillar** | | | | |
| **Result 2.1** Members improve theirs and their members' competencies, capacities, and technical skills to have measurable and lasting impact on members' constituents and communities. | 1) Percentage of Forus' members that report that Forus provides them with useful information, publications, tools or resources | 78% | 80% | Member Voice System |
| | 2) Percentage of Forus' members reporting that Forus supports them to develop relevant and effective services and resources for their members | 56% (2021 membership survey) | 70% | Member Voice System |
| | 3) Percentage of members reporting that Forus supports them in identifying useful ways to monitor and measure their impact | 53% (2021 membership survey) | 70% | Member Voice System |
| **Result 2.2** Members effectively convene NGOs, acting as a representative voice of civil society in different fora and defending an influential and accountable civil society. | 1) Percentage of Forus members reporting that Forus allows them to connect to key policy spaces and discussion fora | 65% (2021 membership survey) | 80% | Member Voice System |
| | 2) Percentage of Forus members that report that being a member of Forus has helped them to engage more effectively with policy / decision-making processes at national level (e.g., on Agenda 2030, Enabling Environment for civil society, FFSD etc.) | 49% (2021 membership survey) | 65% | Member Voice System |
| | 3) Number of Forus members that produce or contribute to research, joint positions or communications with Forus' support | 20 members (2021) | 50 different members by 2025 | Capacity development support monitoring |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Result 2.3** Members' internal functioning and processes are strengthened, towards becoming sustainable entities for the coordination of civil society | 1) Percentage of members reporting that Forus has helped them to develop stronger internal procedures, practices or compliance systems. | 58% (2021 membership survey) | 70% | Member voice system |
| | 2) Percentage of members receiving funds from Forus that present financial reports that meet highest compliance requirements. | 87% (40 out of 46 members) | 100% | Financial monitoring |
| | 3) Percentage of members that report an increase in their active members, as a result of Forus support | No baseline available | 50% of members implementing national projects with Forus technical and financial support | Member Voice System |
| **Result 2.4** Emerging civil society platforms and networks are supported by Forus in countries where we do not currently work. | 1) # of civil society networks or groups supported through Solidarity support | 3 | 3 | Forus activity reports |
| | 2) # of activists/ informal groups/ movements connected to Forus via campaigns and other initiatives (such as podcasts, media engagement etc.) | 35 (2020-2021) | 60 | Forus activity reports Campaigns & Initiatives Tracking Tool |
| **INFLUENCE Pillar** | | | | |
| **Result 3.1** Civil society voices and an enabling environment for civil society are promoted at national, regional and international levels. | 1) # of members advocating for EE at national, regional, and international level. | No baseline available | 75% | Member voice system |
| | 2) # of institutional spaces that are invested by Forus for advocacy and influence on the theme of enabling environment (United Nations, national governments, regional institutions, foundations, etc.). | 4 | 5 per year | Forus activity reports and member reports |
| | 3) Increased number of references to Forus publications on enabling environment | No baseline available | 5 per year | Reference & Declarations tracking system |
| **Result 3.2** Public policies and policy development processes relevant to Agenda 2030, climate change and civil society participation are influenced by Forus and our members | 1) # of references to Forus publications, positions and recommendations on Agenda 2030, climate change and civil society participation by institutional actors. | No baseline available | 20 over the entire Strategy period | Reference & Declarations tracking system |
| | 2) # of international institutions & governments that have collaborated in Forus initiatives on Agenda 2030, climate change and civil society participation | 4 in 2020 | 5 per year | Forus activity reports |
| | 3) Percentage of Forus members reporting that being a Forus member provides them with leverage in dialogue with international and national policymakers | No baseline available | 70% | Member Voice System |

| Result 3.3 The resourcing of civil society for sustainable development is enhanced by Forus through the development of key positions and effective advocacy informed by high quality, participatory research. | 1) # of Forus position papers, declarations and publications advocating for better financing for sustainable development and resourcing of civil society | 1 (2019), 2 (2020) | 1 per year | Member Voice System |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2) Increase of % of ODA going to CSOs | Depends on country | Increasing trend in all OECD DAC countries | Official stats (e.g., OECD) |
| | 3) # of Forus members reporting having had access to new funding opportunities over the past 2 years, in which their membership of Forus has helped(e.g. as a result of Forus' support, visibility, resources or publications). | Baseline to be defined in 2022 | Increase of 30% by 2025 | Member voice system |
| Result 3.4 Forus contributes to the development of a new, more inclusive multi-stakeholder model of international governance, in which civil society is empowered to participate on an equal footing with other stakeholders | 1) # of activities and campaigns promoting a more inclusive model of international governance or more meaningful civil society participation | 5 in 2020 | 5 per year | Comms monitoring Reference & Declarations tracking system Webinars Monitoring Tool Campaigns & Initiatives Tracking Tool |
| | 2) # of initiatives that Forus participates in that result in greater CSO participation in key fora or decision-making process | 2 (2020) | 5 over the strategy period | Campaigns & Initiatives Tracking Tool |
| | 3) # of references to Forus' campaigns and initiatives in key policy making-fora and media | 2021: 55 references (articles) in the media (including references to Forus' campaigns, events, resources and participation in international fora) | 50% increase of references to Forus in the media by 2025 | Reference & Declarations tracking system Campaigns & Initiatives Tracking Tool Media Tracker |

# FORUS MEMBERS

## Regional Coalitions

**ADA -** Asia Development Alliance, Asia
**CONCORD -** European NGO Confederation
for Relief and Development, Europe
**MESA -** Mesa de Articulación de Asociaciones Nacionales y Redes de ONGs de América Latina y el Caribe
**PIANGO -** Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations, Pacific
**REPAOC -** Réseau des Plate-formes nationales d'ONG d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du centre, West Africa
**REPONGAC -** Réseau des Plate-formes des ONG de l'Afrique Centrale, Central Africa
**SADC-CNGO -** Southern Africa Development Community Council of Non-Governmental Organizations, Southern Africa

## National NGO Platforms

**ABONG -** Associaçao Brasileira de ONGs, Brazil
**ACCIÓN -** Asociación Chilena de ONG, Chile
**ADIR -** Action Développement et Intégration Régionale, Burundi
**Alianza ONG -** Alianza de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales, Dominican Republic
**ANC –** Associacion Nacional de Centros de Investigacion, Promocion Social y Desarrollo, Peru
**ANONG -** Asociación Nacional de ONG, Uruguay
**ASONOG -** Asociación de organismos no gubernamentales, Honduras
**BOCONGO -** Botswana Council of NonGovernmental Organisations, Botswana
**Bond -** British Overseas NGOs for Development, the UK
**CANGO –** China Association for NGO Cooperation, China
**CCC -** Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, Cambodia
**CCIC –** Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Canada
**CCOAIB –** Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base, Rwanda
**CCOD -** Conseil de Concertation des ONG de développement, Congo
**CCONG-** Confederación Colombiana de ONG, Colombia
**CEPS -** Citizens Engagement Platform SeychellesSeychelles

**CFRONG -** Collectif des Fédérations et Réseaux d'ONG du Bénin, Benin
**CID -** Council for International Development, New Zealand
**CILONG -** Centre d'information et de Liaison des ONG, TCHAD, Chad
**CIONGCA -** Conseil Inter ONG de Centrafrique, Central African Republic
**CNONGD –** Conseil National des ONG de Développement, The Democratic Republic of the Congo
**CODE-NGO -** Caucus of Development NGO
Networks, Philippines
**CICSO –** Cook Islands Association of NGOs, Cook Islands
**Coordination Sud –** Solidarité Urgence Développement, France
**Coordinadora -** Coordinadora de ONG de cooperación para el Desarrollo, Spain
**CONGAC-** Collectif des ONG Agréées du Cameroun, Cameroon
**CONGAD -** Conseil des ONG d'Appui au Développement, Sénégal
**CONGCOOP –** Coordinacion de ONG y Cooperativas, Guatemala
**CSCI -** Convention de la Société Civile Ivoirienne, Ivory Coast
**Dóchas -** The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations, Ireland
**EENGD -** Encuentro de Entidades No Gubernamentales para el Desarrollo, Argentina
**Espace Associatif**, Morocco
**FCOSS –** Fiji Council of Social Service, Fiji
**FECONG –** Fédération des Collectif d'ONG du Mali, Mali
**FINGO -** Finnish NGO Platform, Finland
**FOND –** Romanian NGDO Platform, Romania
**FONGDD –** Forum des ONG pour le Développement Durable, Guinea
**FONG-STP -** Federaçao das ONGs de Sao Tomé e Principe, Sao Tome & Principe
**FONGTO –** Fédération des ONG au Togo, Togo
**FONGA -** Foro das ONGs Angolanas, Angola
**FORS -** Czech Forum for Development Cooperation, Czech Republic
**Global Focus**, Denmark
**HAND -** Hungarian Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Hungary
**INFID -** International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development, Indonesia
**InterAction**, USA
**JANIC –** Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation, Japan

**JOINT -** League For NGOs in Mozambique, Mozambique
**KANGO -** Kiribati Association of NGOs, Kiribati
**KCOC -** Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation, Korea
**LAPAS -** Latvijas Platforma attīstības sadarbībai, Latvia
**Lithuanian NGDO Platform -** Lithuanian National Non-Governmental Development Cooperation Organisations' Platform, Lithuania
**MACOSS -** Mauritius Council of Social Service, Mauritius
**NFN – NGO -** Federation of Nepal, Nepal
**NNNGO –** Nigeria Network of NGO, Nigeria
**PFNOSCM –** Plateforme Nationale des Organisations de la Société Civile de Madagascar, Madagascar
**Plataforma ONGD -** Plataforma Portuguesa das Organizações Não-Governamentais para o Desenvolvimento Portuguese Platform NGOD, Portugal
**Plateforme belge des ONG de développement et d'urgence**, Belgium
**PLATONG -** Plataforma das ONGs de Cabo Verde, Cape Verde
**POJOAJU -** Asociación de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales del Paraguay, Paraguay
**SKOP –** National Platform of Maltese NGDOs, Malta
**SLOGA –** Slovenian Global Action, Slovenia
**SPONG –** Secrétariat Permanent des ONG du Burkina Faso**, Burkina Faso
**Taiwan-Aid -** Taiwan Alliance in International Development, Taiwan
**TANGO -** The Association of NonGovernmental Organizations, Gambia Uganda NGO Forum, Uganda
**UNITAS -** Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social, Red Unitas, Bolivia
**UNNGOF -** Uganda National NGO ForumUganda
**VANI -** Voluntary Action Network India, India
**ZCSD -** Zambia Council for Social Development, Zambia

Forus, previously known as the International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP/FIP), is a member-led network of 69 National NGO Platforms and 7 Regional Coalitions from all continents representing over 22,000 NGOs active locally and internationally on development, human rights and environmental issues.