



We Were Built for This Moment

Forus Strategy 2026-2030



Civil Society
Resilience,
Solidarity, and
Power





Table of Contents

Foreword	1
Process	2
History and Achievements	3
Our context	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) Analysis: Strategic Challenges and Opportunities for Forus (2026–2030)• SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis	4
Our Vision, Mission and Principles	5
Legitimacy and Representation	6
Theory of Change	7
Social Network Analysis and Network Weaving	8
Connect, Support, Influence and Network Health	9
Recognising and Respecting the Different Roles within Forus	10
Implementation Plan	11
Annexes	12



FOREWORD

We enter the next five years at a time of profound challenge for civil society - but also of profound possibility. Across the world, authoritarianism is on the rise, inequalities are widening, the climate and environmental crises are intensifying, and the multilateral system itself is under strain.

Dialogue is breaking down, and societies are turning inward. Identity-based divisions are replacing solidarity, while conflicts multiply and threaten to undo decades of progress. Nations are investing more in defense than in cooperation, feeding fear instead of hope. Civil society actors face shrinking freedoms, growing repression, and abrupt cuts to development finance.

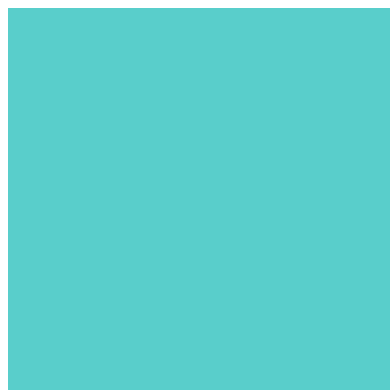
These are not isolated trends. They reflect a global pushback against the very values we stand for - solidarity, dignity, equality, and justice. At the very moment when humanity needs connection and compassion most, those who defend them are being silenced or starved of resources.

Yet this is exactly why a strong, united, global civil society - anchored in national and regional realities, and connected across borders - is more essential than ever. Forus exists to embody this vision. Together, Forus' 73 national platforms and seven regional coalitions, representing more than 24,000 organisations, have shown that when local voices are amplified through collective global action, they can shift agendas, protect rights, and offer solutions where institutions falter.

In recent years, we have advanced civil society's voice in the UN and other multi-stakeholder spaces, mobilised resources and solidarity to support members under threat, campaigned for digital rights and social justice, and helped new and bold leadership emerge. We have shown that when civil society connects, supports one another, and speaks with a united voice, positive change is possible.

This strategy for 2026–2030 is our shared compass. It was co-created with more than 80% of our members through multiple rounds of consultations, regional focus groups, and strategic dialogues.

©Forus network at FFD4





It reaffirms our three-pillar approach - **Connect, Support, Influence** - underpinned by the **health of our network**. These are not abstract words. They are the constellation that guides us:

- **Connect** - because our collective power lies in our diversity and in our ability to listen to and learn from others.
- **Support** - because resilience requires resources, leadership, and the ability to adapt in hostile contexts.
- **Influence** - because civil society must not only be present, but effective in holding power-holders to account, in shaping the future of development, and social justice.
- And at the heart: **Network Health** - because without trust, accountability and solidarity, no movement can endure.

Our ambition is clear: by 2030, Forus will be a more resilient, interconnected, and influential global network, one that has defended civic space, challenged unjust systems, and advanced people-centred, rights-based policies.

This strategy is not a fixed plan; it is a living commitment. It calls us to be courageous when repression grows, to be innovative when old tactics fail, and to practice solidarity when others are under threat. It demands that we invest in new leaders, harness digital transformation for social justice, diversify and share resources to increase effectiveness, and hold ourselves to the same standards of inclusion and accountability we demand from others.

We invite every member, partner, ally, and friend of Forus to walk with us. This strategy belongs to all of us, and its success will be measured not in documents produced but in lives protected, civic spaces reopened, and systems transformed.

Because we are more than a network. We are Forus. And together, we were built for this moment.

Christelle Kalhoulé, Chair
Sarah Strack, Director



**MAVALOW CHRISTELLE
KALHOULE**
Forus Chair

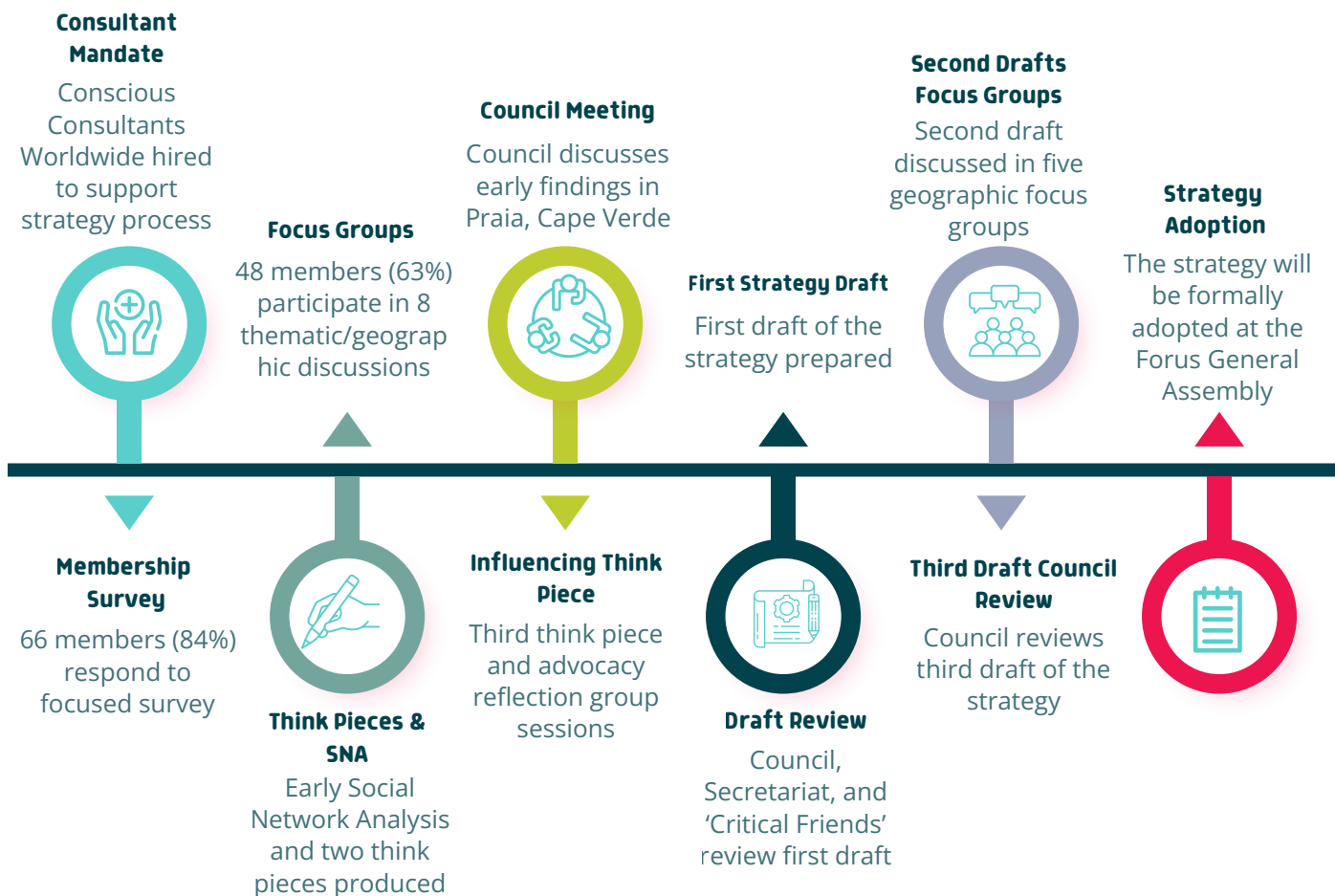


SARAH STRACK
Forus Director



PROCESS

This strategy was developed through a highly participatory process, running from January - October 2025. Further details are in Annex 2.



©Forus General Assembly





©PIANGO, Pacific Islands

HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

History

Forus started out as an informal alliance of national NGO platforms and regional coalitions in 2008 at an international conference in Paris. The network was formalised a few years later as the International Forum of National NGO Platforms (FIP-IFP). In 2016, Forus became an independent organisation legally registered in France. In 2018, the network renewed its identity and image, and FIP-IFP became Forus. The strapline **“Connect – Support – Influence”** was developed to guide the network’s action and communications. Today, Forus brings together 72 National CSO Platforms and seven Regional Coalitions, spanning five continents.

Achievements

Over recent years, we translated our values of “Connect – Support – Influence” into actions - jointly working to strengthen and structure civil society platforms and pushing for change.

**Discover key examples of
how our work turns
collaboration into
achievements.**



Connect

Inclusive, dynamic, and multilingual peer-learning and coordination spaces, placing members at the centre, paved the way to common action, such as:

- **Joint declarations and initiatives at global fora** like the Finance in Common Summit (FiCS), the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), or the Fourth Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), which influenced policy discussions and illustrated what can be done through collective advocacy.
- **Collaborative campaigns** such as [#March With Us](#), which was launched in 2020 to advance gender justice, reached over 200,000 views and was featured in events during the UN Commission on the Status of Women.
- **Articles, podcasts and documentaries which elevated members' voices** on issues such as decolonising development, shifting power, digital rights, and activism, reaching over 500,000 people.
- **Curated network-wide conversations** such as Member Talks, the Forus Virtual Forum, or the 2024 General Assembly in Gaborone, Botswana, where 84% of members were represented and which was described as inspiring, thought-provoking, and community-building, paving the way for a shared vision for the future.

©ASONOG, Honduras





Support

Strengthening civil society action is a cornerstone of Forus' "raison-d'être". Achievements include:

- **Six successful cycles of national projects** as well as a regional coalition support programme, directly supporting more than 50 members to strengthen their structures, organisational capacity or strategic planning, to diversify funding and expand their reach, while sharing learnings across regions and demonstrating how locally rooted solutions can inform and transform global debates.
- **Structural support for members** - helping set up governance systems, financial transparency, monitoring & evaluation frameworks, and adaptive leadership capacities.
- **The creation of a COVID-19 Task Force**, working with members to gather data on national responses, share good practice, provide emergency support, and help adapt programs to shifting conditions.
- **The Leadership Development Programme** has strengthened the capacities of member organisations and leaders, with innovative approaches and reflective practice. Tools such as the [Forus Barefoot Guide](#) have enabled participants to apply these learnings in their own contexts.

©NNNGO, Nigeria





Influence

©CADE



Amid growing democratic backsliding, funding challenges, and shrinking space for civil society participation, Forus strengthened its advocacy, linking national civil society leadership to international agendas. Achievements include:

- **Protecting and expanding the Enabling Environment for civil society** by amplifying members' voices in policy debates and in influencing global standards. Forus contributed to the [OECD-DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society](#) (2021), now a key reference for donor commitments on civic space. Through the [EU System for an Enabling Environment \(EU SEE\)](#), Forus combines research and early warning mechanisms to document deterioration and opportunities for reform of civil society's enabling environment. These efforts have supported national-level action to prevent restrictive legislation, and informed conversations with diplomats and policy-makers.
- **Advancing CSO participation and accountability in multilateral spaces.** Forus deepened its engagement around UN processes, having secured ECOSOC consultative status. Focusing primarily on SDGs 16 and 17, Forus co-produced reports on SDG implementation and led research on localisation and inclusive governance. Over the years, Forus supported its members' engagement in over 50 Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes, pushing for national accountability frameworks to reflect civil society perspectives.
- **Helping design the UNMute initiative** to promote regular UN-civil society dialogue and call for more and better civil society inclusion, at a time when civil society participation in global governance was challenged. Participation in platforms such as the Policy Forum on Development (PFD) and the [Global Gateway Civil Society Platform](#) further helped secure space for our network's messages.
- **Elevating civil society participation in the development finance space through our participation in the Finance in Common Summit (FiCS) Executive Committee** since its inception in 2020. Since then, Forus has coordinated a cross-sectoral Civil Society Mechanism to ensure aligned messaging on issues ranging from climate action to civil society participation and human rights. This contributed to the creation of a formal CSO-PDB Coalition and placed transparency, accountability, and rights-based language at the heart of global PDB discussions.
- **Recognising emerging risks and opportunities in the digital landscape,** Forus initiated the [Let's Talk Digital](#) campaign which reached over 200,000 people, and led the [Civil Society Manifesto for Ethical AI](#), developed with over 50 civil society organisations and endorsed by policy-makers. Forus positioned itself at the forefront of inclusive and rights-based digital governance – in particular through a new project and alliance called [CADE](#).

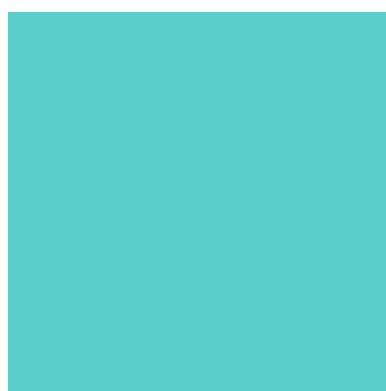


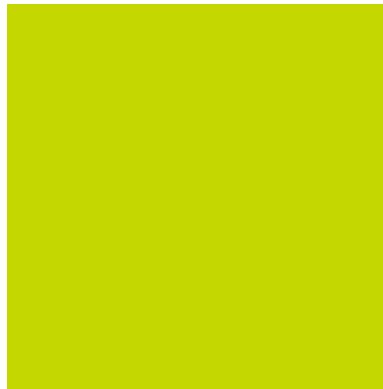
Forus has been able to grow into the vibrant network it is today thanks to partnerships with the Agence Française de Développement, the European Commission, the Fondation de France, the Monegasque Cooperation for Development, and other partners.

We move into this new phase with clarity, conviction, and purpose. Collectively, we have shown that civil society is not a passive observer of global trends, but active architects of new and innovative paradigms. This strategy reflects our collective determination to move beyond resistance and into reconstruction: to fight back against repression, resource cuts, and marginalisation by navigating new pathways for power, solidarity, and justice, for the benefit of the constituencies and communities with whom our members work.

As a new strategy cycle begins, Forus will continue to stand with and behind members and those they work with, investing in leadership, resilience, and creativity, supporting them to collectively influence the systems and institutions that will define the future.

©#WeAreForus multimedia campaign





©EU SEE Network

OUR CONTEXT

Analysis: Strategic Challenges and Opportunities for Forus (2026–2030)

The global context in which Forus operates is rapidly shifting - and not in our favour. Civil society faces growing political repression, shrinking funding, and the erosion of multilateralism. The rules of development cooperation are being rewritten. Digital transformation is accelerating, unequally and with inadequate regulation and governance. Climate change and inequality deepen instability, while legal frameworks are increasingly weaponised against civic actors. Our influencing efforts have not yet succeeded in reversing the current negative trends. We recognise the immediate need to protect what remains under threat, to influence public opinion and policy choices, and build the foundations for meaningful progress when political openings arise. We are confident in the commitment and ability of civil society actors throughout the world to do so.

Through a series of regional and thematic focus group discussions, we developed our PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) analysis - to help ground our understanding of the global context, which sets the background for our strategy. The results are below.

©Forus #MarchWithUs campaign on gender justice





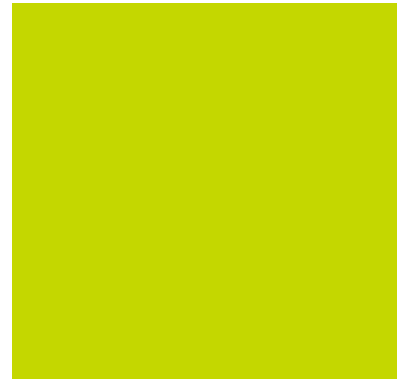
POLITICAL: Democracy in Retreat, Realpolitik on the Rise

The rise of authoritarianism, nationalism, and militarism is narrowing civic space. Governments are increasingly using restrictive laws, internet shutdowns, and security discourse to repress CSOs and dissent. The global prioritisation of security and competition over solidarity and development has weakened the multilateral system. While some states remain supportive of civil society, many are slashing aid and retreating into transactional bilateralism. The legitimacy of the UN remains critical to many CSOs, but its effectiveness is under question, and geopolitical shifts have reduced its influence. There seems to be a real 'Summit fatigue' from all corners - Member States, UN staff, civil society - which exacerbates this tendency. The 2030 Agenda is badly off track, with most SDG targets unlikely to be met by 2030 and VNRs often serving as government showcases rather than true accountability mechanisms.

Strategic implications:

Forus will defend the UN led multilateral system while recognising that real influence may increasingly lie in alternative 'minilateral' arenas. Coalition building and political navigation across these emerging and contested spaces will be essential. It will be crucial to undertake regular power mapping for our focus areas and to be increasingly innovative in our influencing tactics. Forus will position itself as a key voice in reshaping these debates around global governance, insisting that such spaces must listen, protect, and empower communities everywhere, and must be inclusive, accountable, and responsive to the realities of communities around the world. We will approach post-2030 framework discussions with a critical but constructive stance: building on what worked with the SDGs (e.g. universality), while directly tackling gaps (e.g. implementation, weak accountability, lack of truly participatory monitoring). This requires investing in civil society's own narrative power and in alternative accountability mechanisms that governments cannot easily co-opt.

©Forus General Assembly





ECONOMIC: Funding Cuts, Debt Crisis, and a Rewired Development System

ODA is in decline across Europe and the US, with traditional donors increasingly tying aid to national interests, political alignment, security concerns and migration control. USAID freezes and EU budget shifts have hit CSOs hard, intensifying competition for shrinking resources. These cuts are pushing civil society into crisis, especially in the global south. Meanwhile, debt burdens are mounting, global inequality is worsening, and a vicious circle - further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change - is taking hold. Entrenched inequities in the global financial system are caused by political choices, rooted in elite interests. While debates around taxing the ultra-wealthy and reforming the global financial system are not new - they have been persistent themes in economic justice struggles for decades - their resurgence amid growing crises signals increased urgency. These debates remain politically fragile, constrained by entrenched elite interests and the difficulty of securing global consensus. Despite this crisis, civil society is already adapting to funding pressures. **Uganda** has seen efforts to inspire locally led giving, including corporate grant-making programs and appeals for individual donations during crises, with the goal to promote community philanthropy as a source of 'warm money' that enhances local ownership and resilience. Others are sharing resources like spaces, auditors, and tools; pulling expertise for joint consortium work; and testing cross-sector collaborations with the private sector. In **Indonesia**, INFID and its partners are leading advocacy efforts to push for a Presidential Regulation on Civil Society Endowment Funds - a groundbreaking initiative that would enable direct support from the national budget to sustain CSOs.

Strategic implications:

Forus has a role to play in the reimagining of development finance, supporting alternative financing for civil society, and advocating for equity-based reforms, especially given our work around development banks. We will push for an enabling financial environment and track the rise of private actors and development banks in shaping development norms. We will support our members to diversify their funding sources and share successes (and failures - in order to learn together) across the Forus network.

©Forus General Assembly





SOCIAL: Eroding Rights, Rising Resistance

Globally, civil society faces a legitimacy crisis. CSOs are trying to navigate perceived roles and influence amid growing political and social polarisation. Misinformation, divisive narratives, and extremist movements in some contexts are normalised, shaping public perception, constraining human rights and limiting inclusive governance. Far right forces and conservative movements fill gaps left by democratic failures. Populist backlash, xenophobia, and fundamentalism are eroding human rights norms. In many places, CSOs are perceived as elite or foreign actors, and face negative narratives and reduced public trust. Questions are increasingly asked about CSOs' effectiveness, accountability, and extensive political influence, including in the global north. Environmental CSOs across the EU, for example, are accused by members of the European Parliament of corruption, opacity, and working against EU interests. Economic crises and social fragmentation are fuelling protests and repression. Grassroots movements, youth mobilisation, feminist organising, and calls for localisation and decolonisation are gaining visibility in some contexts, but their growth and impact remain uneven and fragile.

Strategic implications:

Forus will support members to rebuild public trust and to move towards localisation. We will be allies to those movements which are under threat.

©CoP29 and UN General Assembly





TECHNOLOGICAL: Between Innovation and Inequality

Digitalisation is transforming civil society work, while widening digital divides. Many CSOs lack the capacity to harness digital tools or respond to AI-driven threats like disinformation, surveillance, and data colonialism. At the same time, digital platforms offer opportunities for advocacy, fundraising, capacity strengthening, and participation. Regulation lags behind tech development, and the dominance of private sector actors in setting digital norms is a growing concern, while civil society continues to face structural barriers to engage in internet governance spaces.

Strategic implications:

Forus has an important role to play in pushing for inclusive digital transformation and ethical rights-based governance. We will focus on digital capacity strengthening and multilingual awareness raising, ensuring members are equipped to engage in digital policy spaces, and promote equitable, rights-based digital futures. We will help ensure civil society's voice is not left out of governance of the digital sphere.

LEGAL: The Weaponisation of Law

Repressive legal frameworks are proliferating, often under the guise of security, anti-terrorism, or digital regulation. Laws are being used to restrict CSO registration, funding, and operations - and increasingly individual activists. Online content filtering, internet shutdowns, and cybercrime laws are increasingly used to silence dissent. International legal systems meant to protect civic space are being eroded, and national judicial systems are often politicised or weakened. In response, civil society is strengthening global peer learning and support spaces - with the EU SEE initiative playing a catalytic role, creating structured platforms for civil society actors to share strategies, lessons learned, and early warnings related to shrinking civic space. These spaces allow organisations facing threats - such as anti-CSO laws, cybersecurity restrictions, or abrupt funding cuts - to learn from others who have faced similar challenges and to collectively develop resilience strategies.

Strategic implications:

Forus will continue to monitor and challenge acute legal restrictions highlighted by members, provide solidarity and support to affected members, and work to protect civic space online and offline. This may include support to members in influencing legislative drafting, constitutional review processes, and institutionalising enabling legislation.



ENVIRONMENTAL: A Climate Crisis that is Exacerbating Injustices

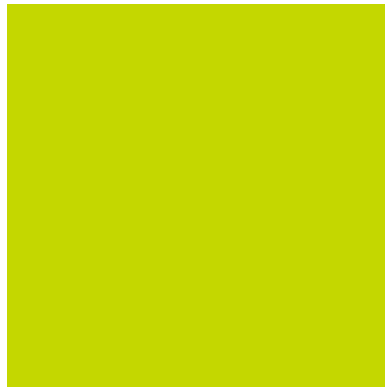
The climate crisis is accelerating and disproportionately affecting the most marginalised and colonised people, and has systemic implications for justice, inequality and human rights. While environmental justice is increasingly embedded in global development frameworks, it remains severely under-prioritised in implementation - where actions are still far off track and fail to address the systemic inequalities at the heart of the crisis. Major powers are backsliding on climate commitments, and green finance mechanisms often bypass the communities most affected. Climate-related migration, resource conflicts, and environmental degradation are driving instability. Progressive action from a wide coalition of civil society actors and Small Island Developing States has led to a ray of hope recently - the International Court of Justice’s advisory opinion affirming legal obligations on major emitters of CO2, recognising a healthy environment as a human right, and opening pathways for reparations

Strategic implications:

Forus will play a role in linking climate justice to the enabling environment for civil society, financing, and human rights agendas - ensuring that social and environmental justice are addressed together, not in silos. We recognise the importance of global climate organisations and their networks and will work in partnership to amplify messages.

This PESTLE analysis provides the backdrop for Forus’ strategic choices. The challenge ahead is not only to navigate these dynamics, but to influence them.





©Forus General Assembly

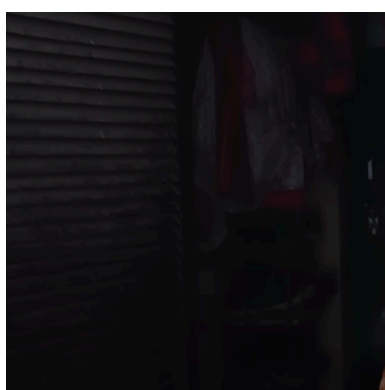
SWOT Analysis

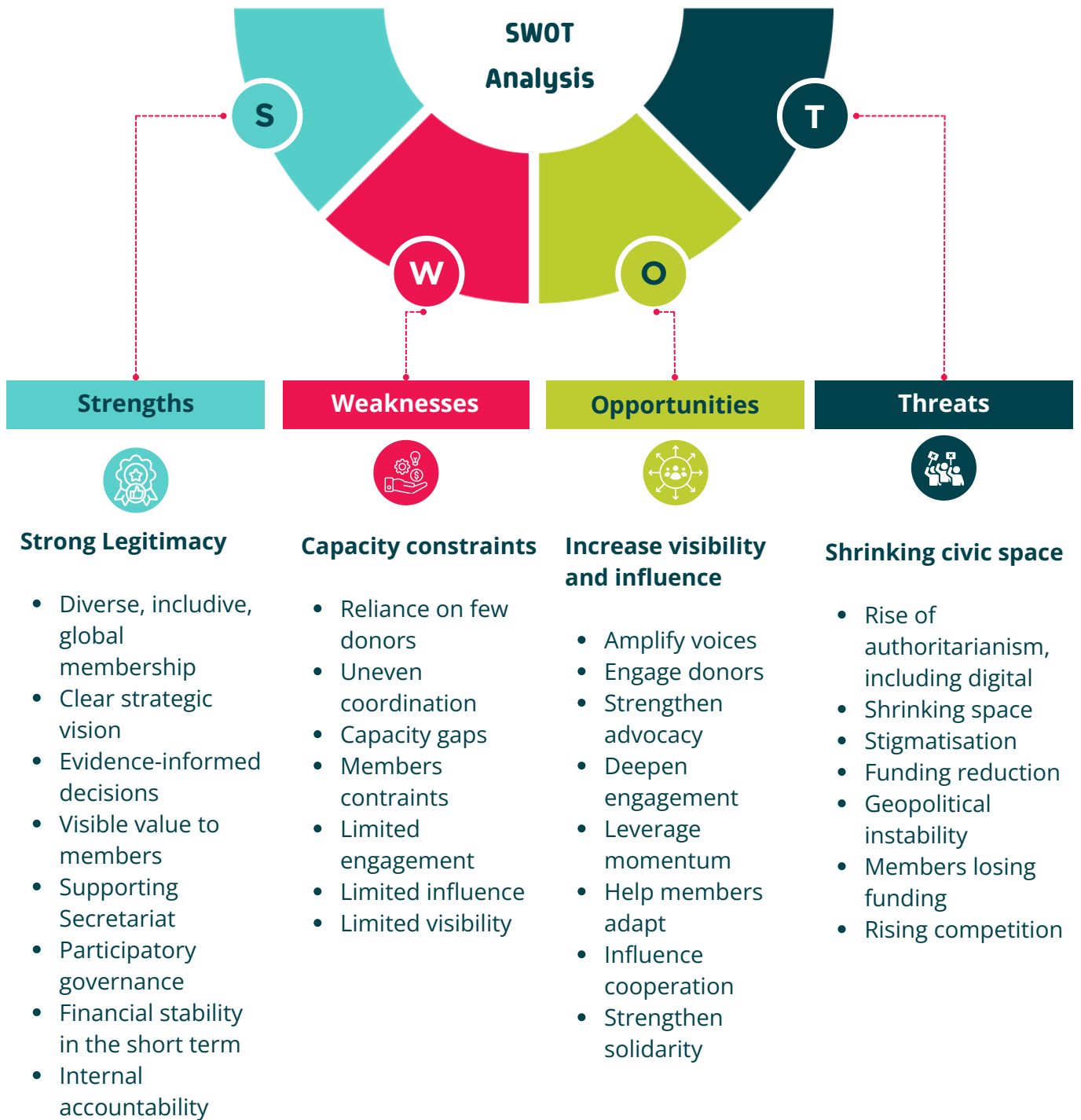
This SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, based on staff discussions and results of the membership survey, is designed to inform strategic choices in a volatile external environment, where Forus must carefully balance ambition, focus, and resource constraints. We will capitalise on our strengths, address our weaknesses, be mindful of the threats and try to take advantage of the opportunities.

Forus stands on a strong foundation: a diverse and globally representative membership, high levels of trust and engagement, and a Secretariat that provides visible value through capacity strengthening, convening, and responsive support. Our participatory governance model and evidence-informed culture position us as a credible and accountable network. These strengths give us the legitimacy and resilience to act collectively at a time when civil society needs it most. Yet challenges remain. Forus is financially stable in the short term, but long-term sustainability is threatened by reliance on a narrow donor base. Our influence in global decision-making spaces is still limited, and uneven regional coordination hampers our reach. Members face internal capacity constraints, and external threats are intensifying: shrinking civic space, growing authoritarianism, funding cuts, and geopolitical fragmentation. Against this backdrop, there is also opportunity. Forus could amplify member voices, strengthen collective advocacy, engage more deeply with youth, feminist and grassroots actors, and help members adapt to political, financial, and digital transitions. By leveraging our projects and partnerships, and by investing in our network health, we can both protect civil society's space and influence the path of global cooperation towards greater justice, equity, and solidarity.

Further details are in Annex 3.

©Forus Financing Change Documentary





©Forus General Assembly





©Forus General Assembly

OUR VISION, MISSION, AND PRINCIPLES

Vision

A vibrant global network of credible and effective National NGO Platforms and Regional Coalitions making a major collective contribution to development, peace, democracy and justice.

Mission

Forus catalyses collective action among National NGO Platforms and Regional Coalitions to defend and enhance the enabling environment for civil society, influence global development agendas, and strengthen the legitimacy and resilience of civil society. Through convening, capacity strengthening, and strategic advocacy, Forus supports its members to adapt to shifting political, financial, and technological landscapes - ensuring that civil society remains a powerful force for development, peace, democracy, and justice.

What we stand for

Grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals, and international human rights norms, Forus members unite around the pursuit of justice and dignity. We fight for a world that is more equitable, diverse, and inclusive, reflecting humanity's shared ideals across cultures and traditions.



Principles

Horizontal relationships: we work to empower members to lead and join in action towards change, learning from each other's knowledge and experiences. We recognise 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 our 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.

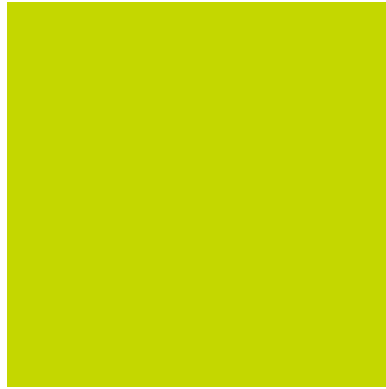
Inclusion: Every member has equal power to influence all processes. Our governance bodies are diverse in terms of language, gender, age and geographical representation. We actively listen and take into account diverse views, and make decisions in a collective way.

Independence of members: Members' strategies and activities are independent of the influence of Forus' Secretariat and governance, while working together to achieve our common strategy. Members remain fully autonomous in defining their strategies and positions.

©Forus General Assembly

Members also adhere to our 'Charter of Values' - a commitment to shared values, and to develop joint strategies and actions.

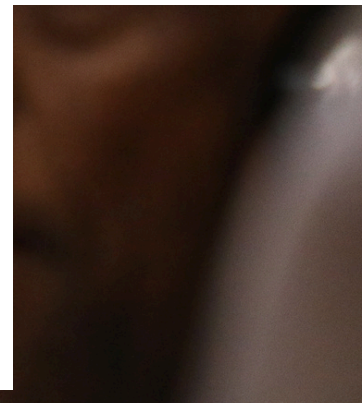
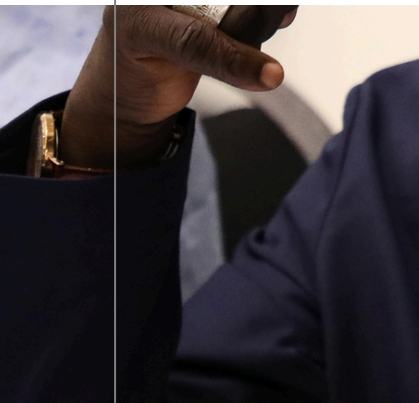
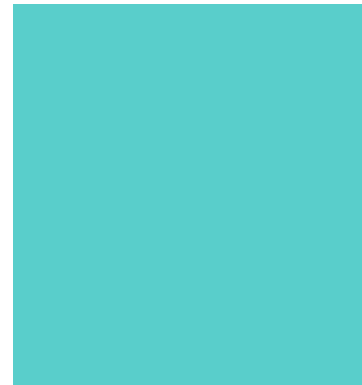
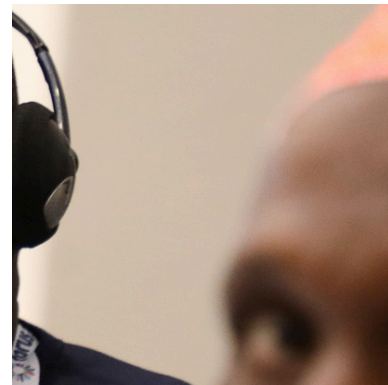
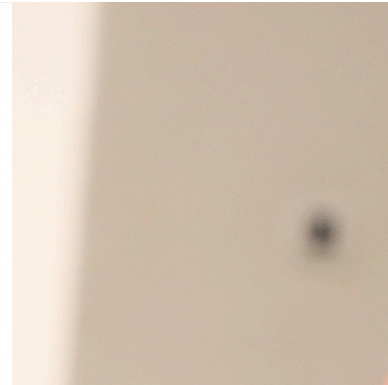




©Forus General Assembly

LEGITIMACY AND REPRESENTATION

In 2025, Forus represents 73 National Platforms and seven Regional Coalitions, spanning five continents.





The 73 National Platforms include:

- 25 in **Africa**
- 10 in **Asia**
- 18 in **Europe**
- 13 in **Latin America and the Caribbean**
- 1 in **Middle East and North Africa**
- 2 in **North America**
- 4 in **the Pacific**



Geographical spread of Forus' 73 National Platforms

Our seven Regional Coalitions include three in Africa (West Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa), one in Europe, one in Asia, one in the Pacific, and one in Latin America and the Caribbean

Our members collectively represent over 24,000 organisations, including national CSOs and international NGOs working on development. Our national platforms are umbrella organisations with national-level NGOs and CSOs as members. The national platforms are a space 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, and may work on social and economic justice, health, gender equality, disaster risk reduction, human rights, climate action and environmental protection, sustainable resources management, etc.

©Forus Council Picture





A particularity of Forus is that it mirrors the current institutional setup of the multilateral system, with national NGO platforms ‘representing’ countries, much in the way national governments represent their countries within the UN system. This representative structure has been a deliberate choice, aiming to ensure that Forus:

- Is distinct from other global networks, **being the only network which brings together national NGO platforms for development and regional coalitions**,
- Has a **high level of legitimacy** at the national, regional and global level,
- Is **well connected to the needs and aspirations of citizens and communities** through the national NGO platforms and their members, and
- Has a **global advocacy reach**, with the ability to influence in over 70 countries.

Our legitimacy is rooted in our members as the driving force of the network. We aim to empower members to participate in spaces where their voices can be heard and their causes recognised. 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, 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. We have a specific role in structuring, strengthening and inspiring national platforms and regional coalitions to amplify their voices on the global stage.



Our legitimacy is rooted in our members as the driving force of the network.



©Forus General Assembly

THEORY OF CHANGE

Our Theory of Change is designed to respond to a shifting and increasingly constrained environment for civil society. Our approach is built around three pillars - **Connect, Support, Influence** - with an underlying focus on **network health**. Our activities seek to reinforce the power, relevance, and legitimacy of our network, working towards both our five-year goal and our overall vision.

Vision: A vibrant global network of credible and effective National NGO Platforms and Regional Coalitions making a major collective contribution to development, peace, democracy and justice.

Goal, Our Guiding Star: By 2030, Forus will be a more resilient and interconnected global network whose members have successfully navigated shifting political, financial, and technological contexts. Through strengthened solidarity, strategic alliances, and collective action, we will have defended and expanded the enabling environment for civil society, advanced democratic values, and promoted people-centred, rights-based policies - helping to build more just and inclusive societies.

To navigate an uncertain and shifting world, we draw inspiration from ancient navigation systems that used the stars to guide ocean journeys. The 2026 – 2030 strategy is shaped by our own shared **Star Map** - a constellation that reflects our collective vision and direction. At its centre is a single **Guiding Star**, the five-year goal. Surrounding it are three **constellations**, representing our three strategic pillars, each with their own smaller stars - the intermediate outcomes we aim to achieve under each pillar. Forus itself is the *va'a*, a traditional Polynesian ocean-going canoe powered by collective effort. Its strength lies in the health of the network (the underlying focus): resilient, balanced, trust-based, and interconnected. When the *va'a* is strong and the Star Map clear, Forus can move together with clarity, conviction and purpose toward our Guiding Star.

However, we recognise that not all *va'a* are making the journey unscathed. Many civil society actors, including some of our members, are in survival mode, struggling to stay afloat in the face of growing repression, funding cuts, and public mistrust. This reality reinforces our collective responsibility to strengthen solidarity, share resources, and ensure that no part of our network is left behind.



In this Theory of Change, each smaller star (intermediate outcome) for each constellation (Strategic Pillar) is a precondition for reaching the Guiding Star: without strong connections, we lack the collective power to act; without support, we cannot sustain engagement or adapt to changing realities; without influence, voices can be ignored; and without network health, coordination and trust collapse. These outcomes are the building blocks of a network that is empowered, connected, and influential at all levels. Together, they create a living **Star Map** - an ecosystem that is adaptive, strategic, and impactful.



At the heart of this model is a clear causal claim: that the ‘intermediate outcomes’ we pursue under each pillar are jointly necessary to achieve our five-year goal, and the activities we will undertake under each pillar are jointly necessary to achieve our intermediate outcomes.

- The **Connect** pillar builds infrastructure for collective action - key for an effective global network.
- The **Support** pillar strengthens the resilience and capacities of members - enabling them to adapt and survive in hostile contexts.
- The **Influence** pillar ensures we are not only present but influential in shaping the future of development, protecting and strengthening the enabling environment for civil society and challenging unjust economic and governance systems - shifting power in the direction of justice and inclusion and responding to the needs of the communities with whom our members work.

Network health is a fundamental building block to the success of Forus. Trust, shared purpose, solidarity and strong relationships are what allow distributed, diverse networks like Forus to act collectively and strategically, despite resource constraints or political barriers. We have decided to explicitly focus on the health of our network because, by doing so, we will be better able to centre the importance of network health in our work.

©Forus General Assembly



Trust, shared purpose, solidarity and strong relationships are what allow distributed, diverse networks like Forus to act collectively and strategically, despite resource constraints or political barriers.



©Forus General Assembly

Assumptions Underpinning our Theory of Change

External Assumptions

- The enabling environment for civil society will keep deteriorating, at all levels. This will make our work harder, and will necessitate preparations for tougher scenarios, and honest reflections on past shortcomings.
- Civil society is already fighting back, and will continue to do so in the coming years, even with reduced spaces and funding.
- ODA budgets will continue to decline, and donors will act more transactionally - driven by political self-interest, not solidarity.
- The development cooperation system is fragmenting, and this opens space to reimagine and rebuild it on more just foundations, recognising the nexus between the closely interlinked humanitarian, development, and peace-building agendas.
- The multilateral system, despite its weakening, remains essential for rights-based cooperation and must be defended, even as influence shifts elsewhere.
- Civil society will need to engage in processes to define a post-2030 framework, but must be realistic that governments may continue to instrumentalise these frameworks for legitimacy rather than accountability. To be effective, CSOs will need to address past shortcomings in engagement with Agenda 2030, including the negotiations which led to its agreement.
- Active, collaborative participation by civil society remains key to influencing both local and global agendas and building a more effective international community for promoting a just and sustainable world, where the most vulnerable populations have a voice, human rights are respected, and inequalities and injustice are fought.

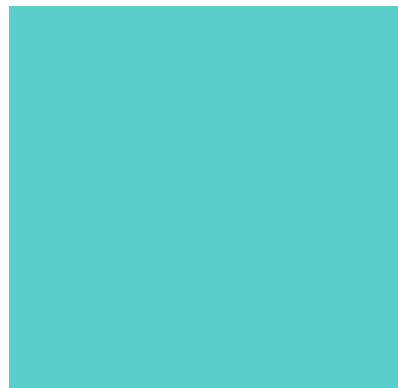


Internal Assumptions

- Forus members (and their members) must adapt, building more diversified funding and business models.
- Participation in global networks like Forus will become harder due to shrinking resources, even if such spaces remain crucial.
- AI and tech advances will matter more - but the digital divide will be harder to close.
- Stronger internal relationships and trust are a prerequisite for collective external influence.
- Strategic alliances will be crucial in the coming years. Without strong alliances with relevant partners it will be harder to achieve our goal.

This Theory of Change assumes that power is shifting, resources are tightening, and legitimacy is contested - but that when CSOs are connected, capable, trusted, and organised, we can not only resist, respond, and transform ourselves, but also reimagine the system, influence policies, agendas and norms, and create positive changes for the communities with whom we work.

The visual version of our Theory of Change is in Annex 1.



©Forus General Assembly





©Forus General Assembly

SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS AND NETWORK WEAVING

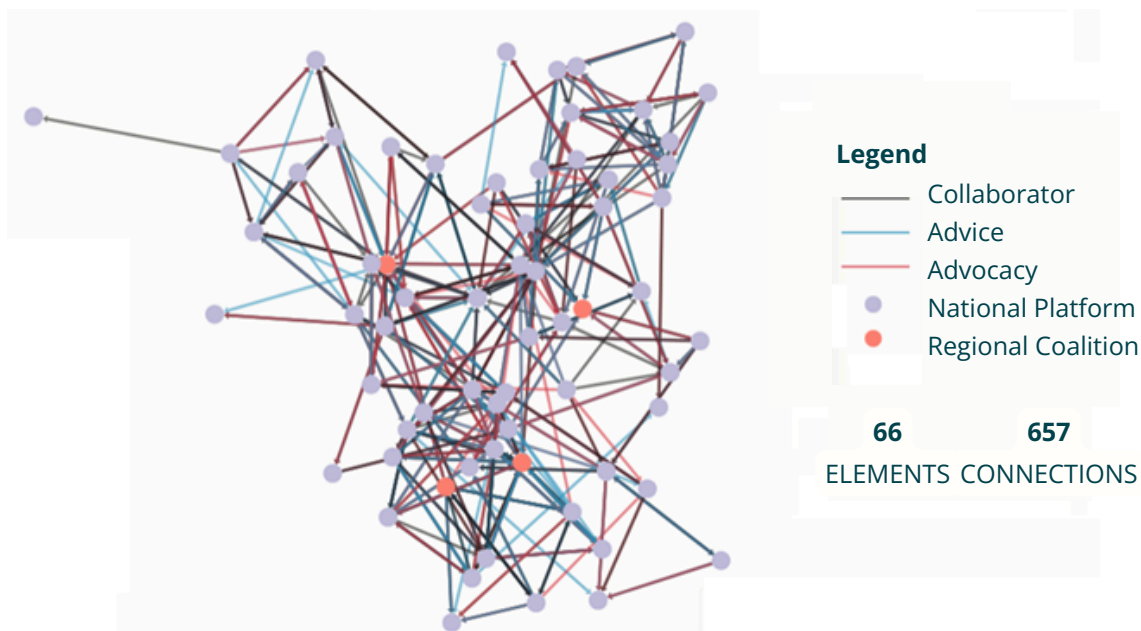
As part of the work to understand the current contexts facing Forus members, we conducted a Social Network Analysis (SNA). This analysis serves as a benchmark of the current status of the network, a visualisation of relationships between members, and as a way to show changes over time. As such, SNA is one key methodology that not only supports strategic interventions in the *structure* of the network (called network weaving), but also measures changes in network health over time.

The data behind a social network analysis goes beyond analysing each member and includes an understanding of the relationships *between* members. Based on these relationships, we can easily see which members are more connected and which are less connected to other members of the network. And, if there are intentional goals around connecting (for example), newer members or those otherwise on the margins of the network, a set of interventions called *network weaving* can support those changes. These interventions contribute to the overall health of a network.

SNA can be used as a benchmarking tool, and, if data is collected repeatedly, as a way to understand how a network changes over time. Combined with network weaving, we can make intentional interventions in the network and see its structure change over time, strengthening connections, fostering collaboration and promoting knowledge sharing.

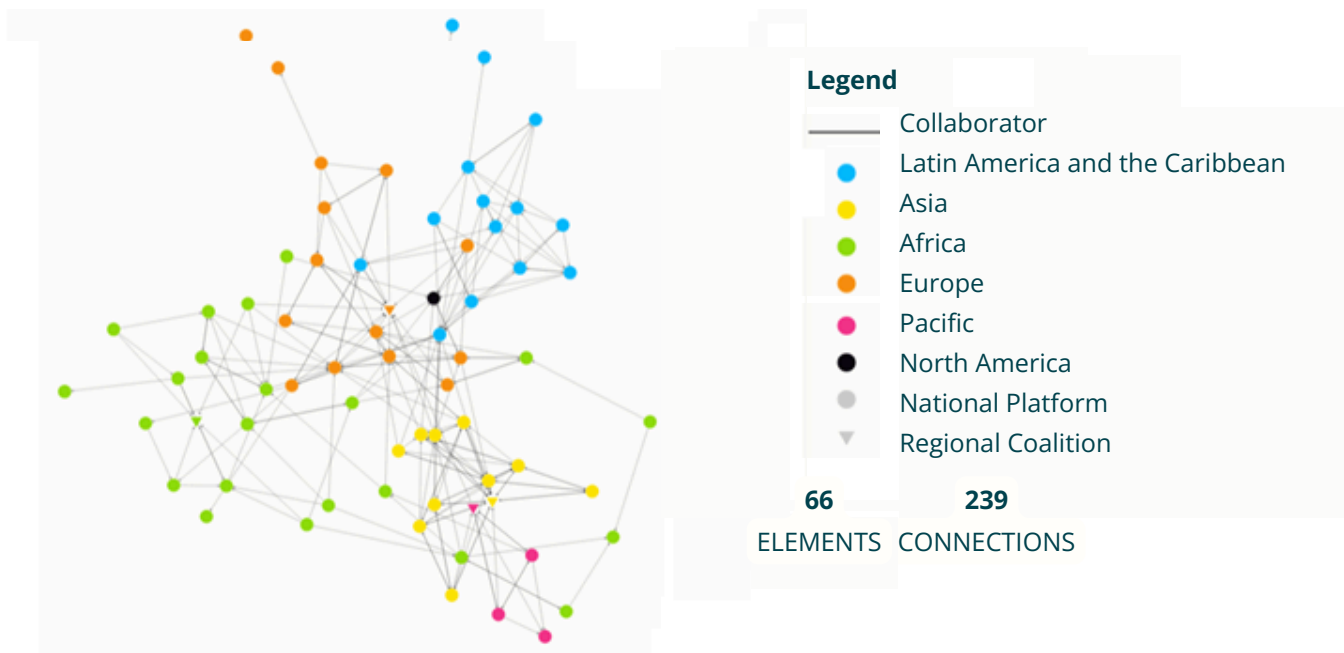
In the summer of 2025 Forus collected SNA data for the first time, and we used that to produce a series of maps, two of which are shared below.

The additional data that we collected in the members survey for SNA were about the kinds of relationships members have with each other. We asked about three specific types of relationships: collaboration, advice giving, and joint advocacy. Like any survey, these measures are subjective, so “collaboration” may mean different things to different survey participants. However, we wanted to capture a broad range of interactions between members - from deep, ongoing work together (collaborations); going to another member for guidance (advice giving); and aligning together for shared political work (joint advocacy).



Forus full member network map (Summer 2025)

In the full network map, one can appreciate the quantity of relationships - among the 66 member organisations that completed the survey, there were 657 reported connections. These connections were separated into 3 kinds of relationship: collaboration, advice giving, and joint advocacy. A typical pattern of a healthy network that includes a dense core, or center, is visible, along with several members along the margins of the network.



Forus regional network map: Collaborations between members coloured by region (Summer 2025)



When network members are coloured by regions, it's apparent that there are more relationships *within* each region than *between* regions. Notice how, for example, the blue circles (Latin American members) are clustered together, similar to African members. Interestingly, there are several members who are **bridges** between regions, which represents a set of skills that may be useful to share with other network members. Ideally, in a well-connected, healthy global network, there would be less clustering between regions, as cross-regional collaborations would be more frequent. We can employ intentional interventions, called network weaving, to support this goal and move toward a healthier network.

Network weaving is an embodiment of two of Forus' values: horizontal relationships and inclusion. Network weaving is a way of approaching relationships that promote the health of a network. Network weaving includes facilitating transactional exchanges between members - the most basic and necessary interactions in a network, such as knowledge exchange around a particular topic. This can later lead toward deeper relationships, like a group for experimenting and innovating around an emerging topic such as innovative financing. 83% of members expressed interest in learning about how to become network weavers.

Additionally, members that already find themselves in bridging roles - bringing together diverse clusters (e.g. regions in this case) of other members, can offer a set of skills that promote network health, like linguistic and cultural translation, understanding and working across multiple contexts, and perhaps playing a role in new collaborations across typical disconnections within a network.

At a high level, we will intentionally include network weaving in our work in the following ways:

Monitor network health

- Collecting SNA data regularly (every year or two) to track the evolution of our network relationships and health
- Using the data collected in the SNA to do network weaving - led by well-supported members

Build on member interest in network weaving

- Supporting a few early adopters and growing a weaving community over time
- Creating a community of practice and supporting a culture of weaving across the network
- Creating an easy get-started guide to highlight ideas and actions to take to promote network health
- Using the opportunity of Forus General Assemblies and other major gatherings to spotlight network weaving
- Recognising trained network weavers who could act as peer support to those wanting to practise

We consider network health as a collectively stewarded resource that supports Forus' work across all pillars. It is the vessel that sustains members and their relationships - stronger network health promotes stronger impact across each pillar, helping us work towards our Guiding Star.



©Forus General Assembly

CONNECT, SUPPORT, INFLUENCE AND NETWORK HEALTH

Forus' 2026-2030 strategy builds on the success of the 2021 - 2025 strategy, and particularly the 'Three Pillar' approach, by which the work was organised around three strategic pillars of action: **Connect - Support - Influence**. Recognising the importance of relationships and trust within Forus, work will be underpinned by a more explicit focus on **network health**.

The three pillars are all interconnected, and progress towards one pillar will intentionally strengthen work towards other pillars. The pillars are constellations of our Star Map, each helping guide us towards our Guiding Star - Forus' five-year goal. While some 'intermediate outcomes' clearly belong in one specific pillar, others could legitimately be under one or another pillar. This reflects both the complexity and the interconnectedness of the work, and will necessitate strong coordination amongst the Forus secretariat.

Each smaller star (intermediate outcome) for each constellation (Strategic Pillar) is a precondition for reaching the Guiding Star: without strong **connections**, we lack the collective power to act; without **support**, we cannot sustain engagement or adapt to changing realities; without **influence**, voices can be ignored; and without **network health**, coordination and trust collapse. These outcomes are the building blocks of a network that is empowered, connected, and influential at all levels. Together, they create a living **Star Map** - an ecosystem that is adaptive, strategic, and impactful. In other words, while none of the pillars are sufficient on its own, their combined effect creates the conditions for Forus to play a transformative role in working towards its goal.

This strategy builds on the spirit and commitments of existing grants. The 'core activities' highlighted are examples of how we might concretely implement this strategy, but we recognise the need for flexibility to change course as the context dictates. 'New' activities which cannot be funded via existing grants will necessitate additional funding, or revisiting funding agreements with current donors.



Pillar 1. Connect

The 'Connect' pillar will promote deeper and wider member-to-member interaction, collaboration and links, across regions and with other strategic actors - activists, allies, social movements and other civil society networks. By deepening connections and enabling coordinated action, the Connect Pillar strengthens CSO resilience and provides the foundation for more effective advocacy and civic space protection across the network.

Intermediate outcomes

By 2030, we will have:

- Strengthened our collaborative infrastructure supporting member-to-member interaction, building deeper connections across regions
- Strengthened the learning and sharing of experience between members, especially between regions
- Strengthened our internal communications across and between all parts of the network
- Engaged in and led strategic alliances, within and beyond the CSO sector

Core activities

- **Decentralised and multilingual communication channels.** Developing and maintaining multilingual list-serves which enable members to engage with each other without passing through the Secretariat, and ensuring that these solutions are available to all members
- **Creating inclusive collaborative spaces.** Supporting the creation and facilitation of new spaces and infrastructure for members to interact, align, collaborate, experiment and innovate around shared priorities, expertise, and thematic interests, with a particular focus on strengthening South-South, triangular, sub-regional, and inter-regional connections. Exploring collaboration between functional roles across membership - for example, exchanges between CEOs, Advocacy Directors, or fundraisers.
- **Sharing of practical resources.** Facilitating the sharing of practical resources between members, such as training opportunities, tools, and methodologies that can build capacity and reduce duplication.
- **Focusing on alliances.** Facilitating and catalysing alliances for advocacy and resource mobilisation, recognising that collaborating with external networks can support members' goals and reduce pressure on Forus. Reinforcing solidarity with other key sectors - climate coalitions, academia, social movements.

Forus is very good at connecting and facilitation learning among members: we can always rely on Forus to find a partner for events, speaking opportunities or joint work





Pillar 2. Support

The 'Support' pillar will focus on supporting members to navigate the external context, both politically and economically. Through this pillar Forus will provide targeted, flexible, and member-led support in key areas responding to members needs, potentially including political analysis, localisation, financial sustainability, digital empowerment, and strategic foresight, enabling them to thrive in a dynamic and challenging global context. This pillar recognises the role of members as leaders and drivers at the national and regional levels, and aims to support them in this leadership.

Intermediate outcomes

By 2030, we will have:

- Supported members to adapt to shifting political, financial, and technological contexts, so that members are stronger, more resilient, more trusted, and better able to carry out their work effectively
- Equipped members to confidently create avenues to increase their financial health, both in terms of diversification of funding streams and financial resilience
- Supported the emergence of a new generation of leadership within the Forus ecosystem

Core activities

- **Conducting political and strategic foresight.** Conducting regular political analysis of global developments, working with trusted partners (think tanks, universities, research institutions) to inform member strategies and convene learning sessions.
- **Focusing on organisational development, resilience and financial sustainability.** Supporting members to strengthen their financial sustainability by promoting diversified financial models, cost-efficiency strategies, and partnerships with specialists in CSO financial health. Exploring the possibility of pooled funding mechanisms for Forus members, in partnership with philanthropic foundations, governments and networks.
- **Peer learning and capacity strengthening.** Facilitating peer-learning spaces and co-creation experiences (e.g. hackathons), including through partnerships that bring in external expertise, to help members develop robust structures and adapt to emerging shifts (e.g. digital and technological, localisation, shifting power, reducing reliance on INGOs, exploring what civil society actors need to do differently to support each other, to effectively influence and to build a more just society), and to help them to help their members do the same.
- **Investing in the next generation of civil society leaders.** Focusing on identifying, nurturing, and empowering emerging leaders within the network and member platforms, to ensure long-term renewal and relevance. Maintaining and developing the Leadership Development Programme (with a particular focus on promoting gender equality in leadership).
- **Scaling up work on public engagement.** Supporting peer learning and skill-building in narrative building, advocacy, and public engagement, recognising the declining trust the public has in CSOs in many countries, and the impact this has on both funding and civic space for members.



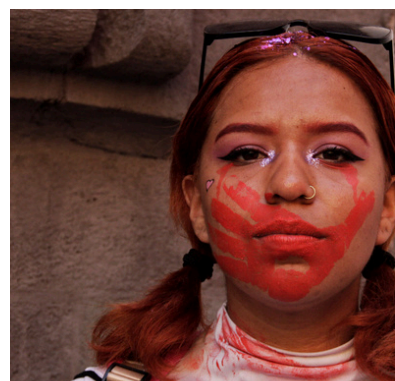
Pillar 3. Influence

Forus exists to ensure that civil society is not only protected, but heard and heeded - influencing systems, shaping decisions, and driving the transformation needed for a just, inclusive, and sustainable future. In a context of accelerating civic space restrictions, shrinking public funding, geopolitical fragmentation, and democratic backsliding, our advocacy will combine **protection and proposition**: defending hard-won spaces while advancing bold, future-oriented alternatives. We believe that change will not come solely from traditional spaces, that power is increasingly contested, decentralised, and reconfigured. This is why our influencing work bridges the local and the global, amplifying member-led advocacy, connecting evidence to decision-making, and supporting collective campaigns across the network.

Forus fights for a development system that is just, inclusive, and rooted in the realities of those closest to the ground. Recognising that our value add lies in our ability to navigate the politics of global, multilateral process, our influencing work is anchored in five global priorities and processes identified by members - the enabling environment for civil society, the SDGs and post-2030 development cooperation, reimagined multilateralism, just and accountable financing, and ethical and inclusive digital transformation. The nature of Forus means that our influencing work makes concerted efforts to ensure that national perspectives and priorities influence the regional and global levels, and vice versa.

However, there is an uncomfortable truth: **influencing efforts have not yet succeeded in reversing the current negative trends** - though perhaps efforts have slowed the trends and created spaces which are unaffected by these trends. The world is moving in directions that threaten civic space and justice, and the communities with whom Forus members work bear the greatest cost. This stark reality exposes a profound tension at the heart of the work - the urgent need to protect what remains under threat, while simultaneously building the foundations for meaningful progress when political openings arise - recognising that this crisis provides an opportunity to transform underlying unjust realities. As such, we will critically reflect on our influencing tactics and ways of working, committing to avoid repeating approaches that have not been effective enough in delivering change. Our strategies will be adaptive, grounded in both realism and ambition, and regularly recalibrated to respond to shifting political and social landscapes over the next five years.

©Forus General Assembly and Melania Torres/Forus





Intermediate outcomes

By 2030, we will have:

- Protected and expanded the enabling environment for civil society, using data, solidarity, and advocacy to influence governments and donors, hold them accountable for their commitments, and partner with them.
- Co-created a civil society agenda for the future of development cooperation and financing, rooted in justice, equity, and democratic ownership, and ensured meaningful civil society participation in the process to develop the future agenda.
- Strengthened civil society participation and influence in multilateral and regional decision-making spaces - both traditional (UN, OECD-DAC) and emerging (BRICS+, AU, CELAC, multilateral and public development banks etc.).
- Leveraged global commitments to advance civil society influence for transformative change and challenge unjust economic systems.
- Amplified inclusive digital transformation and digital rights, ensuring civil society voices shape the governance of digital systems and emerging technologies.
- Actively contributed to the ongoing discussions on the power shift and locally led development, exploring what organisations from the global north could differently to better collaborate with those from the global south.
- Supported members to strategically shape public discourse and policy in their own contexts - through evidence, storytelling, and collective messaging.

Core activities

- **Shaping and influencing key multilateral spaces and processes** that Forus is already engaged in (e.g. HLPF, FICS, FfD4, CSO-DAC Dialogue, Post-Agenda 2030, Global Gateway, IGF, etc). Selectively exploring other advocacy arenas in terms of impact and potential influence (e.g. BRICS+, AU, donor dialogues, etc) and supporting member-led pilot engagements. Navigating these spaces to prioritise and ensure meaningful participation of civil society, especially from the global south. Coordinating with members to respect mandates and leadership and avoid duplication.
- **Engaging in power mapping exercises** (with members and allies) to identify pressure points and strengthen Forus' capacity to run targeted, multilingual advocacy campaigns. Ensuring that results of these power mappings inform advocacy strategies, policy positions and impact initiatives. Facilitating advocacy labs and peer exchanges, enabling members to co-create influencing strategies based on local realities and global windows of opportunity. Intentionally analysing why previous influencing efforts have not been as successful as we would have hoped.
- **Leveraging member leadership and evidence**, amplifying asks, data and case studies to inform global advocacy and supporting member participation and visibility in key policy spaces. Fostering solidarity and coordinated advocacy across the network through early warning data, joint statements, and rapid-response mechanisms to defend civil society participation and support collective action. Co-creating bold, forward-looking policy positions and vision papers on key priorities to shape global debates and agendas.
- **Launching an annual flagship product** tracking trends in global cooperation, financing, CSO participation / contribution, reinforcing Forus' credibility as an evidence-based advocate.
- **Developing members' capacity to localise advocacy messages** and engage public opinion around our key advocacy priorities.
- **Championing intersectional approaches**, centering feminist, youth-led, and community-driven perspectives throughout our advocacy work.
- **Amplifying and supporting key messages** from coalitions, allies and partners, recognising the leadership of others.



Underlying priority: Network health

Network health refers to the internal functioning, relationships and processes within a network, such as collaboration, trust, communication, and resource distribution. These dynamics focus on how members interact, share resources, and align around a common purpose. Importantly, these issues are measurable and data driven. This priority builds on our assumption that stronger internal relationships and trust are a prerequisite for collective external influence. **The healthier the network is, the greater the impact it can have in the external world.**

This underlying priority also includes key organisational issues like financial security and governance. An explicit focus on network health will shine a spotlight on these issues and ensure that they remain an important part of our ongoing work.

Intermediate outcomes

By 2030, we will have:

- Nurtured a resilient, well-connected, and purpose-driven network, grounded in trust, solidarity, and effective internal systems
- Continuously learned from our experience, acted on feedback, and evolved our ways of working together to stay relevant and effective
- Strengthened meaningful and transformative member engagement in Forus
- Strengthened our inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance that enables shared leadership and timely decision-making
- Developed a more diversified and resilient funding base that enables strategic autonomy and long-term investment in our vision and mission
- Supported the skillset and culture of network weaving within Forus so that members can bring those to their own networks



©Melania Torress





Core activities

- **Measuring network health.** Building on strengthened member connections in the Connect pillar, Forus will use Social Network Analysis to inform progress.
- **Embedding trust-building in ways of working.** Intentionally integrating practices that nurture trust across the network, recognising these as foundational to collaboration and resilience. Exploring power dynamics and imbalances between members in the global south and the global north.
- **Focusing on learning and innovating.** Developing internal processes to identify and respond to shared learning priorities each year, adapting network-wide practices and plans accordingly. Systematising sharing of organisational innovations across the network.
- **Monitoring engagement trends** and adapt activities and processes to members' expectations and needs. Going beyond measuring levels of participation, focusing on measuring the meaningful aspects of member engagement - levels of trust, collaboration with other members, using influence positions etc.
- **Ensuring inclusive and accountable governance.** Facilitating regular reviews of Forus' governance model, assessing inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and effectiveness, recognising the need for a more strategic governance body to support the growing demands. Exploring peer-to-peer self regulatory accountability systems for members. Exploring the evolving role of Regional Coalitions within Forus.
- **Enhancing financial sustainability through diversification and experimentation.** Diversifying our donor base and exploring alternative financing models and alternative resources (open licenses, shared resources etc) to ensure long-term health and autonomy. Experimenting with new financing models, sharing successes and failures across the network.
- **Fostering solidarity mechanisms.** Developing a clear solidarity mechanism to enable members to support one another in moments of political, financial, or reputational crisis - whether through direct support, joint advocacy, or public statements of solidarity.
- **Supporting network weaving advocates and community of practice.** Facilitating learning and practising these new skills together, sharing challenges and successes.

©Forus General Assembly

A big thank you to Forus for all your hard work, passion, and professionalism. You've built a vital platform for us and other NGOs to connect and collaborate





Concrete examples of interlinkages between pillars

©PFNOSCM, Madagascar

Enabling Environment for civil society

Our work on the enabling environment crosses over all three pillars.



Influence

We push for political commitments to civic space at various levels - this work sits firmly in the Influence Pillar.



Support

However, securing political commitments in global spaces inevitably relies on national governments coming together to agree on those commitments, and this rarely happens without strong civil society engagement at the national level. Under the Support Pillar, Forus may organise meetings, webinars, or conferences in order to help members understand, navigate and influence such global processes.



Connect

And under the Connect Pillar, Forus may organise group exchanges for members to discuss, exchange and learn from each other, sharing intelligence and advocacy tactics.

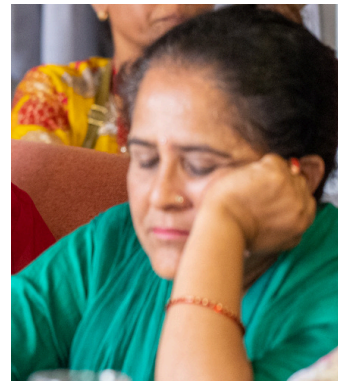


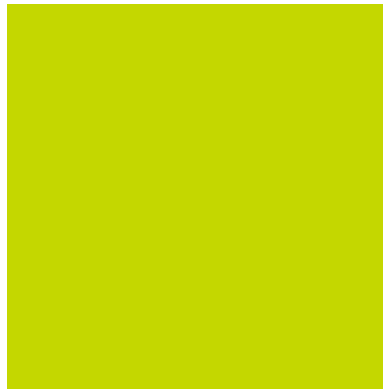


However, our work on the enabling environment is also very concrete, and reflects the nature of Forus as a global network of national NGO platforms and regional coalitions, rather than a traditional advocacy organisation. A key role that Forus plays in this arena is that of the **broker**. Forus has developed a clear value-add and expertise in navigating multilateral political processes and brokering civil society participation, particularly of members from the Global South, in these processes. Forus cannot, and should not, provide the thematic expertise for all of these processes - this expertise should come from the members. The expertise of Forus lies in its ability to navigate complex political processes and brokering meaningful civil society participation in these processes.

Our work on the resilience of civil society also straddles pillars. We are committed to supporting members to navigate the complex times we are living through, politically, economically, technologically. This work sits under the **Support Pillar**, with the secretariat actively helping members understand and navigate these changes - be it by developing toolkits, bringing in experts to explain the situation, or offering training to members. But it also sits under the **Connect Pillar**, recognising the expertise of our members and the willingness to share this expertise with other members. Supporting each other and learning from each other will be an important part of civil society resilience in the years to come.

©CADE





©Forus at FFD4

RECOGNISING AND RESPECTING THE DIFFERENT ROLES WITHIN FORUS

There are many constituent parts of Forus: National Platforms, Regional Coalitions, the Secretariat, the governance bodies (Executive Committee, Council, General Assembly) and the various Working Groups.

The General Assembly (GA)

The General Assembly (GA) is the ultimate decision-making body, where members gather to decide together on strategy, revise past activities and plan for the future. It takes place every two years, when possible in the form of face-to-face meetings. The GA is composed of one representative for each full member (National Platform).

The Forus Council

The Council is elected every 2 years by the GA. It is made up of **15 members**, with a regional distribution of seats. Its role is to ensure the implementation of decisions and strategic and political orientation voted upon in the GA, ensure the coordination of activities and the proper functioning of the executive team, and report on its activities and management.

Executive Committee

Certain Council functions are delegated to the **Executive Committee**, which consists of 5 members. The Committee is elected every two years by the Council.



©CNCD, 11.11.11., Belgium

National Platforms

National Platforms have three main roles within Forus:

- Pooling of resources: National platforms pool technical resources and human capacity, 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 mobilise the expertise of their members or external expertise to build and to promote collective positions. National platforms are particularly well-positioned to defend their members' 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 organised 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.

When Forus coordinates global advocacy via a specific initiative which may involve celebrating 'champion states' or calling out 'rogue states' (for example), national platforms would lead on the relationship with potential champion states and would inform decisions about potential champion / rogue states.

Regional Coalitions

The seven **Regional Coalitions** represent a space for National Platforms to come together and participate in regional initiatives. They cover West Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Europe and the Pacific. Having similar core missions as the national platforms, they play a crucial role to catalyse transnational collaborations and empower the voice of the sector at regional level. They act as bridges and amplifiers, coordinating cross-border tactics, engaging regional bodies, and reinforcing member campaigns. Like National Platforms, Regional Coalitions lead and participate in Forus' activities, including through specific working groups.



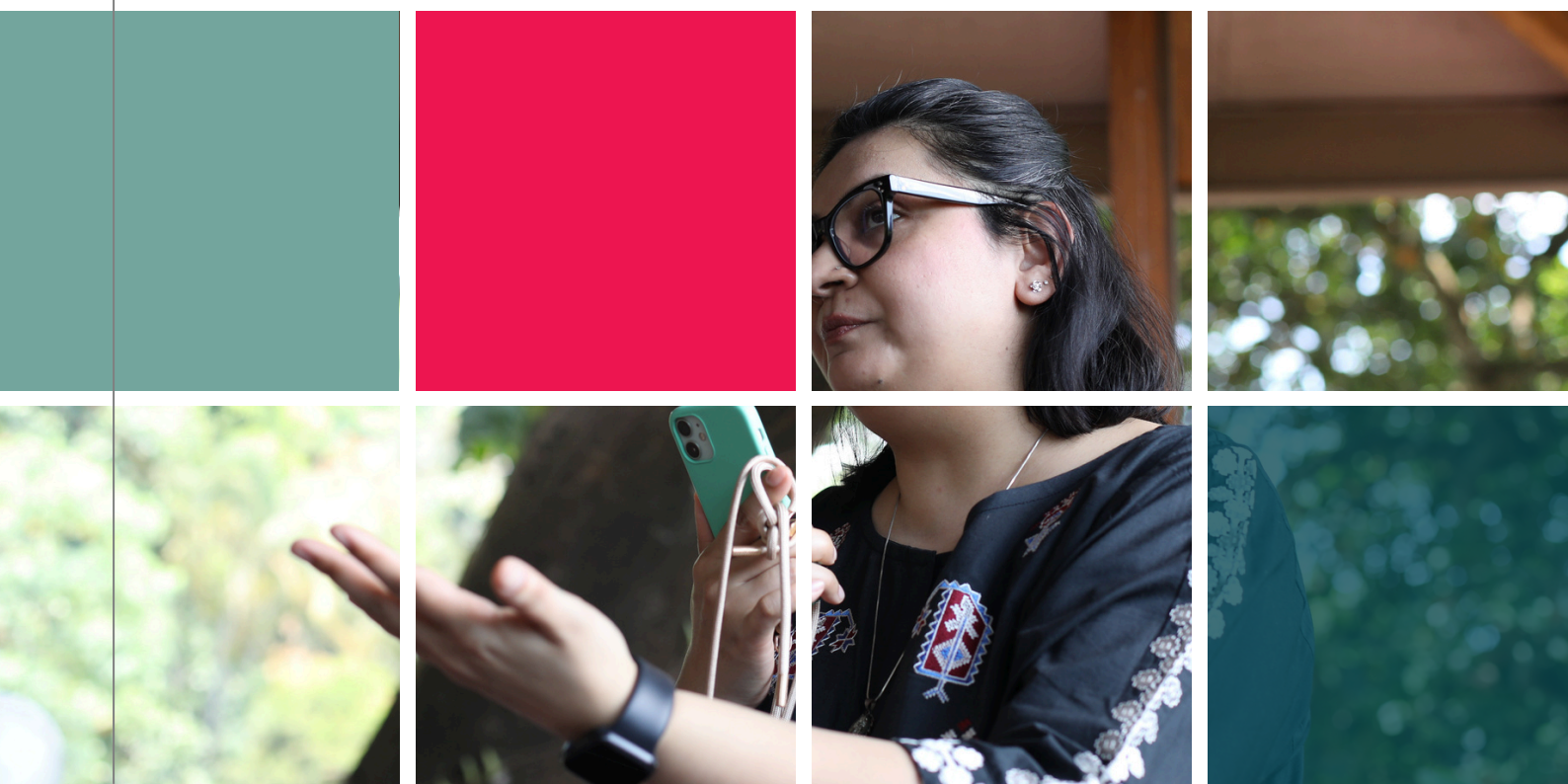
Working Groups

Working Groups are spaces for members (and invited guests, where relevant) to share experiences and strategies on key issues. In 2025, we have six Working Groups, mainly focusing on influencing topics: the enabling environment for civil society, local power, financing for sustainable development, digital governance and Agenda 2030. There is also a Working Group on communications. All Working Groups meetings have professional simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Spanish provided by the Forus Interpreters & Translators Pool in order to "communicate across borders" and to enable the active participation and inclusion of all members. Working Groups are time-bound, evolving to match the needs and priorities of Forus.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat is purposely decentralised, reflecting the global nature of Forus. Its role is to ensure the daily operations of the network, facilitating and coordinating the implementation of the directions and decisions taken in General Assemblies and in the Council meetings. As Forus is a member-led network which sees itself as supporting the overall move towards localisation, the role of the secretariat is to **support** and **enhance** the leadership of members, to **amplify** member voices, to **convene and connect** members, to **ensure** coherency and consistency of messaging, to **monitor** global policy developments, to **facilitate** member participation in global spaces and **support** members to grasp opportunities to participate, to **directly engage at the multilateral level**, and to **leverage** member expertise and their voice in service of Forus' Guiding Star. The Secretariat is under the responsibility of the Director who reports to the Executive Committee.

©Forus Leadership Development Programme





IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Implementing the strategy will require special attention to the enabling conditions that make implementation possible. We will prioritise five areas:



Ownership

Building ownership and understanding across the network. Successful implementation depends on members embracing the strategy. Forus will therefore invest in popularising the strategy through regular articles in the member newsletter, dedicated sessions at the General Assembly, and detailed discussions within the Secretariat.



Financial Plan

Developing a financial plan. The strategy will be fully costed, to distinguish between actions deliverable with existing resources and those requiring additional investment. On this basis, Forus will prepare funding proposals for priority areas that go beyond current commitments, ensuring financial sustainability.



Structures & Capacities

Calibrating structures and capacities. Forus will reflect on its ways of working to ensure they are aligned with the new strategic priorities. This will include reviewing the roles and effectiveness of Working Groups, ensuring the Secretariat has the skills needed to deliver, and adjusting governance mechanisms where necessary.

Influencing Priorities

Maintaining flexibility in influencing. The strategy recognises the complexity of the current global context and the need to take time for collective reflection on political analysis before selecting targets and tactics. Influencing priorities will be revisited and adjusted over time, acknowledging the fluid state of global cooperation and the importance of staying responsive to change.

Monitoring

Monitoring success. Forus will assess progress through indicators linked to the intermediate outcomes under each of the pillars. Baselines will be established where needed, and progress reviewed regularly to ensure accountability and allow for course correction. The monitoring approach will remain light and flexible, designed to capture learning as well as results.

These steps will lay the foundation for a strategy that is ambitious yet practical, resourced, adaptable, and collectively owned.

©Midia Ninja, Brazil

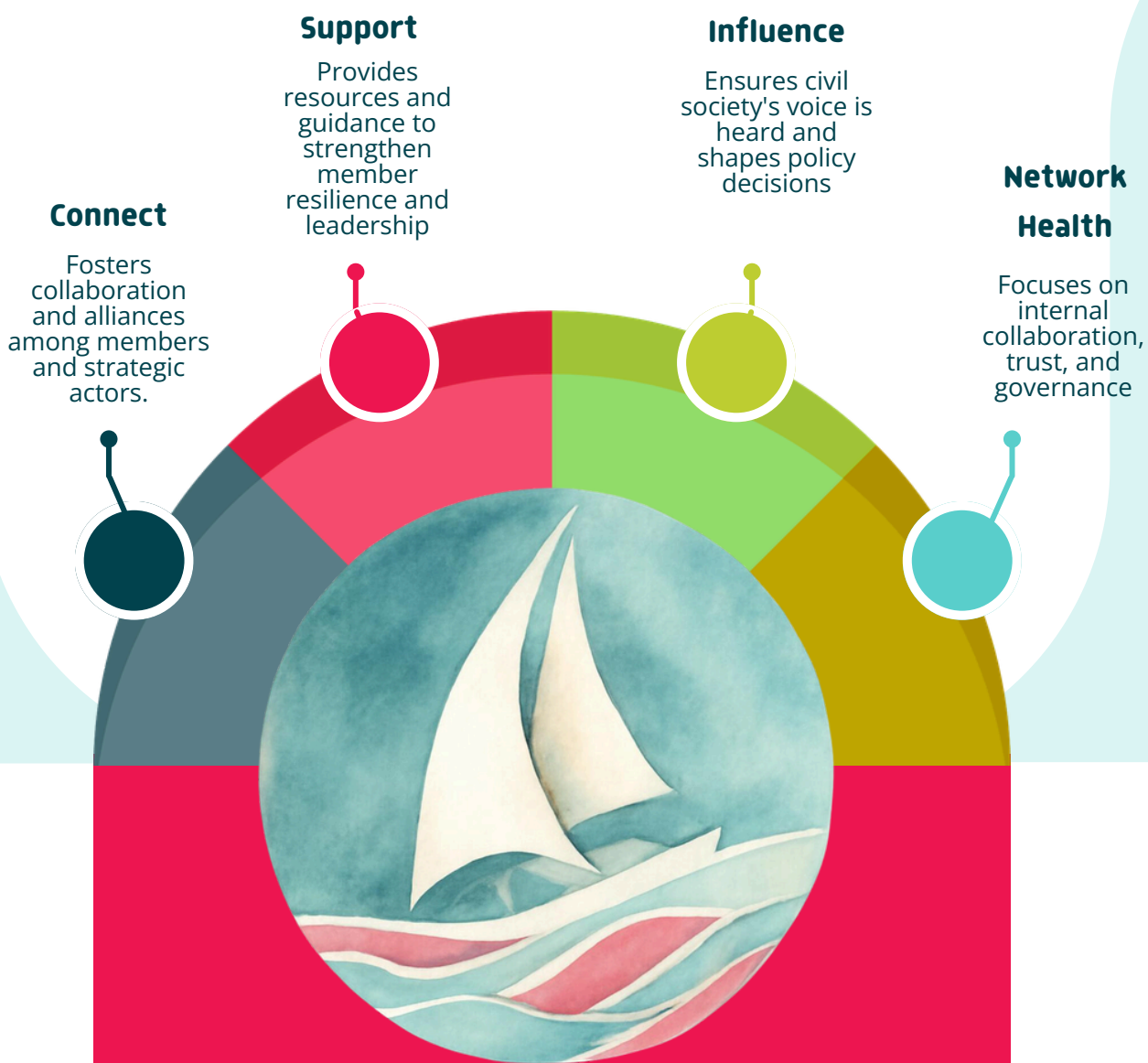




Forus Strategic Framework

Annex 1.

Forus Strategy 2026-2030



By 2030, Forus will be a more resilient and interconnected global network whose members have successfully navigated shifting political, financial, and technological contexts. Through strengthened solidarity, strategic alliances, and collective action, we will have defended and expanded the enabling environment for civil society, advanced democratic values, and promotes people-centred, rights-based-policies- helping to build more just and inclusive societies.



Full details of the process

Annex 2.

January

Conscious Consultants Worldwide was mandated to support the strategy development process.

Feb - April

66 members responded to a focused Membership Survey, representing 84% of the membership.

Five linguistic / geographic and three thematic Focus Group Discussions were held to reflect on the future strategy. Discussions were also held with participants in the Leadership Development Programme, the Staff team, the Executive Committee and the Council. 48 Forus members (63%) participated in discussions about the new strategy. Over 20 members took part in more than one discussion.

May

Early iterations of the Social Network Analysis were developed.

Two think pieces were produced, to stimulate discussion within the Council:

- Remaining Relevant in Uncertain Times
- Network Health, Network Perspectives

June

The Council discussed the early findings during a 1.5 day meeting in Praia, Cabo Verde.

July

A third think piece was produced, to stimulate further thinking about Forus influencing tactics:

- Rethinking Forus' Global Influencing Tactics

Two sessions were held with an ad hoc Influencing Reflection Group of 12 members highly engaged in Forus' advocacy work to discuss this paper and to undertake a power mapping of one of Forus' key areas of focus.

The first draft of the strategy was prepared.

August

The first draft of the strategy was reviewed by the Forus Council, Secretariat and a group of 'Critical Friends'.

September

A second draft of the strategy was discussed in a series of five linguistic / geographic Focus Group Discussions, bringing together a total of 32 members.

October

A third draft of the strategy was discussed by the Council.

November

The final version of the strategy was reviewed and formally adopted by the Council.



Full SWOT Analysis

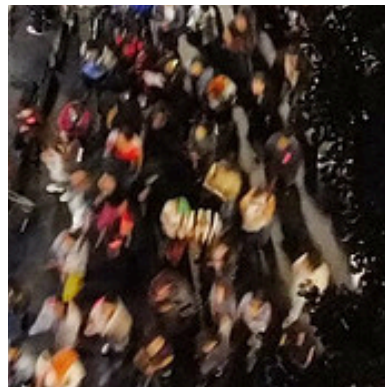
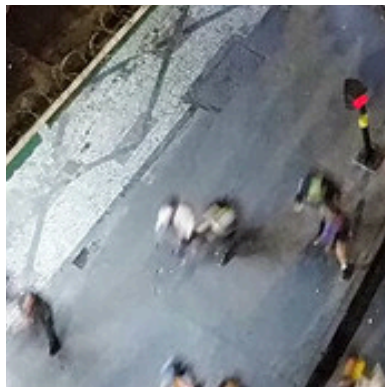
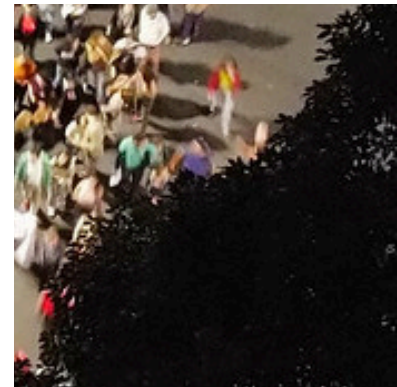
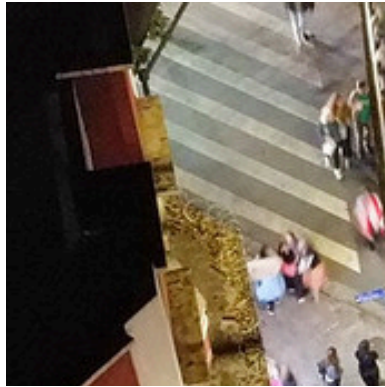
Annex 3.

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Diverse, inclusive, and globally representative membership means we have strong legitimacy	Long-term financial sustainability and over-reliance on a small number of donors
Strong member engagement, ownership, and trust	Uneven regional coordination and engagement
Clear strategic vision and well-defined pillars	Gaps in technical and communications capacity
Evidence-informed decision making and learning culture	Many members face internal capacity and resource constraints, including limited availability to take more leadership in various activities and workstreams
Visible value to members - especially in capacity strengthening, convening and catalysing funding to members	Membership structure limits wider engagement
Supportive, responsive, and well-managed Secretariat	Limited influence with key global decision-makers
Participatory and member-led approach to governance	Limited external visibility
Financial stability in the short term	
High levels of internal accountability and transparency	



Full SWOT Analysis

<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
Amplify member voices and increase external visibility	Ongoing shrinking of civic space and rise of authoritarian regimes
Engage more actively with donors and diversify funding partnerships	Increasing stigmatisation and discrediting of civil society actors
Strengthen collective advocacy and coordinated influencing efforts	Continued reduction in grant-based funding and push toward loans / blended finance
Deepen engagement with youth, feminist and grassroots movements	Geopolitical instability and fragmentation of global governance mechanisms
Leverage momentum from our projects (FICS, CADE, EU SEE) and other joint initiatives	Digital authoritarianism and tech-enabled surveillance of civil society actors
Help members adapt to political, financial, and digital shifts	Members losing funding, staff and potentially closing because of funding cuts
Influence the redefinition of development cooperation and aid architecture	Rising competition among CSOs and between networks, with strategic partners potentially becoming competitors in advocacy or funding
Strengthen internal network health and inter-member solidarity	



Forus is a member-led network of **73 National NGO Platforms and 7 Regional Coalitions from all continents representing over 24,000 NGOs** active locally and internationally on development, human rights, social justice, environmental issues, and more.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Fondation de France, the International Cooperation Direction of the Principality of Monaco, the European Union and Oxfam. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Forus.

Special thanks to Wendy and Alain Dubreuil, Álvaro Martínez and Tiago Tavares for translating this document.

We also wish to thank Conscious Consultants, Arturo Cortés Barbabosa, Sam Worthington and Sarah Strack for coordinating the production of this document.



Funded by the European Union

