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2022 FORUS VIRTUAL FORUM

REPORT

*Reconnecting amongst the Forus family
Strengthening our ties
Sharing perspectives, experiences and learnings
Celebrating our diversity!*

CONTENTS

- 1... EDITORIAL**
- 2... A HIGHLY COLLABORATIVE & MEMBER-LED EDITION**
- 3... KEY FACTS ABOUT THE 2022 FVF**
- 4... LANGUAGE INCLUSION**

DAY 1

- 5... Session 1. The role of civil society in today's turbulent world**
- 8... Session 2. Strengthening local leadership and achieving equal partnerships**

DAY 2

- 11... Session 3. Shifting the paradigm of aid towards co-responsible and sustainable support to local CSOs**
- 14... Session 4. Shifts in civic space, digital access and rights, and the erosion of democratic values**
- 17... Members' feedback and satisfaction level**



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2022 FORUS VIRTUAL FORUM

EDITORIAL

Dear members and allies,

We hope this message finds you all safe and in good health.

The [second edition of the Forus Virtual Forum](#) has come to an end and we would like to **thank you for your participation in this edition!**

The second edition of the Forus Virtual Forum was **highly collaborative and member-driven**. The members of Forus were actively involved in all stages of the organization of the Forum, from its planning to its execution, defining the content and format of the Virtual Forum, and many of them participating as moderators and panelists during the sessions.

This report aims to allow us to look back on the rich and vibrant discussions that took place during the two days of the Virtual Forum. We hope you enjoyed as much as we did this space for dialogue that allowed us to reconnect amongst the Forus family, strengthen our ties, share perspectives, experiences, and learnings, and celebrate our diversity!

We hope to see you soon at other Forus activities and events!

Remember that you can see the upcoming events of Forus [here](#).

*Warmly,
The Forus Team.*



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2022 FORUS VIRTUAL FORUM

A HIGHLY COLLABORATIVE & MEMBER-LED EDITION

In October 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Forus organized a Virtual Forum with the aim of gathering its members and fostering exchanges and collective reflection across the network and beyond.

Following the success of the previous Forus Virtual Forum (FVF), and with the aim of strengthening community-building and ties among its members, the **second edition** of the Forus Virtual Forum took place on **27-28 June, 2022**.

The **program** of the 2022 Forus Virtual Forum was **defined by the members of Forus**, through a process of **consultation** carried out by the Forus Secretariat from April to early June 2022. The final program consisted of **4 thematic sessions** over two days.

During this consultation process, Forus **members shared** their suggestions on the topics that they wanted to see addressed during the Forum, and indicated which of the topics suggested by Forus they wanted to see included in the program. Subsequently, the Forus Secretariat compiled the suggestions received from members into a list of 8 topics. Forus **members** then **indicated** which topics were of most interest to them. **Thank you very much for your participation in this process!**

We would also like to express our special thanks to all our members and allies who participated in the sessions as **moderators** and/or **panelists**. **Thank you for your valuable contribution to the Forus Virtual Forum!**





98

Individual participants
from all over the world
attended

**KEY
FACTS
ABOUT
THE 2022
FVF**

42

Forus member organizations
participated in the Virtual
Forum!

38

National platforms

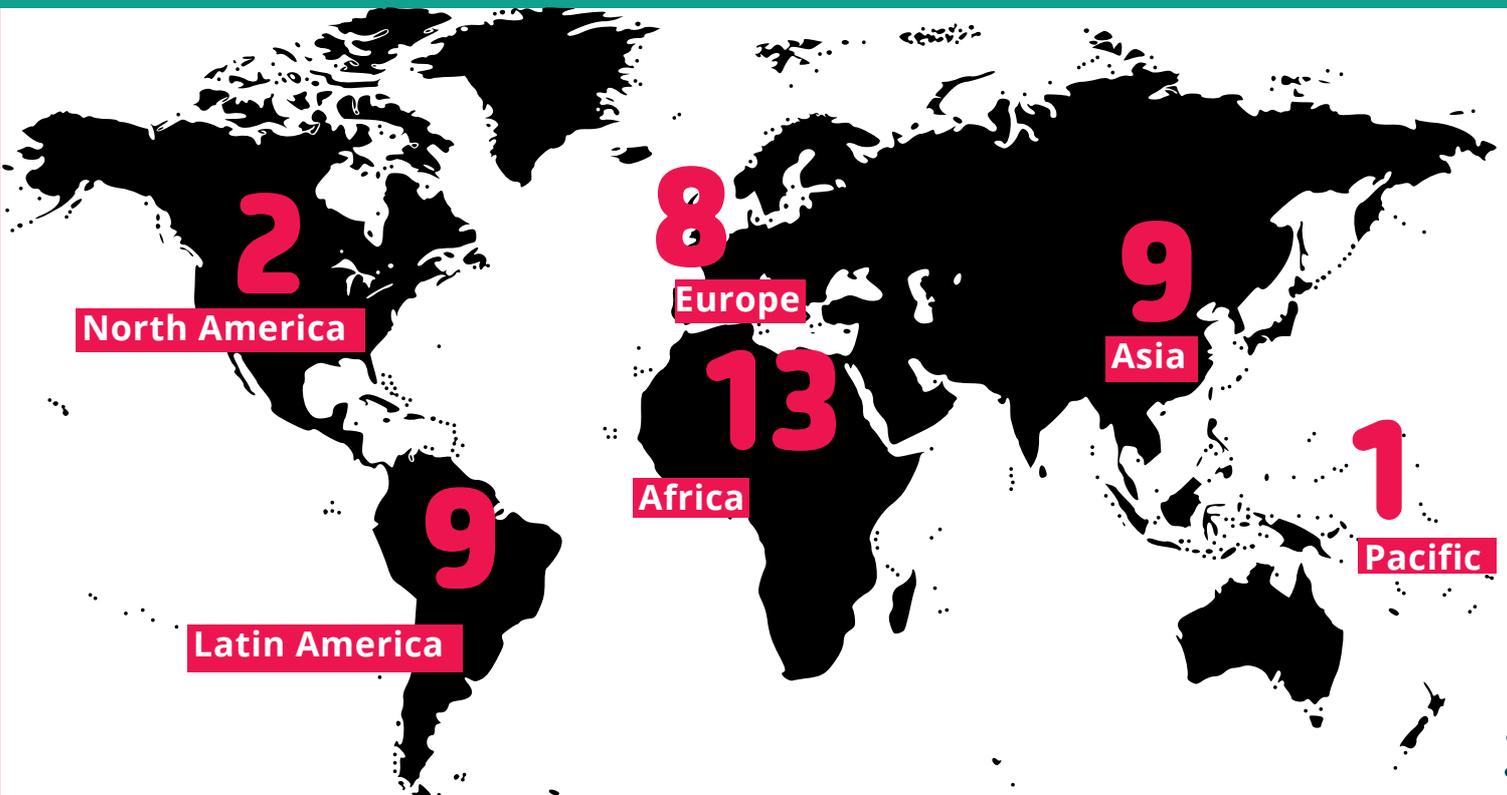
4

Regional Coalitions

8

external CSOs also participated in the
Virtual Forum

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF
PARTICIPATING MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**



LANGUAGE INCLUSION



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2022 FORUS VIRTUAL FORUM

With the aim of fostering the inclusion and active participation of members, **simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Spanish** was provided during the 4 sessions of the Forus Virtual Forum.

Forus understands the importance of interpreters and translators as linguistic and cultural mediators, and respects the arduous preparation and training that this profession requires. Therefore, we are very grateful to the **11 interpreters, members of the Forus' Interpreters & Translators Pool**, who participated in this second edition of the Virtual Forum!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE FORUS NETWORK!



English<>French: Daniella Sánchez (Mexico City, sanchezmdaniella@gmail.com); Maribel Egremy (Istanbul, maribel.egremy@gmail.com); Roberto Sánchez (Mexico City, roberto-se@live.com); Wendy Dubreuil (Paris, wendysd2@hotmail.com).

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The role of civil society in today's turbulent world. Pawn of international power games or force for positive change and transformation? How can we achieve real transformational change?

During the **Opening session** of the Forus Virtual Forum, Forus members reflected and discussed the role of civil society in today's world, as well as what civil society should stop, continue and start doing in order to achieve real transformational change.

The session was inaugurated by some opening remarks from **Sarah Strack** (Director, Forus) who celebrated the opportunity to bring Forus members together to discuss issues of interest to members and the Forus network.

The session was divided into two rounds of discussion. The first round, **"Pushing forward: What Civil Society Organizations need to overcome at regional and national level"**, was moderated by **Lina Lara Negrette** (Advocacy coordinator, CNONG, Colombia). This first round was opened by **Kashish Das Shrestha** (Freelance journalist and activist, Nepal), who spoke about his experience in 'solutions journalism' and as an activist in Nepal. Likewise, **Ziad Abdel Samad** (Executive Director, ANND, Arab region) and **Deborah Van Berkel** (Chair, Sinergia, Venezuela) highlighted the importance of capacity development, networking, and professionalization of civil society, as well as the strengthening of alliances, to better address the current challenges.

The second round of discussions, **"Triggering Transformational Change: the good, the bad and the new"**, was moderated by **Oluseyi Oyebisi** (Executive Director, NNINGO, Nigeria) and included as panelists **Sagarika Bhatta** (Chairperson, PowerShift, Nepal), **Putheary Sin** (Director, CCC, Cambodia), and **Maite Serrano** (Executive Director, Coordinadora ONGD, Spain), who highlighted the need to integrate more youth, grassroots groups and activists (climate, gender, vulnerable groups) in the work of CSOs and in dialogues with governments and international organizations.





Live polls for peer sharing & learning!

SESSION 1

Learn more about what Forus members shared during the session!

During this session, Forus members responded **anonymously** to **3 live polls**. Below, you can see some of the **most relevant findings** of these polls:

POLL 1

Participants considered:

Far-right movements

Online surveillance

Restrictive laws

Limited access to funding

Negative CSOs narratives

to be **VERY SERIOUS threats** to civil society in their national / regional context.

POLL 2

Participants identified the following **4 priorities** for CSOs to achieve real transformational change.

- 1 Sustainable Funding Models**
- 2 Capacity Development**
- 3 Collaboration with Grassroots**
- 4 Having strong CSO Networks**





Live polls for peer sharing & learning!

SESSION 1

Learn more about what Forus members shared during the session!

POLL 3

Forus members also brainstormed on *What CSOs need to STOP, CONTINUE and START doing to achieve real transformational change*. You can see some of the participants' suggestions below:

What should Civil Society **STOP** doing to achieve transformational change?

- Stop being functional to current governments and being political as CSOs are in essence apolitical
- Wholly depending on foreign funding and relying on cooperation for external financing, with agendas that limit local action
- Stop following the same paradigms in a world that has changed
- Stop speaking in an incomprehensible language/jargon
- Staying in our own bubbles and stop being passive
- Being victims

What should Civil Society **CONTINUE** doing to achieve transformational change?

- Human rights-based action and advocacy
- Building new models of social and political action
- Advocate for transformational change
- Develop our own capacities for articulation and design joint strategies to confront authoritarian contexts
- Working together / networking/joining forces
- Continue strengthening transparency & accountability
- Keeping dialogue spaces

What should Civil Society **START** doing to achieve transformational change?

- Working in networks and strengthening our own identity
- Creating awareness and involving youth movements, including using digital tools and social media
- Building & strengthening horizontal alliances and more inclusive partnerships
- Empowering and enabling ourselves as agents of change in everything we do!
More capacity development
- Better advocacy and dialogue with the media to better counter the current negative narratives about the work of CSOs
- An active and committed approach to democratic change and environmental justice

Strengthening local leadership and achieving equal partnerships.

How sustainable are the development models that CSOs are currently promoting and how can meaningful greater localization and community-led development be accelerated globally? How can international partners play a complementary role in the development sector while supporting leadership at the local level?



During the second session of the Forus Virtual Forum, Forus members explored the ways in which we can work together and leverage our diversity to counter the vested interests and obstructive powers that push against the **implementation of alternative development models**.

During this collective discussion, Forus' members **shared ideas** on how our network can be more politically influential and impactful by putting at the center the voices, initiatives and demands of local leaders and communities that have suffered the greatest impacts of current development models.

The session was moderated by **Ana de Oliveira** (Policy and Research Officer, Cooperation Canada, Canada) and **Athayde Motta** (Member of Executive Board, ABONG, Brazil), and included the participation as panelists of **Josaia Osborne** (Deputy Executive Director, PIANGO, Pacific), **Harsh Jaitli** (Director, VANI, India) and **Gladys Casaccia** (Member of the Executive Coordination, POJOAJU, Paraguay).

During the session, Forus members highlighted some **key elements** to enable the implementation of alternative development models that effectively address the needs of local communities. Some panelists, for example, highlighted the urgent need to rethink and replace the destructive and extractive neoliberal model with local development models in order to change power dynamics. Other panelists and participants also emphasized the need for CSOs to collaborate more and compete less, with the common goal of putting the interests of local communities at the center of their actions, as well as the importance of involving local grassroots organizations in all CSO actions and building horizontal alliances.

Participants also underlined the need to be more present and more active on the regional and international scene, as well as to collaborate with multiple actors. In this sense, we must advocate for civil society to be included in official spaces in which our voices are not being heard and taken into account. **8**



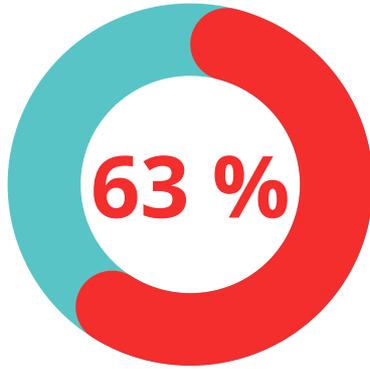
Live polls for peer sharing & learning!

SESSION 2

Learn more about what Forus members shared during the session!

During this session, Forus members responded **anonymously** to **4 live polls**. Below, you can see some of the **most relevant findings** of these polls:

POLL 1



of participants consider that, even though traditional development models have failed to solve inequalities and poverty, **some CSOs keep promoting these models because it is in their interest to keep the status quo**

POLL 2

Participants identified:

Economic interests & **Over-reliance on external funding**

as the **2 main obstacles** preventing the implementation of alternative development models in their national/regional context.

POLL 3

Participants also gave **examples of some of the main difficulties in visualizing the progress** of alternative development models in their national/regional contexts, namely:

- Donor restrictions limiting creativity of local CSOs
- Lack of capacities to mobilize resources
- Short-term projects
- Little/no media coverage
- Economic powers



Live polls for peer sharing & learning!

SESSION 2

Learn more about what Forus members shared during the session!

POLL 4

Finally, we also asked Forus members to tell us **how we can make our network more politically influential**. Below are the **ideas that our members shared with us!**

How can Forus be more politically influential?

- Promote multi-stakeholder dialogues in the regions, generating common agendas
- Participate in national development agendas
- Implement a civic space monitoring and alert mechanism in the regions where Forus has members
- Building common advocacy agendas to which Forus members can contribute from their know-how, in such a way as to strengthen Forus' voice and proposal capacity in global scenarios where international agendas with local, national and regional implications are discussed.
- Advocate for civil society to form part of social dialogue platforms in our respective countries.
- Forus needs to strengthen support among members and have common positions shared at high level forums.
- Forus needs to engage in direct dialogue with donors to better influence.
- Continue to strengthen the capacities of its members and engage in partnerships with the private sector and trade unions
- Strengthen research processes to enable members generate data/information that gives opportunity for CSOs to be respected as contributors to development. Data to better enable advocacy.
- Strengthening the network with meetings, discussions, analysis of the current realities.
- Work more on social justice and development issues
- Make sure that CSO's doors of participations are widely open in the highest level of policy making with all consultations through bottom top approach.

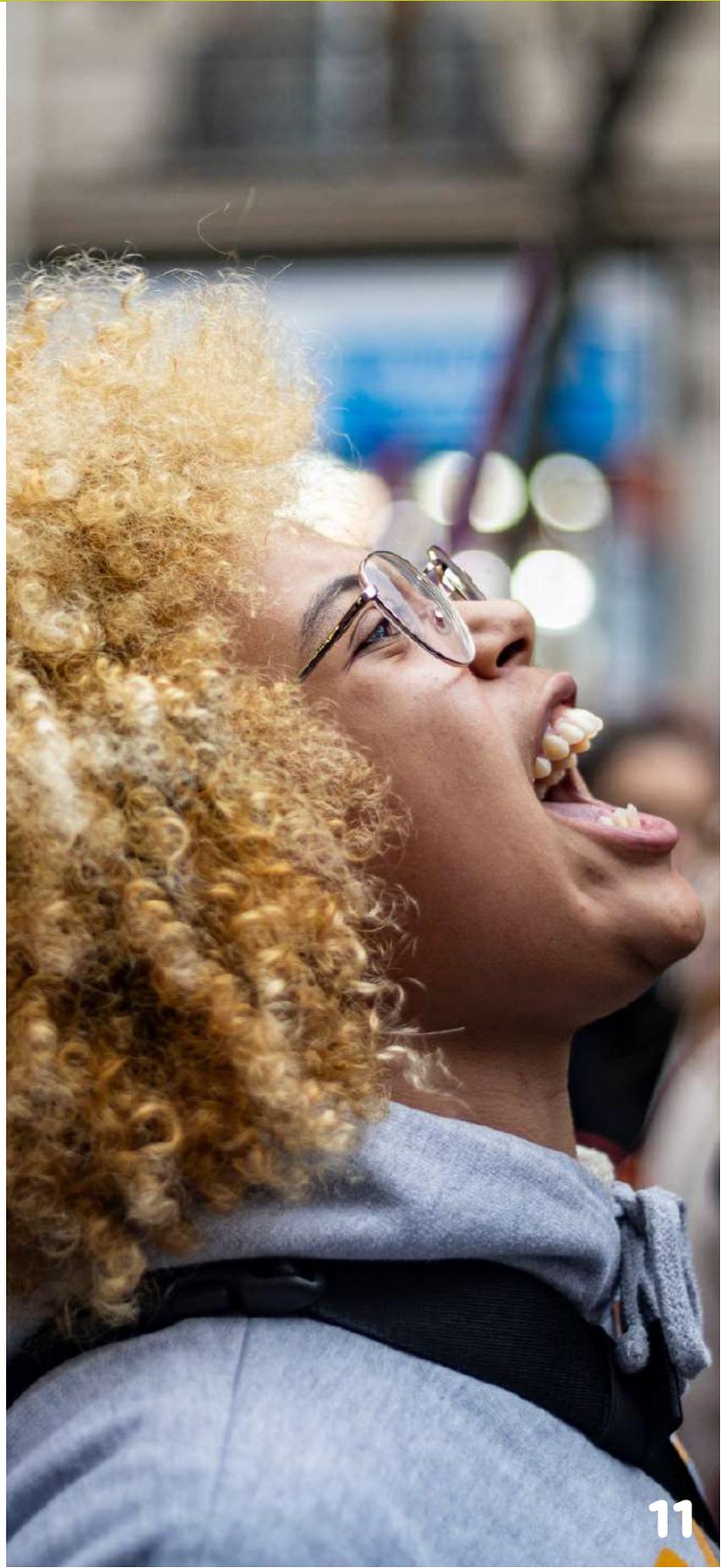
Thank you for participating in our live polls!

Shifting the paradigm of aid towards co-responsible and sustainable support to local CSOs. *How can new funding models allow better localization of financial and human resources in order to ensure the implementation of sustainable community-led actions?*

During this session, Forus members brainstormed on how to transform donors' approach to local needs and potential innovative CSOs funding models. Forus members also shared their various experiences in trying to **access new diversified and sustainable funding models.**

The first round of discussions "**Are we on the right path for fund localization?**" was moderated by **Josefina "Pina" Huaman** (Executive Secretary, ANC, Peru) and included the participation of **Jean-Luc Galbrun** (Advocacy, Coordination Sud, France), **Akmal Ali** (Networking and Capacity Development Officer, PIANGO, Pacific) and **Rolando Kandel** (President, EENGD - Red Encuentro, Argentina) as panelists.

The first round allowed us to hear **concrete experiences** of several Forus members in fund localization. Forus members agreed on the necessity to put people at the center of our actions, as well as to establish equitable and sustainable partnerships between donors and CSOs in order to prioritize the interests of local communities. Furthermore, participants noted that CSOs must advocate to be included in budget discussions with national governments. Since national resources are a public good, civil society should be heard when it comes to allocating government budgets.





The second round of discussions "*Exploring Innovative Funding Models & Strategies*" was moderated by **Raina Fox** (Senior Manager, Interaction, United States) and included the participation as panelists of **Ms. Xu Xiaoxiao** (Assistant Executive Director, CANGO, China), **José Ramon Avila** (Director, ASONOG, Honduras), **Zahra Bazi** (Program Manager, ANND, Arab region), **Inese Vaivare** (Director, LAPAS, Latvia), and **Ana Paula Gouvea** (Fundraising & Partnerships manager, Forus).

In this round of discussions, panelists and participants shared some of the **lessons learned** during their attempts to diversify funding strategies in their national/regional context. Participants underlined the importance of establishing equal and sustainable relationships between local CSOs and international NGOs, as well as the importance of creating and strengthening such partnerships with other actors, such as foundations, public development banks and the private sector.

Several participants also highlighted the urgent need to attack structural constraints that prevent CSOs from accessing new funding models, such as corruption, democratic fragility and the non-compliance of middle-income countries with their commitments in favor of international development cooperation.



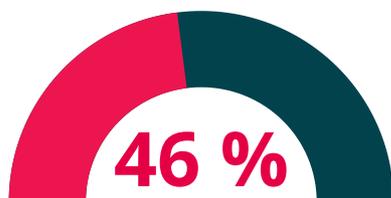
Live polls for peer sharing & learning!

SESSION 3

Learn more about what Forus members shared during the session!

During this session, Forus members responded **anonymously** to **3 live polls**. Below, you can see some of the **most relevant findings** of these polls:

POLL 1



of the participants in the session reported that **donors have not responded effectively to CSO demands**, meaning that donors do not address disparities and agendas in local/national funding and decision-making power. The rest of participants stated that donors have responded **somehow effectively** to CSO demands.

POLL 2

Participants **shared some of the top priorities** to move towards a real and coherent **common agenda between CSOs and donors** in order to leave behind the disparity in the allocation of funds:

- Power shift from a relief and welfare approach to a human rights and development approach tailored by local actors
- Apply the principles of co-responsibility and equity in order to build trust
- Build dialogue acknowledging the power inequalities and rebuilding a different form of partnership
- Strengthen dialogue mechanisms that bring together CSOs from different regions
- Local CSOs need to ensure their integrity and therefore be accountable to their constituencies in order to be more trusted by beneficiaries, governments and donors.
- Donors should embrace local solutions and ideas emerging from local CSOs and beneficiaries.
- Simplify processes for submission of proposals.

POLL 3

Members in the session identified **1)** strong competition from large INGOs, **2)** capacity to secure institutional and innovative funding and **3)** the growing risk aversion of international donors as **the biggest challenges that their organizations face** when trying to access new types of financing.

Shifts in civic space, digital access and rights, and the erosion of democratic values. *Regional perspectives on these intersecting challenges.*

During the **Closing Session** of the 2022 Forus Virtual Forum, we heard concrete examples from Forus members about **how civil society is fighting back** to defend civic space, both online and offline.



The first round of discussions on "***Exchanging experiences on the impacts of digitalization, COVID-19 and shrinking civic space on CSOs around the world***" was moderated by **Jyotsna Mohan Singh** (Regional Coordinator, ADA, Asia) and included the participation of **Pedro Bocca** (International Advocacy Advisor, ABONG, Brazil), **Moses Isooba** (Executive Director, UNNGOF, Uganda), **Hum Bhandari** (Executive Director, NFN, Nepal), **Balint Hamvas** (Director, HAND, Hungary) and **Zia-ur-Rehman** (National Chair, PDA, Pakistan) as panelists.

Some members gave examples of the threats and restrictions affecting civic space in their countries, particularly in countries with authoritarian and/or far-right governments. Members and participants agreed that the best way to fight back is through international pressure, advocacy at all levels and public denunciation. Other members gave examples of how their governments seek to control CSOs by delegitimizing their work, imposing restrictive laws on their work and fundamental freedoms, and creating excessive red tape and unnecessary regulations.



The second round of discussions on "*Responding to growing threats and restrictions: How CSOs can strategize and push back at regional and national levels to defend civic space*" was moderated by **Deirdre de Burca** (Advocacy coordinator, Forus) and included the participation of **Susana Eróstegui** (Director, Red UNITAS, Bolivia), **Jaeun SHIN** (Director Policy & Education Center, KCOC, South Korea), **Sara Brandt** (Policy Advisor and Coordinator, Global Focus, Denmark) and **Rizka Antika** (Program Officer, INFID, Indonesia) as panelists.

During the second panel, Forus presented some key findings from the new Forus report on civic space "[*Enabling Stories: How civil can build new narratives in a world transformed by digitalization and the Covid-19 pandemic*](#)", in order to illustrate how civil society is fighting back across the world. Members and participants also gave examples of how CSOs in their respective contexts are responding to these challenges, *for example*, by creating and disseminating **alternative CSO narratives**.

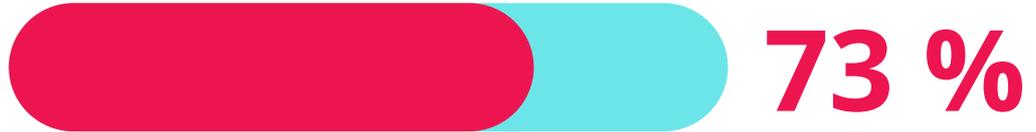


Live polls for peer sharing & learning!

Learn more about what Forus members shared during the session!

During this session, Forus members responded **anonymously** to **2 live polls**. Below, you can see some of the **most relevant findings** of these polls:

POLL 1



of members in the session consider that **their government criminalizes civil society in their country**.

Some members gave **examples of how their government criminalizes CSOs in their countries**:

- Criminalizing social protest: extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, and disproportionate use of violence
- Restrictive regulations for CSOs, political persecution, violation of fundamental freedoms
- De-legitimization of social movements working on gender policies
- Bureaucracy to obtain legal status as NGOs
- Only those in favor of politicians receive benefits
- Criminalizing CSOs helping asylum seekers
- Accusing CSOs of tax evasion

POLL 2



of participants **have been involved in developing alternative CSOs narratives**.



of them said that these alternative narratives have been **Somehow effective** in pushing back against the criminalization of CSOs.

MEMBERS' FEEDBACK & SATISFACTION LEVEL



8,9 / 10

**Average satisfaction rate
of all FVF sessions**

Members participating in the Forus 2022 Virtual Forum were **SATISFIED** with the Forum sessions, giving an average satisfaction rating of **8,9**, on a scale from 0 (*not at all satisfied*) to 10 (*very satisfied*).



SOME FORUS MEMBERS ALSO RECOMMENDED US TO:

- Continue organizing these dynamic, democratic, diverse, and constructive peer-learning spaces
- Give more time to participants to respond to the live polls
- Vary the time of the sessions, taking into account the time of other regions
- Extend the time of presentations/interventions/reactions
- Deepen the topics discussed during the Forum, in particular, those related to fund localization and civic space

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK!

Thank you very much for your feedback, which will be of great help for us to improve our future events! And thank you for contributing to the strengthening of **transparency** and **accountability** within our network by completing the satisfaction micro-survey at the end of every event, working group meeting or webinar. By collecting your feedback on a regular basis, we are able to ensure a process of **ongoing adaptation and improvement** based on the feedback collected from our members.



YOUR FEEDBACK IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR US!

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, comments, suggestions or complaints related to the Forus Virtual Forum. You may do so by emailing **Arturo Cortés Barbabosa**, Forus' Network engagement & Accountability Coordinator, at arturo@forus-international.org.

We would be delighted to receive your feedback on how we can improve our future events!



VOICES OF FORUS

THE PERMANENT FEEDBACK CHANNEL FOR FORUS MEMBERS!

Voices of Forus is a permanent channel that allows Forus members and partners to send us **at any time** their comments, suggestions, opinions or complaints regarding their relationship with Forus, as well as the network's activities, Secretariat, governance, members and functioning.

Remember that you can choose to send us your feedback **anonymously** or by sharing your contact details with us.

[Click here to share](#) with us your feedback, suggestions and/or complaints via our permanent *Voices of Forus* feedback channel!

HELP US LEARN MORE ABOUT FORUS MEMBERS!

PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS

Forus is looking forward to learning more about its members!

That is why the Forus Secretariat has prepared a [membership mini-questionnaire](#) that will allow us to collect key data about our members in order to:

- **better understand** the **current composition, needs, expectations, and challenges** of our members
- **better plan** our upcoming activities, making them more and more member-led and in line with our members' current needs and expectations
- **prepare** our future **funding proposals**, based on the current needs of the network.



**PLEASE CLICK
HERE TO ANSWER
THIS BRIEF
QUESTIONNAIRE**

**THE ESTIMATED
RESPONSE TIME IS
ONLY 10 MINUTES**



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2022 FORUS VIRTUAL FORUM THANK YOU!

Thank you for your participation in this edition of the 2022 Forus Virtual Forum, we hope to see you soon in other Forus events and meetings. Remember that you can see the upcoming events of Forus [here](#).

Forus is especially grateful to **all Forus members and allies who participated as moderators and panelists** during the 2022 Forus Virtual Forum, as well as to the external organizations that participated in the Virtual Forum sessions: **Alliance of NPO Networks** (South Africa), **Ambrela** (Slovakia) **ANND** (Arab region), **Association of Foundations** (Philippines), **Fundación Atreuco** (Argentina), **Fundación Otras Voces** (Argentina), **IPRU** (Uruguay), **Kashish Das Shrestha** (independent journalist and activist, Nepal), and **PowerShift Nepal**.

Special thanks are also due to all the team of the Forus Secretariat, namely Ana Paula Gouvea (Fundraising and Partnerships manager), Ana Zuñiga (Operational Support Intern), Arturo Cortés Barbabosa (Network engagement & Accountability Coordinator), Bibbi Abruzzini (Media & Campaigns Coordinator), Deirdre de Burca (Advocacy Coordinator), Sanaâ Nadir (Communication Coordinator), Sarah Strack (Director) and Thomas Janvier-Perez (Advocacy intern).

Thank you to the photojournalists **Both Nomads**, **Sebastian Barros** and **Midia Ninja** for the pictures illustrating this report.

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