



Civic Engagement

– On how people getting involved in Denmark can support global sustainable development

1. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE THE PEOPLE

You need the world, and the world needs you. Our planet is steadily becoming more connected. It is increasingly obvious that all of us – whether we live in the global North or the global South – are linked to one another through a worldwide web of interrelationships. Climate change, refugee flows and global market mechanisms affect all of us in various ways. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are a shared responsibility of humankind, committing all countries to work on issues such as sustainability, responsible consumption, health and equality. This is a departure from the notion that big problems are to be found in the poor parts of the world and should solely be addressed there. The challenges that we face are interconnected and call for civic engagement to be overcome.

Each one of us can do something, but together we can do more. This makes it crucial that people organise as active citizens in vigorous communities, spanning near and far, taking in what is shared and what is alien.

Civic engagement, active citizenship and participation are key words to make democracy work, and this has always been the starting point for Danish organisations' interventions under the Civil Society Fund. It is reflected in CISU's close to 300 member organisations with 300,000 volunteers, in addition to a large body of dedicated and passionate staff. All of these people are engaged in local, national and global activities aimed at solving international problems. For example, keen volunteers attend in second-hand shops, sit on boards, plan

and carry out events, keep accounts, raise funds or travel into the world to work for nothing but the pleasure of contributing. These numerous activists, driven by a sense of commitment and solidarity, make a massive difference, strengthening Danish civil society organisations and their development cooperation in the global South by:

- Creating communities of shared interests and values. This fosters solidarity, equal and close relationships, persistence and resilience.
- Being present on the ground among the most vulnerable people. Having roots in the community makes for greater ownership of activities, better understanding of the local context, and a wider network of contacts to the most vulnerable and marginalised people.
- Being adaptable and cost-effective. This is thanks to their special drive, great knowledge and ability to empower the target group through help for self-help and a focus on active participation.
- Being transparent and informing about development cooperation at a personal level, which enriches citizens' global outlook and strengthens support in the population.

Civic engagement features prominently both in CISU's strategy, in the official Danish "The World 2030, Denmark's strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action" and in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, all of which highlight the role of civil society organisations in creating and maintaining the active participation of citizens and other actors in fighting poverty and global inequality in a sustainable manner.

THE WORLD 2030

- DENMARK'S STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

"Denmark acknowledges the value of a strong, diverse civil society and will support its central role in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals. (...)

The Danish civil society plays an important role in maintaining a civic Danish engagement in the development cooperation and in reaching a broad spectrum of Danes with knowledge about the living conditions and development in other parts of the world (...). In order to maintain a broad civic engagement in civil society activities, organisations managing pooled funds must simplify procedures and requirements (...)" (from page 13 of the official translation into English).

CISU'S STRATEGY 2018-21.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COOPERATION AT ALL LEVELS OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CISU works for a world in which:

- People take an active part in various types of communities in order to develop their own lives, conditions and opportunities.
- People are active fellow citizens who express themselves and participate in the development of their society.
- Organisations cooperate with other actors to promote the rights of their members and target groups.
- Organisations engage in democratic processes and hold decision-makers to account.

2. WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Civic engagement refers to joint action to bring about positive change in the world. CISU works with it by involving citizens actively in international development cooperation motivated by togetherness and solidarity.

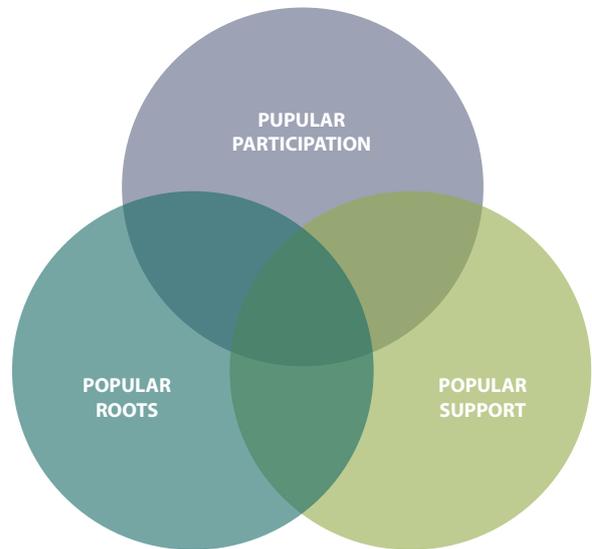
CISU perceives three forms of civic engagement:

Popular roots: Citizens' relationships to organisations involved in development cooperation, serving as activists, members, financial contributors and more.

Popular support: Citizens' support for and recognition of the work and funding allocated to development cooperation.

Popular participation: Citizens' active participation in initiatives that promote global sustainable development. Such participation may take many different shapes and can vary widely in its duration.

CISU wishes to promote interventions by civil society organisations that create scope for action and shared solutions in favour of a sustainable world with social justice and with climate and environmental responsibility.

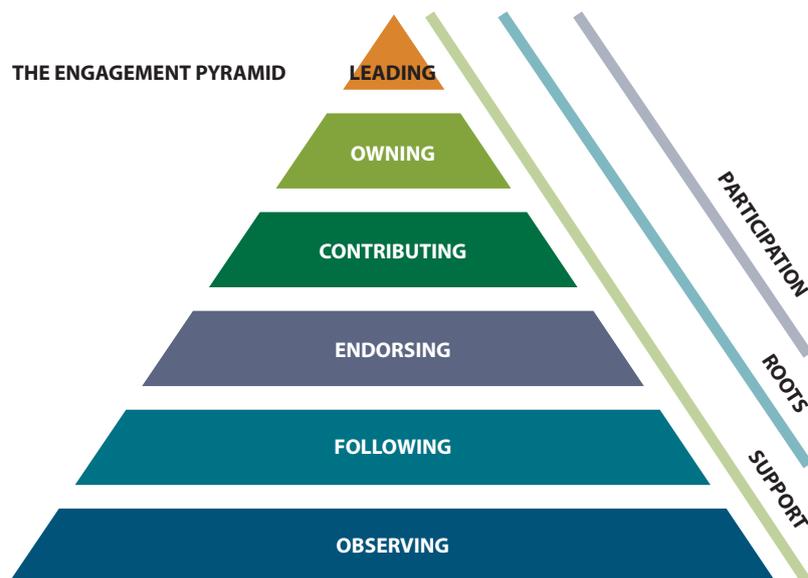


3. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

CISU has users and member organisations of all sizes that are anchored in communities all across Denmark. Furthermore, they work in close partnerships with other civil society organisations in the rest of the world. In the encounter between people near and far, close relationships grow to create meaningful and sustainable development results. CISU's member organisations are also engaged in the local Danish communities of which they form part, and their keen volunteers participate in various ways in development cooperation and in information work in Denmark. Such initiatives help underpin popular support in Denmark. Thus, the organisations' interventions contribute to enhancing all three forms of civic Danish engagement in global sustainable development cooperation.

Civic engagement can take many shapes and varies in depth and intensity. There are overlaps between the three circles, as people can move from one to another, say, by participating intensively for a while, and then becoming a passive member. The same person could also be working for a cause in several organisations in different ways.

Support, roots, and participation as visualised by the circles have been elaborated upon in terms of six levels in the Engagement Pyramid, ranging from sporadic engagement at the bottom to deep engagement at the top. The pyramidal shape illustrates that the number of persons tends to be larger at the base and smaller at the top.



Inspired by The Engagement Pyramid developed by af Gideon Rosenblatt

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE: THE PERSON...
Leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is not merely engaged, but is also an engager. • The cause is an integral part of the person's identity, and he or she is willing to dedicate time and take on active leadership. • The person takes the lead in promoting a cause or in an organisation's work in general. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organises the community around a cause, e.g. by mobilising her neighbourhood in pursuit of the sustainability agenda and holding a green city festival. • Acts as the face of an organisation, e.g. by serving as a board member or spokesperson.
Owning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person acts persistently to advance the cause, investing his time in it for prolonged periods. • The cause becomes a part of his identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plays an active role in a group of volunteers. • Promotes the cause through public debates or opinion pieces in the local newspaper. • Coordinates cooperation with a partner in the South or travels abroad on monitoring missions. • Works hard to promote a cause through various initiatives. The person may, for instance, be engaged in the field of refugees and immigrants by serving as the contact person for an asylum seeker, coordinating a community group of volunteers and making statements in the public debate.
Contributing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is dedicated to the cause on an ongoing basis. • The person has committed herself to promoting the cause among others and to spending time on it. • These are not sporadic or impulsive acts, but continuous contributions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joins in debating events. • Takes part in a local initiative, such as collecting second-hand football gear or baking a cake for the information meeting for new volunteers. • Helps the organisation write newsletters or keep accounts. • Frequently shares messages on social media.
Endorsing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person agrees with, believes in and supports the cause. • The person does not spend much time on it, but is willing to endorse it and let the organisation use his name to promote the cause or to further the organisation's work in general. • These acts are sporadic and impulsive, and are not necessarily repeated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs a letter of intent about, e.g., acting for sustainability. • Volunteers to collect funds. • Becomes a member of or financial contributor to an organisation.
Following	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person understands, is interested in and relates to the cause. • The person has knowledge of the cause, but does not participate actively in informing others about it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares her contact info with an organisation in order to stay up-to-date about the cause. • Shows up at several one-off events. • Joins a Facebook group and follows its activities passively. • Gives a single donation to a development project.
Observing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person expresses interest in and is aware of the cause. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows up at a one-off public talk. • Reads about the cause in the newspaper or on social media. • Shares an organisation's views in one or several respects.

Participation presupposes that a person has the motivation to become engaged, as well as the abilities and latitude to do so. Civil society organisations may foster motivation by shining the spotlight on the person's and civil society's roles and responsibilities in a globalised society and on creating strong, inclusive communities of dedicated activists. Likewise, it may be useful to focus on capacity development to strengthen these people's abilities. Read more below in section 5.

4. HOW CISU CAN BE USED

Funds: Danish organisations can apply to CISU's funds for support to carry out development cooperation based on civic engagement alongside their partners in the South. In 2020 and 2021, the Civic Engagement Fund has a support facility for engaging Danish people in development cooperation.

Capacity services: CISU's member organisations can contact CISU to obtain advice on how to work with civic engagement. They can also attend CISU's courses or suggest subjects to be addressed.

5. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW AND DO MORE

Inspirational material: CISU's website contains materials for planning and implementing interventions that engage citizens in development cooperation. There are also links to a series of short interviews with enthusiasts from civil society. It is available (in Danish) [here](#).

The concept of citizen participation: Read more about citizen participation and what characterises a citizen on CISU's website under "Medborgerbegrebet" (in Danish) [here](#), if you wish to delve more into the relationship between civic engagement and citizen participation.

SETTING GOALS ASSISTED BY THE ENGAGEMENT PYRAMID

The Engagement Pyramid and its way of perceiving participation may serve to set the goals of an intervention.

A concrete exercise: Draw the pyramid on a blackboard or large piece of paper. Indicate the level at which your target group is located. Then indicate the level that you would like the target group to move to, based on reflections as to what your goal is. Is it:

- To assist them at what they are doing at this level (so that they carry on, or do it a little more)?
- To move the target group up one level?
- To pave the way for deeper engagement in the cause going forward by mobilising more observers and followers for the time being?

CISU'S THEMATIC PAPERS

CISU draws up thematic papers setting out our view of how our member organisations may understand, interpret and apply various key concepts in civil society cooperation.

The thematic papers are based on our practice and experience of member organisations' international work, our advisory services and courses, as well as our administration of funds open for applications.

The thematic papers are approved by CISU's Board. They are not carved in stone, but will be revised at appropriate intervals in view of experience gained. Moreover, new thematic papers will be drawn up on other issues.

See the latest version and other thematic papers at: cisu.dk/temapapirer (in Danish).

