2nd WINGS Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean:
Finding Common Paths to Fostering an Enabling Environment in the Region

Meeting notes

Session 1 | Enabling environment for philanthropy in Latin America and the Caribbean: what are the common trends?

Using the World Café methodology, participants were divided into three groups to discuss the hot-issues connected to an enabling environment for philanthropy and giving in the region. The following is a summary of the main discussions:

Cultural & Political Framework
Table host: Lourdes Sanz (Cemefi)
○ The **local cultural and political contexts** that undermine the emergence and development of civil society in general and philanthropy in particular, are connected to the **lack of knowledge** of common citizens about civic values and institutions.
○ People in the LAC region don't understand how democratic institutions work, therefore they have trouble understanding the role of civil society in the democratic framework.
○ Countries in the region are generous and have a history of solidarity. But this narrative has not been translated into support for civil society.
○ The belief that governments should provide all public services works against the third sector. This also adds the government itself as a competitor for resources.
○ Collaboration between all three sectors - private, public, and non-profit - was addressed as an important trend to change the current culture and its negative impacts.

Legal & Fiscal Framework
Table host: Aline Viotto (GIFE)
○ Organizations need to **think strategically** when trying to introduce fiscal or legal changes. It's necessary to pay attention to the context to avoid pushing for changes that could have unforeseen negative effects. It is also important to understand that there's never a right moment but we need to organize around the representation issue.
○ **Regulations vary a lot from country to country** within the region, from under-regulation to over-regulation, but as a whole, the region faces heavy government requirements.
○ The relationship between the government and the organizations is also diversified within the regional, but in general, it faces a lot of challenges.

- There's no consensus on what makes a good legal and fiscal framework. For example, which type of regulation is better: umbrella regulations or specific regulations?
- One of the main challenges is how to create knowledge on legal and fiscal issues that is not a copy of the United States or the European Union.
- It is crucial to collect evidence to advocate for the necessary changes to these frameworks.
- The region, as a whole, lacks representation based on a collective understanding of the issues, strong collaboration, and a unified voice.

Shrinking Space
Table host: Graciela Hopstein (Brazilian Philanthropy Network for Social Justice)
- Participation in decision-making spaces is decreasing. And this is true for all the different types of civil society actors across the region.
- In the LAC region, the environment is constantly shifting, which poses one crucial challenge: **how to foster collaboration in a fast-changing context?**
- The diversity in the region makes it difficult to agree on a common agenda which in turn hinders the ability to build strong collaboration amongst different actors.
- The absence of understanding of what civil society is and its importance and the lack of institutionalization creates a very fragile environment for civil society.
- Overall, the region faces a chronic lack of resources and the competition for the remaining resources weakens civil society as a whole.
- The shrinking space also offers opportunities to strengthen and expand society even at times of restrictions.
- Advocacy is a key role philanthropic support organizations to play, influencing the changes in legislation and creating opportunities for collaboration.

Main takeaways
- Countries in the LAC region present different challenges and opportunities for the work of civil society. In order to create an environment that enables philanthropy and civil society to thrive, it's crucial to have a better understanding of the legal and fiscal framework, but also of the political and cultural contexts.
- Within the diverse local backgrounds, organizations face yet another challenge, the constant changes in the conditions in which they operate.
- Collaboration is imperative in order to confront the difficulties faced by organizations. Engaging different actors - private, public, and non-profit - around the same issue should be a priority as well as building representation based on a collective understanding of the topics.

Check the graphic recording from this session (Click here).

Session 2|Cases & Experiences: What can we learn from each other to create a healthier environment for philanthropy and civil society to thrive?

The session began with the presentation of three inspiring experiences: (i) the Argentinian private ecosystem for the public good by Javier García from GDFE, (ii) a collective strategy to build support for an Endowment Law in Brazil by Paula Fabiani from IDIS, and (iii) the fight for tax exemptions for non-profits in Peru by Cecilia Ramos from TrustLaw.

The experience from Argentina aimed to create representation for private organizations and build an agenda to influence public policy. GDFE found that the sector competes more than collaborate and there is a gap of communication between civil society and the private sector.

On the endowment legislation in Brazil, IDIS shared the main takeaways from the process: the need to create material and knowledge based on research, the importance of connecting with relevant actors in order to build a coalition to influence the government decisions. Also, the ability to understand timing as a crucial aspect to be agile and take advantage of the "window of opportunity" when it presents itself. Presentation available here.

TrustLaw's experience on **tax exemptions for nonprofits in Peru** highlighted the internal effort it takes to gather the necessary knowledge on legislation and its impacts and the importance of having legal advice by working in partnership with a big legal firm in the country. To build a strong advocacy case, it is necessary to know your partners, have a clear proposal, understand the environment, the challenges and opportunities they offer.

On the second part of the session, participants were organized into three groups to map their own experiences on strategies to be engaged on issues connected to enabling environment in their countries. All responses are mapped below:

Ideas that you haven't tried but you find interesting:	Successful experiences:
To do an assessment of social private investment jointly with the main organizations related to this matter.	DATA (Giving research)
Create an advocacy tool - manual for CSOs for public policy change (Cemefi, Mexico)	Ethical code for fundraising (including donor code).
A center on a university for philanthropic studies. (FJLCS, Brazil)	Support to coalitions of organizations in promoting change in local legislation.
Use co-creation methodology to build consensus on what change is needed. (TrustLaw)	Dia de doar (ABCR, Brazil)
Collaborative research on philanthropy in LA	Alliance with local government to fund CSOs membership and participation in accountability standards.
Academic fora to discuss challenges and proposals.	Sustentabilidade Econômica das Organizações da Sociedade Civil (Sustenta OSC)
Build a strategy to push a fiscal reform	Access to funding acceleration programs (Innpactia)
A community of practice in philanthropy environment.	Participatory grantmaking (GlobalGiving)
Unique application form for various donors (Innpactia)	Donor-project "investment"/match-making rounds (Innpactia)
Modify and simplify access to funding (GlobalGiving)	Capacity building in "back office" knowledge (Comunalia)
Promote more money donations from the financial market (GIFE)	Capacity building for CSOs (RFJS)
A unique pipeline of social impact projects (Innpactia)	Project creator (Innpactia)
Civil Society Fund (RACI)	Support community-led nonprofits
Networks knowledge exchange (GIFE)	Belonging to networks (local, regional, international) (RACI)
Regional / Community Advocacy (HIP)	Partnership with organizations of the philanthropy ecosystem (RFJS)
Online petition (change.org, others)	Working with academia on knowledge sharing and research has been a successful way of attracting philanthropists
Use of technology to create safe spaces for CSOs and philanthropy environment	Advocacy based on data (HIP)
Technology for impact evaluation	Opportunities for collective actions between LAC Groups and organizations (ELAS Fund)
Formal agreement to present new authorities in order to address legal and financial restrictions.	Censo GIFE
Matching donations	Funding civic engagement projects in LAC
Work in alliances	Incorporate public-private civil sector in projects
	FATF & GAFILAT were involved in NPOs concerns
	Work with the community
	Thematic networks/coalitions
	Participatory budgeting and community council participation
	Endowment law advocacy (coalition) (IDIS)

	Supporting: - advocacy; - resistance; - defense of H.R. defenders
	SGD Funders
Unsuccessful experiences:	**Ongoing initiatives:**
Investing all the time and resources in affinity groups or just networking. We need to innovate and accelerate.	Fundo BIS (GIFE)
Support the advocacy efforts of organizations that do not coordinate with the rest of the social sector (TrustLaw)	Civil Society Network with 6 networks working together.
Advocacy to include tax incentives for smaller organizations or new organizations (Cemefi, Mexico)	Supporting infrastructure of the sector.
Cooperation with other online fundraising platforms to incentivize local giving (GlobalGiving)	Synergos LatAm Collective Action
Capacity building eternally instead of rethinking systems (Innpactia)	Rede Coletiva do Advocacy pelo Meio Ambiente
Wiser investment from the private sector (locally)(RACI)	Movimento por uma Cultura de Doação
Not prioritizing the advocacy strategy (Comunalia)	Brazilian version of the web pages: Grantspace and Grantcraft (GIFE)
Regional laws for civil society (Comunalia)	Giving Tuesday / Dia De Doar Campaign
Philanthropists network (IDIS) : online platform to connect philanthropists.	Citizen participation mechanisms. Affinity Groups having a voice in these spaces (Cemefi - Mexico)
Work with municipalities.	Tax issues advocacy
Dialogue/debate only with similar organizations	Events and conferences like Forum IDIS, Conferencia GIFE, Festival ABCR to share knowledge
Proposed fiscal incentives for all causes (as part of the Endowment Law): the government didn't approve and the fiscal incentive was accepted only for culture	3 platforms: - CSR accreditation - AIT - standards for CSOs accountability - Pladis - Social Investment platform to link CSOs + CSR (Cemefi, Mexico)
Changing the mindset of corporate philanthropy to focus on community philanthropy.	Knowledge group with infrastructure organizations.
	Leadership training (course) (FJLES)
	Develop the concept of collaborative philanthropy: research and publication (GIFE)
	Raise awareness about drivers behind banks' AML/CFT regulations.
	Donation Financial Framework (ABCR)
	Support to collective of Peruvian NGOs for the change of legislation on tax benefits (TrustLaw)
	One tool to approach strategic actors (Comunalia)
	Democratize access to funding opportunities (RACI)
	Data analytics on supply/ demand of funding (Innpactia)
	Ceding power and empowering decision-making within nonprofits (GlobalGiving)

	Donor/funding mapping (Innpactia)
	Strengthening networks (RFJS)
	Grupo democracia (GIFE)
	Production of knowledge (publication - research) (RFJS)
	Capacity Building led within our own non-profit community (GlobalGiving)
	Comunicação de causas (GIFE)
	SDGs Platform (RACI)
	SGDs (HIP)
	Multi Stakeholders dialogues (RACI)
	Middle donors for human rights (FGV)
	Community philanthropy development program
	Creation of foundations & associations
	Demand for a specific approach for NPO
	Capacity building for small organizations
	Community foundation mapping exercise at LAC level
	Legal changes on tax donations (GIFE)
	Community asset mobilization initiative.
	Survey with members to build an advocacy agenda
	Establishing new co-funding agreements with corporate foundations.
	Culture of giving campaign-Discover your cause (Idis)

Main takeaways
- Organizations would greatly benefit from a country-by-country mapping of the environment in the region in order to be more prepared to take strategic actions at national and regional level.
- Producing knowledge, creating narratives and communication strategies and building alliances are important steps in building strong and well-informed advocacy initiatives. This process takes time, effort and capacity but can lead to meaningful and necessary changes.
- Initiatives fail due to a number of reasons, among them, not enough collaboration and coordination between organizations and communication focused only in the usual suspects, were the most common mistakes organizations made.

Session 3 | Analyzing Options on How to Engage in Collective Action

Jocelyn Nieva, Senior Legal Advisor for Latin America and The Caribbean for ICNL divided her talk in two parts:

Presentation of the [Assessing the Legal Environment for Civil Society Organizations](#) tool: During this part of the workshop, Jocelyn provided context on the restrictions and barriers faced by NPOs (nonprofit organizations) and how they can mobilize around these issues.

An important highlight is that the environment for NPOs has become increasingly restrictive all over the world and can affect organizations in different ways depending on the type of organization, the issues they engage in, the countries and regions they are located, and the relationship they have with governments. Among the main restrictions highlighted were: bureaucratic costs and proceeds, banking restrictions, huge amounts of documentation, fixed deadlines, taxations, among others.

The first step to mobilization is understanding a crucial difference: if the problem lies in the text of the law or if it's in the way the law is understood/implemented. Another key step in comprehend the context of the issues the organization is trying to change, what are the organization's priorities and who are the potential partners and allies. (Full presentation in PDF [here](#))

FATF Standards and Non-Profit Organizations (available [here](#)): the second part of the session started with an introduction from Jocelyn Nivea and continued with a presentation from Gabriella Pellón (available [here](#)), member of the Expert Hub on Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism created by leaders of the [Global NPO Coalition on FATF](#). Garbiela explained why NGOs should care about the Financial Action Task Force ([FATF](#)): the FATF rules have deep effects on the ability of NPOs around the world to operate facing legal and financial restrictions due to anti-terrorism restrictions based on the [Recommendation 8](#), and on the relationship between them and governments and the concrete impact, it has the countries evaluated based on the requirements.

Another important topic was how to conduct initiatives on the global, regional and domestic levels, to address the legal and fiscal constraints that affect NPOs. The main recommendations for NPOs to take part in working groups to make their voices heard by authorities and banks; to improve the organization's knowledge regarding FATF and how it operates; to gather evidence on excessive regulations and financial restrictions and to conduct advocacy efforts around the correct implementation of Recommendation 8.

After both presentations the group was divided into smaller groups to conduct an exercise using the "[Assessing the Legal Environment for Civil Society Organizations](#)" tool, mainly focusing on Part I and II, to define the priorities to collaborate at a national and regional level.

The first group was debating **bank de-risking and the implications of FATF on the way banks treat NPOs.** The participants highlighted the inconsistency of regulations. In some countries, there is a lack of regulation to bank de-risking, while other countries have an abundance of regulations and often these are not designed with NPOs in mind.

The potential partners to tackle this issue are: other NPOs, donors, central banks and bank coalitions. Engaging with them is a key aspect of hosting a conversation on the effects these regulations have on NPOs.

The groups also highlighted the importance of having a deep understanding of the legislation in place in order to be more prepared to advocate for the necessary changes regarding the treatment for NPOs.

The second group decided to work on the **cross-border/international transactions topic.** They wanted to address issues as the access of local organizations to international funds, international grantmaking, and diaspora donations. In many countries in the region there are not clear norms to regulate this type of donations. In some cases, the norm in practice ends up being the local government decision - and in the current context, the decisions tend to be biased to make it harder and sometimes impossible for civil society to obtain their resources even when they are already available for them.

The group mapped the possible actions under the idea of reaching out to regional economic forums in a cross-sector coalition to make transnational donations possible. They identified as possible partners the private actors that might also be interested in allowing cross-border/international donations. They can be important allies to a civil society collective - that in the midterm can be structured between WINGS Members.

Main takeaways
- Although restrictions and barriers faced by NPOs differ from country to country, it's possible to identify the most common obstacles: bureaucratic costs and proceeds, banking restrictions, huge amounts of documentation, fixed deadlines, taxations, among others.
- Before engaging in any mobilization process organization need to form strong understandings around the main issues they intent to mobilize against in order to recognize the root of the problem. One useful question to ask sra: if the problem lies in the text of the law or if it's in the way the law is understood/implemented?
- In order to act strategically organizations need to take the time to prepare, mapping the impact of the restrictions, who is affected by them, who might be interested in addressing the issues, the past efforts and the local context.

Workshop on Narrative and Communication

The workshop, facilitated by Ricardo Borges Martins, Pedro Telles and Anna Livia Arida, from [Advocacy Hub](), aimed to foster discussion on how to engage different stakeholders (from common citizens to decision-makers) on the organization advocacy strategy in the shrinking space context. The facilitators provided participants with theory and practical tools on communication to address problems related to the shrinking space in their national contexts. ([Presentation available here]())

On the first part of the workshop, the facilitators presented 5 different approaches to advocacy: 1) Collaboration with decision-makers; 2) Direct persuasion through dialogue; 3) Support from key stakeholders be they large groups or specific actors; 4) Pressure from the streets through protests, direct action, and 5) Litigation. More than one of these approaches to achieve the goal and more often than not, one organization can't do it alone.

Even though there isn't a single formula that guarantees that the advocacy process will be a success, there are some criteria and tools that can help to make the initiatives more effective.

Setting objectives: an important step on any advocacy process is to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) objectives.

Setting strategy: selecting the actors and processes more useful to reach the objectives.

Creating key messages: synthesizing the big and complex messages, kinding the best way to communicate, test the message with people who are not experts on the subjective, think about the reactions your message can create, from your partners and opponents.

Defining the audience: it is important to think of who you want to reach. But also who you **don't** want to reach, for strategic reasons. These people are the one who are against the initiative. Sometimes you don't need to engage a lot of people, sometimes just the key players is enough.

Defining the narrative: make it interesting, with clear messages and objectives.
- How you present the narrative, more intimate or not.
- Going beyond the central issue as a way to corroborate the narrative.
- Very different narratives can talk about the same key messages.

Organizations need to work on **setting the agenda not only reacting to it. Or at least frame the issue using your narrative.**

The second part of the workshop consisted of a practical exercise. Divided into five groups, the participants worked on communications strategies based on the audiences they need to target and the guiding questions provided by the facilitators:

1. What is the relationship that each member of the group have with this sector today?

2. What values, principles and objectives do you share with representatives of this sector?
3. In which direction should actors in this sector move regarding shrinking civic space?
4. If you had a meeting with a player in this sector, what would be your key messages?

Group 1	
Target Audience: Media	
What is the relationship that each member of the group have with this sector today?	Relationships with PR experts, some members of the group have some media training and the members of the group have data that is interesting to journalists.
What values, principles and objectives do you share with representatives of this sector?	Tell the truth; have credible and reliable sources; transparency; democracy maintenance; good exercise of rights, freedom of expression and press.
In which direction should actors in this sector move regarding shrinking civic space?	Report: show the truth Raise awareness: the sector is reliable. Identify the media that has been more favorable towards public space issues. Strengthen the transparency of the media involved. Strengthen collaboration between actors and media.
If you had a meeting with a player in this sector, what would be your key messages?	- "The civic space closes first for us and then continue to close until it reaches you" - "We are complementary, we need each other" - "We both need to strengthen transparency"

Group 2	
Target audience: Citizens	
What values, principles and objectives do you share with representatives of this sector?	CSO are relevant as they make a difference in the lives of people; giving (doing good things); democracy and participation.
In which direction should actors in this sector move regarding shrinking civic space?	Showing direct impact of the law (narratives/political context); reasons that people joined each other / good ideas / innovation; public good and diverse perspectives are in the same boat.

If you had a meeting with a player in this sector, what would be your key messages?	Using examples where CSO were there for you
	"Who is fighting for you"
	   - Right for women to vote
	   - Multi racial engagement
	   - Slave (work)
	   - Human trafficking

Group 3	
Target audience: Citizens	
What values, principles and objectives do you share with representatives of this sector?	Being part of a community; access to rights and duties of citizenship.
In which direction should actors in this sector move regarding shrinking civic space?	A more aware, more informed, more participatory citizenship.
If you had a meeting with a player in this sector, what would be your key messages?	- Give you information about rights and use it consciously. - Call to action: Participate! - Protect rights in conjunction with the community. The strength is in the collective . - If you are not well I am not well (common good).

Group 4	
Target audience: Private sector	
What values, principles and objectives do you share with representatives of this sector?	Trust; transparency; strong legal / institutional environment; democratic oppenes and civil society participation.
In which direction should actors in this sector move regarding shrinking civic space?	Private sector should regard CSOs as equal partners and value co-creation.
If you had a meeting with a player in this sector, what would be your key messages?	Problem: Persecution against CSOs Cause: Legal, fiscal, institutional restrictions by governments Solution: Private sector can partner with CSOs, putting their name in projects to "protect them" provide legitimacy and political capital Problem: there is a bad perception of CSOs in society Cause: Because the government speaks and acts against these organizations Solution: private sector can create a communication campaign sharing good experiences with CSOs to give them visibility and legitimacy

Group 5	
Target audience: Private sector	
What values, principles and objectives do you share with representatives of this sector?	Ethics; transparency; freedom; country-development and sustainability.
In which direction should actors in this sector move regarding shrinking civic space?	Sustainable development, strengthening of institutions, legal security.

If you had a meeting with a player in this sector, what would be your key messages?	- We want to raise the transparency bar for all institutions and we are forming a movement and signing a declaration in favor of ethics and transparency. - Assume themselves as social actors and understand that the reduction of civic space also affects them - Defend freedom of initiative / institutions.

Group 6	
Target audience: Private sector	
What values, principles and objectives do you share with representatives of this sector?	Promote, strengthen the protagonism of women; reconnect as exchange agents; social justice; transparency; entrepreneurship; health; youth; community development and legitimacy.
In which direction should actors in this sector move regarding shrinking civic space?	Private sector sharing good practices about their relationship with CSOs; giving visibility to the causes that they support; new ways of doing grantmaking; Participatory grantmaking and fund advocacy and campaigns.
If you had a meeting with a player in this sector, what would be your key messages?	- The perception of civil society is really bad cause by the president discours; we want you to help us to disseminate the experiences you have had with CSO in order to create new positive narrative and rebuild trust in our sector - The persecution of SCO caused by the recent legal and fiscal (legislation) have shrink the space for civil society, we want you to partner with us funding initiatives to open these spaces.

Group 7	
Target audience: Citizens	
What values, principles and objectives do you share with representatives of this sector?	Collaboration; ability to operate and collective impact
In which direction should actors in this sector move regarding shrinking civic space?	To share their power, to support collective efforts and to be transparent and accountable.
If you had a meeting with a player in this sector, what would be your key messages?	- Civil society contributes to build something better - It is your responsibility to keep and increase our achievements - We can do more together

Main takeaways

- Building an effective narrative revolves around establishing clear objectives and thinking strategically about who is the audience and how is the best approach to engage them.
- The narrative should be interesting and clear. And there's not a one-fits-all process to creating strong communication, one message can be presented in a number of different ways.
- Communication is more than just reacting to a narrative already in place. Setting the agenda is just as important as framing the existing issue to fit the organization's narrative.