

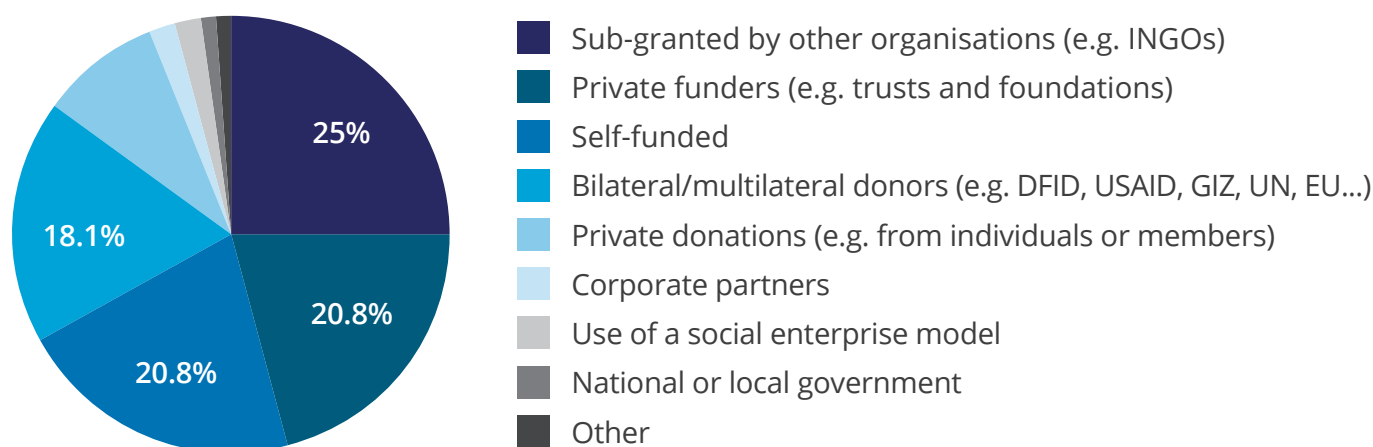
SHIFTING THE POWER:

Emmanuel, young researcher
from Uganda

What will it take to fund and resource youth CSO differently?

We investigated the root causes behind youth CSOs just surviving, not thriving, and we learned that **with enough and consistent flexible funding CSOs can deliver the programming they want to**. In this brief we explore how to break down the main barriers to an empowered and well-resourced youth CSO.

Breakdown of funding sources for youth organisations:



This graph shows there is no one predominant way for organisations to get their funding. Among the least common funding sources, however, is “use of a social enterprise model”, “national or local government” and “corporate partners”. How can we better leverage these opportunities to support a better-resourced youth CSO?

We found that...

Short-term, non-continuous funding is the norm, and few organisations have experience in funding for longer periods than 6 months to 1 year. Worsened by gaps between funding cycles, short-term funding impacts the sustainability of youth CSOs, their ability to retain staff and talent, and manage core costs.

Despite allowing for a more effective use of resources (and less time dedicated to fundraising), **longer funding still inhibits the freedom to determine where to spend funding based on need**, and is only part of the answer.

Building relationships goes beyond compliance and one-way accountability, and despite these being the foundations to strong donor rapport, they need to be nurtured by detailed communication and two-way transparency between donor and youth organisation.

Organisations have a lot of appetite to **explore new ways of securing funding**, but face resourcing and capacity gaps. They are not clear on what alternative strategies are and even less certain of how to implement them.

How can we do it differently?

Organisations want more (and not less) **interaction with donors** so they can better understand the realities of youth civil society, as well as more freedom to make decisions and be the brains, not just the faces, of development initiatives.

To address structural resourcing challenges among youth CSOs, such as poor staff retention driven by disparity in pay rates with INGOs and the impossibility of offering better contracts, donors and INGOs must **change funding structures to better value (and compensate) the expertise of national organisations**.

Donors must review restrictions on existing funds and **support flexible funding streams that enable organisational growth in strategic areas**, as well as skill building and staff retention opportunities.

Now more than ever before, **a more diverse group of funders must prioritise investment in innovative, scalable and creative alternative funding models** (such as social entrepreneurship) to support youth CSOs sustainability and break the cycle of persistent donor dependency.

“ **FLEXIBLE FUNDING ALLOWS THE STAFF TO COME UP WITH DRAFT AND UNTESTED IDEAS, SOME OF WHICH GAVE BIRTH TO SOME OF OUR MOST PROMISING PROJECTS SUCH AS OUR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ELECTIONS TRACKER.** ”

FROM A YOUTH-LED ORGANISATION IN UGANDA.



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