



DEVELOPMENT  
ALTERNATIVE



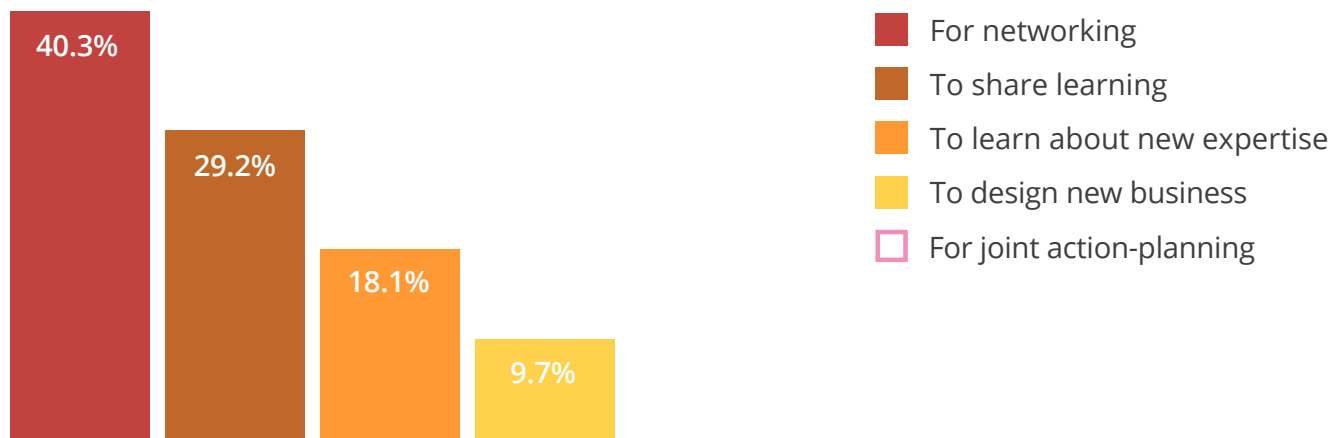
# SHIFTING THE POWER:

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## How to build connection and collaboration differently?

We investigated the root causes behind youth CSOs just surviving, not thriving, and we learned that **youth CSOs are keen to explore alternative ways to collaborate more effectively together.** This brief unpacks where and how youth CSOs are connecting with each other, what are the spaces and platforms they are using, what works well and what doesn't.

### What are collaboration spaces used for?



*The graph above shows how different spaces to foster connection and collaboration are currently used by youth civil society.*

## We found that...

**Building trust and transparency are important for creating strong and lasting relationships.** These attributes need to be established at the beginning of a new partnership and be formalised, for example through an MOU, clearly defining roles and expectations.

**Most youth CSOs want collaborations that last for 3 - 5 years and outlive programme's funding cycle.** However, funding limitations and short funding cycles are a real constraint to ensuring strong collaborations, as without resources and time it is challenging to build relationships.

**Funding opportunities determine who to collaborate with and on what terms.** Youth CSOs often want to make decisions about how to connect and collaborate differently, but the rules for collaboration (ie. with whom, how and on what) are often set by donors and INGO, based on donor strategic priorities, partnerships and funding opportunities they offer.

**Establishing more diverse and productive spaces for connecting are important.** While there are a number of virtual spaces for youth CSOs to interact, physical spaces to connect are fewer, less frequent (quarterly or biannual) and often far from where most of the work is delivered. Yet there is an appetite to question the potential and usability of existing spaces, before creating new ones to increase connection.

## How can we do it differently?

**Donors and INGOs must co-develop partnership standards at the outset of programme design,** based on mutual trust, shared expectations, and agreed roles. The process must be co-owned to ensure a greater sense of horizontality, relevance and decision-making power by all partners. This will help to foster and maintain longer term partnerships beyond funding cycles.

**Decisions on partnerships should also be mutually beneficial and agreed jointly with donors,** as well as productive and meaningful to organisations. Activities, like partnership or influence mapping, can help donors and youth CSOs identify which collaborations are the most relevant and strategic from both perspectives.

Building connection and collaboration is not just about creating more spaces; it is about **revisiting how spaces are structured and how they can be expanded to achieve more, be more accessible and more relevant.** How can we move beyond simply "sharing" and into "delivering and thinking" together? A deeper conversation should be held in the sector about who needs to own and drive responsibility in such spaces.

**“ WE COLLABORATED WITH TWO OTHER ORGANISATIONS FOR A TRAINING OF TRAINERS WITH LOCAL LEADERS AND OTHER COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS. THE PROGRAM WENT SO WELL BECAUSE WE USED OUR DIFFERENT EXPERTISE IN A PRODUCTIVE WAY. ”**  
FROM A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATION IN ZIMBABWE.



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