

Civil Connections Community Foundation (CCCCF)

Annual Report 2021

This report is presented and passed at the organization's general meeting held in Copenhagen, Denmark.

On April 21st, 2022



Contents

Organization's information:.....	ii
Foreword:	iii
Introducing Civil Connections	1
i. About Civil Connections Community Foundation (Civil Connections)	1
ii. Our approach:	1
iii. Mission and Vision	2
Report on the year 2021:	3
1.0. Key Milestones in 2021:	3
1.1. A strong project and fundraising profile:	3
1.2. Projects that have run in 2021	4
1.2.1. Erasmus+ funded projects	4
1.2.2. CISU funded projects	6
1.2.3. Nordic Council funded projects	8
1.3. We have developed three approaches/models ready to guide our work:	12
1.4. Consolidating our communication and community mobilization:	13
i. Membership platform on our website:	13
ii. Developments on the website and Social Media (SoMe) generally:.....	14
iii. The blog:	16
Our future plans – part of our strategy for 2020 - 2023	17
2.0. What we will concentrate on in 2022:	17
2.1. Defining the organization further – for more efficiency:	18
i. Organizational structure and Management:	18
ii. Organizing around international cooperation:.....	19
2.2. Clearer and more detailed strategic objectives:	19
2.3. Our strategy and the SDGs	21
3.0. A call to membership.....	22
Conclusion:.....	23
Pictorial Highlights through 2021	a

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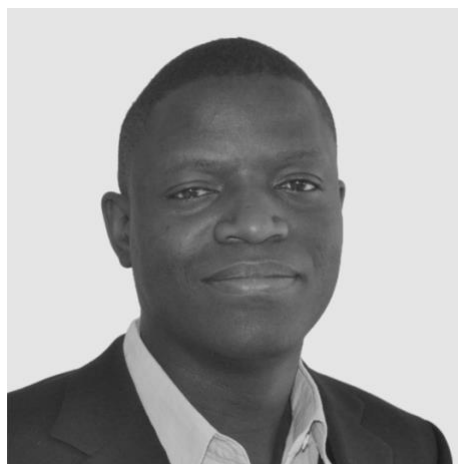
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Foreword:



A reflection on Civil Connections' 2021

Dear members, friends, followers, and Civil Connections network, thank you so much for 2021.

True, the world has struggled and continues to struggle with COVID19, variant after variant, two years down the road of the pandemic's outbreak. And as I write this short message, students across primary and secondary schools in Uganda (save for candidate classes), will only be concentratedly rejoining schools on the 10th of January 2022 after a complete 2-year stay at home – a real-life impact we have seen if you need one. I am sure you also know that school dropout rates have more than tripled, teenage pregnancies have followed the same trend, low resource communities have been hit hard, and development as a sector has seen many of its gains over the years rolled back – especially in relation to gender, poverty, and inequality aspects (UN, 2021).

But as I reflect over 2021 on this morning of 19th December 2021, from the rural Mayuge district in Eastern Uganda where I am on a mission to monitor some of the projects and activities, we laid foundation for in this year, I am filled with optimism. I explain why in the following paragraphs.

Let's go back 15 years ago:

To paint a clearer picture, yesterday I had an unexpected meeting and consequently a 30-minute conversation with two young men that I never thought I would remember who they were – these were Sulayi and Abed. To be honest I felt a little offended with their thought that I could not remember them given the period I have been away – 16 years. but how could I when they are some of the people that laid the foundation to the philosophy of Civil Connections?

You see, when I first came to Mayuge in 2004, Sulayi was only about 12 years starting his secondary school, and Abed was slightly older. Both sons of peasants, Sulayi was offered a place for education at a local school – Delta High School, that we (RISE Uganda NGO I was working with) cooperated with. Sulayi was orderly, captivated by anything called new knowledge, and aspiring to be a respected professional. Hearing about my arrival to Mayuge from Kampala, Sulayi automatically started working closely with me. He went on to set up a school club at his school (replicating the model we were using in other communities) through which RISE carried out different activities – from simple information events to actions in the local town, and before long Sulayi earned his place

as one of the 9 volunteers RISE worked with across the 6 years, I worked in Mayuge. As we talked yesterday – me and Sulayi, I could not hold back my tears of joy as he told me he was a headteacher of a local school and would like me to visit his school and local village to see how many initiatives they were running – based on the RISE model we built years ago.

Abed, the lesser resourced of the two, coming from a peasant family of 17 children, never gained the chance for school, but he was probably one of the most hardworking boys I had ever met. As we set up an office and needed a handy helper Abed ended up doing nothing to do his job. Cleaning, shopping, receiving, and settling in guests, connecting us to the local community, and eventually supporting information activities in the local communities were all a piece of cake for this young man. We at some point decided that his capacity would not be fully reached without education. So, in working with a local junior school – Montessori Primary School, Abed started in the 5th grade at about 16 years (others were about 9 – 10 years), and after 3 years went on to join Sulayi at Delta High School.

And although motivation to stay in school quickly dwindled, blame put on a mix of his struggling family and the consequent need for income, as I talked with Abed yesterday, like Sulayi I was warmed in my heart. Abed now works with a local Solar Energy supply company as a field agent, has built a little three-room house just outside of Mayuge Town, he has a wife and three children. Like Sulayi, Abed could neither hold back his wish for me to visit his house so he could show me what my association with him years ago, and the work of RISE had given him. He is still a proud hard working young man.

Over the 30 minutes, we reminisced about the different groups we facilitated to start name after name popping up – Gili Gili, Budhebera, Delta, Wakalama, Wairama, St. Mulumba, Kyabando, Nsango, Mpungwe, etc. It was like music from an old Goldie, but the most impactful aspect on this memory lane was that these groups are still active and call themselves RISE groups to date. In Sulayi's words "RISE was not just an organization, it was a way of doing things, and that methodology continues to guide all of us". Abed added "I was little known, but I get surprised when I go deep in Mayuge, and people start asking 'are you not Abed from RISE' and wondering when we are coming back to continue building on what we started". Moses, another young man standing by, joined in with a saying "when you plant you have to come back and harvest your fruit and Mr. Andrew (as I was called then), if you just dare to take a trip into these groups you will be surprised by what you and RISE achieved". This is what I really call hope – this to me is real hope.

Taking up from the above, we joined and continue to harvest motivation to tincture real impact in communities that need this and get surprised by how ready they are to lead their way – just if given space. This is what we have done and learned in 2021 – a year that the following pages of this report will take you on a journey into.

I hope that you take your time to read this report, get to know Civil Connections more, and get closer to the communities and agencies we work with in these communities. And when all this is taken in, please remember to join a real impact cause – we have our doors open. We hope that you join us on our journey in 2022 and beyond – as we aspire to build robust communities.

Andrew Julius Bende
Daily Leader
Chairperson of the Board

Introducing Civil Connections

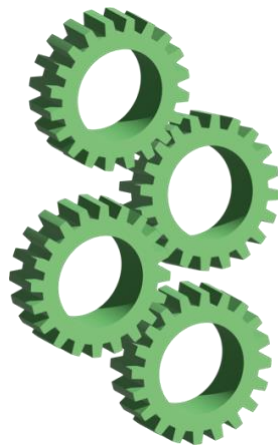
i. [About Civil Connections Community Foundation \(Civil Connections\)](#)

Founded in September 2018, CCCF is an international nongovernmental organization based in Copenhagen, Denmark. The aim of CCCF is to increase value and achievement in international development initiatives at local grassroots communities by building bridges to and for commonly unreachable local grassroots development actors especially in the rural areas, to be central in defining how this takes place. We do this through developing partnerships, outfitting these with exposure, capacity, motivation, and mentorship for long-term sustainability.

With a base of members and supporters across the globe, we have strong will and commitment to identifying local development actors – especially those rarely found on the mainstream development radar, and facilitating, motivating, and mentoring them to keep believing in their work, as well as amplifying their contribution to global development.

To this end, we actively work with engaging all types of actors on the necessity and benefits of strategically focusing on local rural grassroots as a domain of high presence of inequalities. And of course, it is here over 70%, and in some regions up to over 85% of the global population – commonly the poorest and most vulnerable have their livelihoods (UN, 2018). Indeed, targeting local grassroots, especially rural ones, is a decisive focus to bring the most vulnerable, yet commonly unseen and in some cases unreachable communities on board the international development agenda.

ii. [Our approach:](#)



Our working with partners and grassroots development actors bases on four strategic objectives, including:

- Amplifying – telling our followers and the wider world about their work
- Facilitating sustained capacity growth.
- Resource mobilization, financing, and fundraising
- Long-term motivation, and mentoring.

Read more about these in our strategy.

iii. Mission and Vision

Our vision is a world where local grassroots development actors (NGOs, CBOs, associations, groups, social enterprises, etc.) have adequate capacities, sustainable approaches, tools, methods, and sustained dedication to achieve their development objectives in facilitating community development.

Our mission is to support local grassroots development actors (with special attention to the rural) to achieve their aims in facilitating community development for a fair and sustainable world. This is done through: amplifying their work to the world, facilitating sustainable growth of their capacity, resource mobilization and funding, and long-term motivation and mentoring. Visit us: <https://civilconnections.org/>

Report on the year 2021:

We at Civil Connections have gained so much hope in 2021 (see our achievements below):

The story of Sulayi and Abed is not foreign to Civil Connections. When we started our work in September 2018, the idea was and remains to bring a fresh reflection on the way we work with rural, low-resourced, marginalized contexts/communities. Having grown up in a similar context, I was at trouble doing development without the rural grassroots at the center. In Uganda where I come from, over 70% of the country is rural, and the rural houses over 80% of the country's population. It is also here that we often find inadequate infrastructure – roads, unequipped medical facilities, schools, etc. as well as contradictory cultural traits e.g., high levels of gender inequality and heavy women and girls' domestic burdens etc.

And when development initiatives concentrate and or program without these contexts at the center, it simply means that we are not adequately reaching 70% or more of precisely the people we want to get into the betterment loop. So, we at Civil Connections set out to give a more concentrated look and programming for the rural and marginalized contexts and we have a positive story/report to tell:-). Here below is a quick snapshot of the achievements we have made in 2021 – our hope.

1.0. Key Milestones in 2021:

1.1. A strong project and fundraising profile:

Although majority of our new projects are starting in 2022, as the year 2021 ended two different funders – the European Union (EU) and Civil Society in Development (CISU) met with approvals of several. These join the list of others we have gotten funded in 2021, and through which we aspire to create real impact at the grassroots level or for the most marginalized communities across the world. Below is the list of projects developed and funded in 2021 starting with the newest:

- i. Strengthening structures for a deepened grassroots-based entrepreneurial movement for young females in the Bono region of Ghana, funded by CISU Denmark with 66,500 Euros.
- ii. "THE JOURNEY - In the shoes of refugees" - Creating opportunities for young Europeans to learn about forced migration through online simulation of refugee journeys and routes, funded by the EU with 189,300 Euros.
- iii. Demystifying the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for everyday European youths - facilitating knowledge, network, tools, actions, & familiarization funded by the EU with 60,000 Euros.
- iv. Girls Choose - Building a grassroots and gender sensitive Sexual and Reproductive health Rights and HIV and services strategy for periphery and marginalized communities in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, funded by CISU Denmark with 67,300 Euros
- v. Facilitating inclusive and responsive youth policy development in Samegrelo Region of Georgia funded by CISU Denmark with 64,200 Euros.
- vi. Protecting Our Planet funded by the EU with 39,430 Euros.
- vii. Climate Ambassadors funded by the EU with 41,350 Euros.
- viii. Hvordan lykkes man med små impact indsatser i marginaliseret samfund / kontekster? En model, funded by CISU with 3,750 Euros.
- ix. Creating structures for rural youth leader's mobilization, capacitation, and mentoring for more effective execution of their policy making and development roles within the Uganda Local Government system – a pilot in Yumbe and Mayuge districts funded by CISU with 67,500 Euros.

These projects will run across several partnerships and countries including – Denmark, Uganda, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania, Zimbabwe, Georgia, Ghana, Sweden, Greece, Turkey, Hungary.

1.2. Projects that have run in 2021

Below is a presentation of the key projects we have gotten into the house, as well as those we have self-initiated and financed:

1.2.1. Erasmus+ funded projects

i. Foresee, Observe & Combat: Norway



According to data provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2016 around 36.7 million people were living with a contagious illness where most of the subjects of this illness were between the ages of 25 and 29. Due to a lack of awareness among European youth, they are uninterested about undergoing the tests necessary to combat contagious diseases. This situation puts both them personally and their society's collective health in danger. This project aims to increase consciousness about the possible outcomes of this neglect, and to widen the youth's understanding of infectious diseases. Throughout the project, participants will be informed on the topic of protection from illnesses and the procedures that they need to take in case of becoming infected.

Read more about the project here: <https://civilconnections.org/foresee-observe-combat/>

ii. Climate Ambassadors: Turkey



In late November 2021, 60 young people from Turkey, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia and Macedonia came together on a Youth Exchange to learn about ecological challenges. We thank Erasmus+ for helping Civil Connections capacitate European youth, motivating them to exchange experiences at a grassroots level across Europe. Civil Connections makes Youth Exchanges happen as a part of its drive to create robust communities around the world.

iii. Protecting Our Planet: Turkey



Protecting our Planet is an Erasmus + Youth Exchange in Turkey, where 60 young people from Denmark, Turkey, Lithuania, Latvia, Czech Republic and Italy came together to learn about ecological challenges and discuss solutions. This project was all about preparing European youth to be the leaders of the future and teaching them to communicate the importance of protecting our planet to younger generations through a mixture of games and intercultural and creative learning.

1.2.2. CISU-funded projects

i. Facilitating Youth Policy Development – Georgia



In late October 2021, we kicked off Facilitating Youth Policy Development, a civil society project run in Georgia by the Academy of Peace and Development APD, coordinated by Civil Connections in Denmark and funded by CISU—the civil society branch of DANIDA. The project has three central objectives:

1. To increase the competences (mobilize & capacitate) of youths, civil society organisations and civil servants to address youth issues
2. To foster the establishment of sustainable forms of cooperation among youths, local youth organisations and local authorities
3. Based on the National Youth Policy Document and the lessons learned, to design a regional-based/ youth policy guide and an action plan for bringing this to use, and advocate for its approval and uptake.

ii. SLOGBAA: Uganda

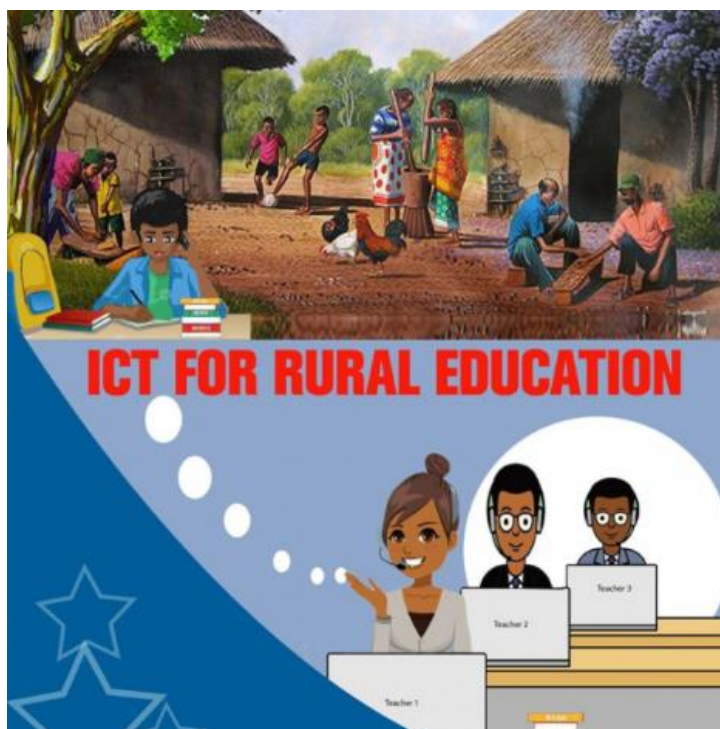


SLOGBAA started out with Network for Active Citizens coming up with a brilliant idea, to make a one-of-a-kind project empowering youth leaders in Uganda. At the beginning of the project it caused conflict in the local community, as it proved threatening to community leaders who were already in power. However, our country coordinator Violet Ann Naigaga has reported that the project has recently been embraced across the community. Through SLOGBAA, we have empowered over 150 youth leaders through different activities, providing a forum where young people can discuss issues openly without fear of being judged afterwards. This is a space of freedom where one can discuss anything!

Read more about the project here:

<https://civilconnections.org/slogbaa/>

iii. ICT for Education: Uganda



We want to contribute to new approaches maintaining the education of young people in low-resourced communities faced with high-cost online learning. We will do this by: Implementing and utilizing a toll-free distributed telephone line to connect participating primary schools in Yumbe town council with Community Extension Teachers (CETs) to provide home school education during and after Covid 19; Compiling and distributing copies of a “Pass Primary Leaving Exams questions” pamphlet to the participating schools to guide students, CETs, and parents at home with a continued familiarity with the upcoming structure of

the exams and reading practice. Mobilizing and guiding other stakeholders— especially parents—on their roles and responsibilities to enable continued learning within homes both during and after Covid-19 as a way of supporting their children towards succeeding at these exams, and their general education.

Read more about the project here:

<https://civilconnections.org/ict-for-rural-education-uganda/>

iv. Mayuge RISE Youth Soccer league

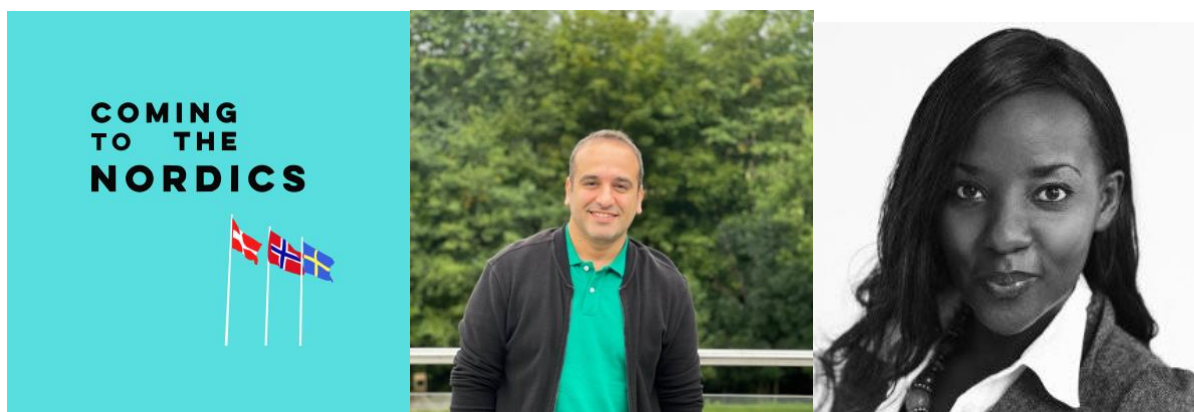


Mayuge RISE Youth Soccer league, previously known as RISE soccer league, is a recently relaunched 5-month football weekend event comprising eight youth soccer teams, each with at least 30 players/members. The league is home to 240 players and at least 500 spectators every weekend, engaging 2800 youths and members of their communities every month. The league has set out five immediate objectives: to provide a set of accessible leisure sports activities for youths during their free time; to draw young people away from destructive behavior towards a more engaging peer-run alternative; to promote the talents of young people within the field of sports; and to provide space for coming together, building common linkages, and networking. The league acts as a mobilization space for talking about community development and issues youths face.

1.2.3. Nordic Council-funded projects

Coming to the Nordics – A podcast of migrant stories

We named this project our flagship for 2021 due to the expansive coverage it has given us and the people we have had on the podcast. This process led to us producing over 30 podcast episodes with different migrants in Nordic countries, which forms a crucial part of our efforts to confront the subject of inclusion in European societies head on. Below is a dive into why we think this project is so significant.



'And for me, there is a difference between when you come to visit a place and deciding to stay in a place. When you choose to stay in a place you are no longer going to act like a guest, you now change your mind so that you begin to take up the values of that place. You want to participate in that place, you want to contribute, and it's coming genuinely'.

Carol Krogstrup on the Coming to the Nordics podcast

Intro to Coming to the Nordics by Andrew Julius Bende:

A couple of years after my arrival in Denmark and actively engaging in the social fabric of the country, I remember the debate on integration coming to new heights. There suddenly started emerging more specified definitions of the term integration – this among others taking connotations of “speaking fair free Danish, being ‘well placed’ on the job market (with minimum income demands), and the question of social mobility to count as a Dane also coming with caveats of carrying original ethnic Danish traits, etc.”. And when one spoke the language with an accent there would be representations of not being well integrated.

I remember being part of uncountable discussions and debates about integration, and what in fairness would be achievable from a personal perspective, and integration's relations to its other relatives like assimilation and inclusion. At that time, when someone talked about integration, I would tell them, no, it is not integration we need to talk about but rather inclusion. This was because the emerging definitions of integration made it difficult to be achievable by anyone not ethnically Danish. And if you went on with this, then it would be more beneficial for the debate if we outrightly called the theme assimilation.

Integration defined fairly is a lifetime journey that changes and is negotiated according to the context of the society and a specific moment in time, which makes it very fluid and too dynamic to make fair policy around. Examples of this fluidity from contemporary Denmark and Europe at large include changes to laws in the face of shocks like the “the refugee crisis” that triggered new approaches to how we saw people entering our borders. The economic crisis at the start of the 2010s and its influences on the job market, and or the rise of right-wing nationalism witnessed across the 2000s, probably triggered by the other incidents, but that also defines new and stricter standards for integration.

All these events and ‘integration redefinition’ and policy demands, only attest to the fatigue that comes with maintaining a dedicated focus on an integration model that calls for

assimilation, rather than inclusion and active participation in the lives of our communities. Taking this approach is very tiring for both those that define and set the standards, and those that need to keep adjusting their lives to fit the changing standards. But if we settle with inclusion, then this frees us and in real sense means that we also create the chance to change the view of things from expecting and forcing others to fit in, and instead work for creating spaces, opportunities, and to facilitate others to fit in.

So based on this line of thinking, we in the fall of 2020 initiated a project “Coming to the Nordics” that set out to delve into stories of migrants and to understand their everyday, their motivation to be part of the Nordic societies, their daily navigation, and commitments that we do not see in the bigger lines, their hidden contributions to these societies etc. And through these stories, then go back to ask our question if these are not striving for inclusion or not included already. And, if there is need at all to continue using the term integration on them where in real sense we are demanding for assimilation. This project is presented below.

Coming to the Nordics Project – setting high ambitions:

Our project set out to contribute to a Nordic region that is tolerant to diversity and has supportive tools in inter-cultural citizenship for easier and quicker migrant inclusion and integration. This would be reached through facilitating more inter-cultural experiences, reflections, learning, awareness and hopefully curiosity, towards better spaces for social-cultural inclusion and harmonious/sustainable communities.

Specifically, the project set out and has achieved the following outputs:

- Developed 30 episodes in a podcast series we have named after the project “Coming to the Nordics”. This will give listeners many months and maybe years of engaging with inclusion. Here, we among others delved into their journey – reasons and the process of coming to the Nordics, life here – challenges, successes, contradictions, navigation of understanding, roles in their inclusion into the new societies, and advice they would give to other newcomers to ease their faster inclusion and settle-in.
- We have developed the podcast into a storybook for these to be available for all interested to continue to interact with them for many years.
- We have developed an online course in Podcasting that we know is relevant in getting beginners to start their podcasts. This gives opportunity for more untold stories to come to life.

The process and thought behind the project design was also a major product. Particularly, the idea of combining storytelling, which is well known for providing easy access to bridging social-cultural gaps, with podcasting – a widely accessible and acceptable technology of modern learning was a great idea. By this, the project has given us access to stories untold, and hopefully over the next many years facilitating more inter-cultural experiences, reflections, learning, awareness and hopefully curiosity, towards the migrants’ cultural realities and shocks, as well as giving them the chance to reflect on their own role in their inclusion process.

Moreover, we have the belief that this is just a pioneer. We have seen across the project period that more and more migrants that would not come forward to narrate their lives, or call it rarely heard narratives of representatives of 8% of our local Nordic communities, have picked interest and courage to participate in the podcast. They want to contribute to local dialogue, reflections, debates, and policy formulation, purposely and meaningfully for diverse and sustainable local communities in their countries. They are seeking inclusion.

Exemplified narratives – and suggested reflections on inclusion:

On a human/personal level, the project is trying to exemplify to both the migrants and the locals in the Nordic countries that it doesn't matter whether people are speaking perfect Danish, English, Norwegian or Swedish, but that people get up every morning and are part of their local society, its lifestyle, and everyday dynamics.

By this I could take my own (Andrew's) life example. As of 2021 I have lived in Denmark for 11 years. I have two lovely children – my son is 11, and my daughter is 9. There is little of Uganda about these children apart from for having a big family there and often traveling and being familiar with the country. They are fully Danish, and not because I say it to them, or I try to hypnotize myself to believe this – they are Danes born and raised in Copenhagen. The society also accepts them as Danes – their schools, clubs, friends, the airports/entry points, health system, etc. Is it not tragic or problematic that their father who was by their bedside on their delivery, changed their diaper across their toddler years, has several times made food for them every day, has over the years made sure that they are proper citizens of Denmark – teaching them Danish values? Reading Danish night books, and singing with them in “Alberte Synger med de Små”, is written off as not integrated?

In fact, as I wrote this example, I had to ask my wife if by saying that “my children have a connection to Uganda”, will not politically polarize and get them deported with the argument that they have a bigger family in Uganda than in Denmark and therefore a bigger connection there. This is indeed some of the extremes we have witnessed, where some children in family unified marriages have been sent out of the country after the death of the strongest Danish connection or have lived a part of their lives abroad. We also took a discussion on the implication of gaining dual citizenship vis-à-vis your “proved strong connection” to Denmark. We ended up into a joke that maybe for one to be sure of not being judged lacking in Danish connection should skip dual citizenship.

Another example I commonly give is of a Ghanaian mother that fell in love with a Danish guy while he worked down in Tamale and on his return to Denmark, he decided to have her come with him. They have since been married, and the young woman has now raised two teenage sons on 18 and 15 years. For the past 18 years she has been the person that has made food packs “madpakke” for her children on their way to school. She has woken them up every single morning, changed their diapers while small, been the shoulder that they have cried on and recollected after challenges, and when the kids and her husband come home after their busy days there is always a hot meal made with love for them. The two teens are proud Danish citizens on their way to contributing the economy and society in a few years from now.

After all these years however, their mother still struggles with the Danish language and has tried several jobs and settled with a cleaning job somewhere in a restaurant where Danish is not a big demand. Given that she had only achieved a high school education in Ghana and when she moved to Denmark, she immediately started with her mother role, she is insecure around anything academic and professionally connoting. She tries to visit the library occasionally but as soon as the talks become academically demanding she retracts to a corner and only watches as another mother in her group takes on discussions and dialogues one after another. Her safe space is her home, her chosen friends, her children, her husband, her restaurant job that gives her the agency to go by Føtex and contribute to the house economy – she loves Denmark. Should we demand more than that of her? Should we demand that she speaks fluent Danish otherwise she is not good enough?

I would say, we will and in fact are in the process of killing her self-worth – her agency in including herself in the Danish society. I would say, we should be more open to who she is and support her to continue doing exactly what she finds interesting as long as it's within legal confines, as opposed to identifying all the wrong things about her. By this we will make the public place more secure for her, and instead of retracting from conversations it is almost certain that she will get more involved with time – and this might take a long time, but it is worth it.

A third example also around what we commonly believe as a successful integration, is in the definition of success itself. I remember we had this discussion and agreement within the project Coordinating Group, that success has to be defined by the person we are interviewing, where they reflect on their lives in the Nordics and find a spot, they themselves believe was success. And there are many examples. Imagine a 30-year-old that has never gone to school, or at most achieved high school in Uganda, he comes to Denmark and is able to get a kitchen job. He for sure struggles a lot with learning the language, but slowly starts understanding and eventually speaking a little bit of Danish. Through his kitchen job he can fend for his family, and you can generally say that he has a settled life. When asked if he is successful, he nods in approval. He doesn't need to be a rock star, he says.

So, when we were designing the storyline for coming to the Nordics and who we were going to interview, we intentionally decided not to start with the so-called “success stories” as defined by and according to the integration criteria. Because what is success? We were in clear agreement that the moment you define success based on the definition of integration that leans more towards assimilation than inclusion, then you would end up in the same trap of success being only achievable for the exceptional few.

Summation:

Those that have listened to the first episodes of the podcast have given the exact feedback we hoped for, i.e... “this is powerful”. We have gotten artists like Moussa Diallo and Mpho Ludidi to donate songs to the podcast, as well as featuring the podcast project at the Danish Folkemødet 2021 as a grassroots support platform, and its foreseen significance in contributing to the social-cultural development of the local Nordics.

Our hope is that as we release more of the podcasts, and people read the compiled storybook, that these will create a basis for a stronger debate with time. The podcast as well as the storybook will then be utilized in training within the local communities the different organizations work in, as well as offered as a free online training material.

Learn more about the project and engage with us:

All the project products are available here: <https://civilconnections.org/coming-to-the-nordics/>

A specific link for the course is here: <https://courses.civilconnections.org/courses/an-introduction-to-the-basics-of-podcasting>

1.3. We have developed three approaches/models ready to guide our work:

We have across 2021 piloted, tested, and systematized three approaches/models on which our programming and work will be based for a clearer navigation towards the results we want to achieve. The three models have both been a result of specific piloted projects to

give as a fairground of assurance, as well as long-term engagements with our partners from local contexts for their guidance on how we can best build robust communities. The three are listed below:

a. Our Community Impact Project Model - CIPM

This introduces our Community Impact Projects Model (CIPM) and Community Impact Projects (CIPs) as a concept. It provides a step-by-step process to understanding why CIPs and the CIPM are important, as well as giving practical suggestions on how to design CIPs. The model is suitable for anyone who works with projects, or initiatives where aspects of quick impact are considered as the focus. We developed the guide to purposely support development of CIPs in communities with low resources or low funding, to give us a backbone for building impact fast and at low cost. Get your copy here:

<https://civilconnections.org/subscribe-to-our-newsletter/>

b. ICT4Education – Mobile Telephony & Community clustering learning for low resourced communities

Through a small-scale intervention over the fall of 2020, we have been able to document a process/framework through which one could organize students and communities to learn remotely by use of a combination of – telephones, Bluetooth speakers, and community radios. We have called the project “Information Tech for Education – ICT4Education”, and we piloted in Yumbe district in West Nile region of Uganda, for the critical reason that millions of learners were out of school due to COVID19, and the most affected being rural low resourced due to access reasons. The model offers an interesting easy to work with, community and learner mobilization and support model. We will release the complete manual/guide in March 2022.

c. Podcast storytelling for engaging

Over the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021, we intervened in the migration discussion in Denmark and the Nordics at large by starting a podcast – “Coming to the Nordics”, where we have given the floor to migrants and professionals within the integration system to define words like inclusion, integration, and belonging to the Nordics through their personal stories. The results have been amazing. But this journey led us to understanding the power of podcasting, as well as the technical intricacies of how ‘everyday people’ can utilize podcasts to tell their stories into major policy discussions, for the potential of giving more varied and wide-based input into these. To this end, we have called the model “PODCAST STORYING” and created a backup course to guide one to start their own podcast. The documented model will be out in March 2022, but find the online course here:

<https://courses.civilconnections.org/courses/an-introduction-to-the-basics-of-podcasting>

1.4. Consolidating our communication and community mobilization:

i. Membership platform on our website:

One of the biggest developments among many that have come on our website is the implementation of the membership signup portal. This now gives our followers a chance to fully sign up as members and enjoy the benefits of insider tips and services that we have in store in the coming years. We have also intensified the recruitment of members to join us or

support our cause towards building robust communities.

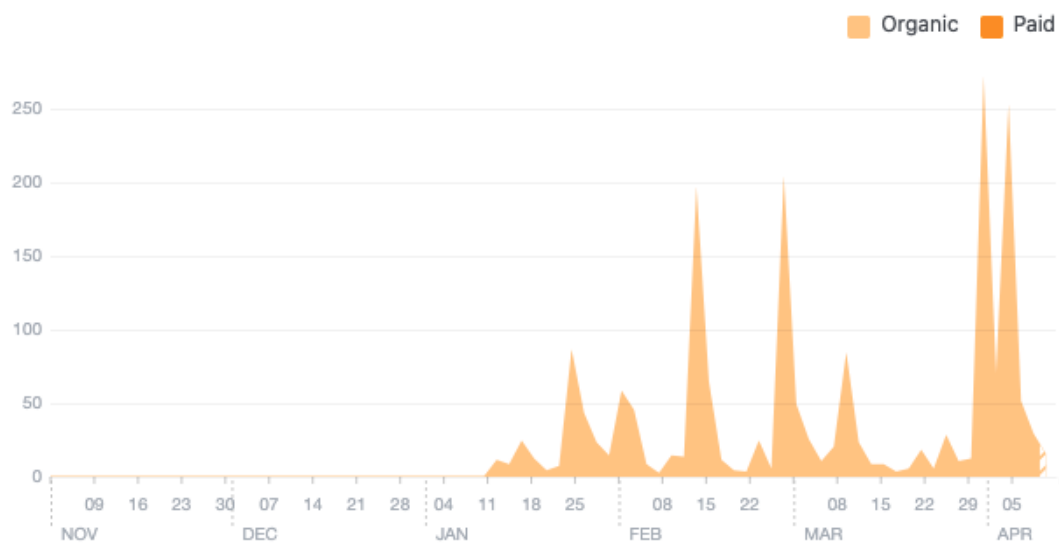
<https://civilconnections.org/become-a-member/>

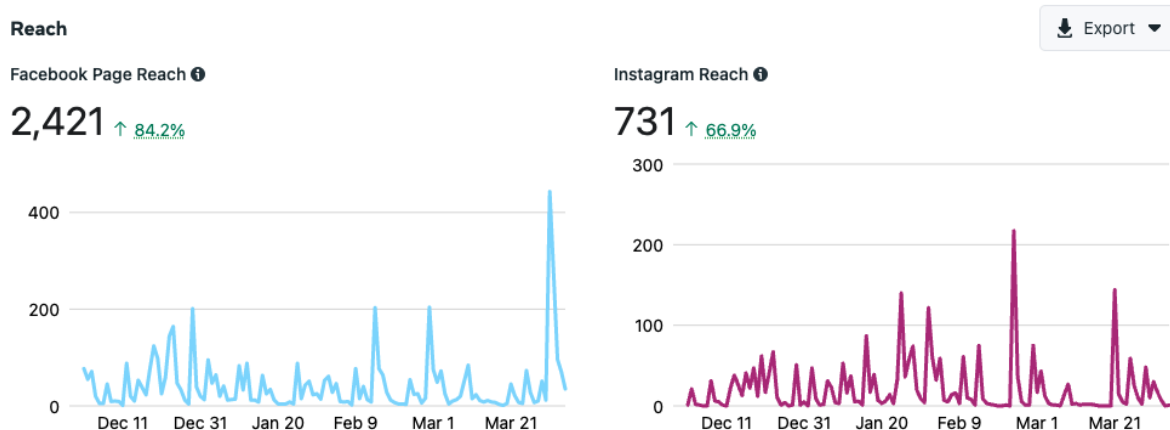
ii. Developments on the website and Social Media (SoMe) generally:

Over the last year, Civil Connections has made great strides when it comes to our website and social media. We are now very active on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter, and are looking ahead to another very active year. We know the importance of informing our online community about what we are doing to make a real difference in the world. This is why we communicate regularly with our international partners to share their content with our own followers and draw attention to the brilliant work they are doing. 2021 saw a rapid increase in our social media reach, where we went from zero to nearly 400 Instagram followers, and our Facebook reach has increased dramatically (see the metric below). These improvements mean one thing: Civil Connections' work is reaching a far wider audience, making it more likely that people will support our projects and work and understand the value of our organization.

Post Reach

The number of people who saw any of your posts at least once. This metric is estimated.





We use different content across different channels by for example using Instagram for more visually stimulating content and videos, and LinkedIn for our specific working practices and what we think about work in the NGO world. Over 2021, we focused on communicating a combination of our project results and the content we produced to our audience, using a mixture of our blog and social media. We are now focusing on taking this social media strategy to the next level by including some funds for boosting our posts in project proposals in an effort to expand our reach further within Denmark and beyond. We like to make posts regularly so that we can provide our audience with frequent, high-quality content, but for this we also depend on getting updates from our brilliant partners around the world!

Increasingly, we are aiming to make Civil Connections a knowledge leader in the world of grassroots development; we believe that we have a lot of knowledge to convey and a firm understanding of how small, local, grassroots organizations can be brought into the wider development process. We regularly read articles from sources like GlobalNyt and the New Humanitarian, think about how they apply to our work and then communicate that to our audience.

Because we know the value of having a good website in showing the world what Civil Connections is about and what we do, we totally transformed ours over the course of 2021. It now includes succinct sections on what we do, our international projects and a blog complete with high-quality content from Civil Connections staff and international partners. We have made great progress on the communications front recently, but we can go even further with the help of our members, partner organizations and our board. By sharing our posts on your own profiles and even contributing to what we post—for example by sending us an interesting article you've read on one of our key topics—you can dramatically help improve our reach!

Find all our information here: www.civilconnections.org or www.civilconnections.dk

And if you missed the SoMe links at the start of this report, here they are again:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/civilconnections/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/53395685/admin/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/civilconnectionsfc/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIp1wR-XVTi836fhOt1UvXw>

iii. The blog:



Our blog began to thrive in 2021 and has covered a range of important and exciting topics, notably including inclusion and grassroots development. As mentioned in our strategy, the intention with the blog is to bring news from the local grassroots to the mainstream/public and give such news, ideas, inputs, and discussions, access to the limelight. In return, we hope that our followers will find this as a great way to keep a connection and thus interact with the local grassroots.

If you want to read some of our articles from 2021, click here!

<https://civilconnections.org/blog/>

Our future plans – part of our strategy for 2020 - 2023

2.0. What we will concentrate on in 2022:

On top of the projects that will run into 2022 and of course new ones we will fundraise, we have several programs/activities we will start in 2022 and on. These are below.

1. A Community House in Mayuge – Uganda:

Andrew (Daily Leader) and his wife Stine own a house in Mayuge in Uganda, and they want to turn this into a community house for civil society groups and actors to have a place to call their workspace. It will both be a shared workspace as well as an incubator where ideas are supported to grow. This will also have services that are commonly not accessed by young people – especially schools. These first ideas are:

- A community library with the national school's syllabus and other context-aware materials in it.
- A computer center where youngsters can access computers, internet, and ICT training.

2. Grassroots Community Grant program (GCGP):

To support our ambition to create robust communities at the grassroots and to remain true to this, we in Civil Connections are starting a Small Grants program where we will award small grants of between 1.000 DKK and 10.000 DKK (150 and 1,500 USD) to causes, projects, actors, organizations, ideas that our grants committee will deem impactful at the grassroots. To build this grant program we are saving up 30% of all our administration portions across the different projects and incomes we gain, to distribute these further down the value chain. Our ambition is to increase this gradually up to 50% of all our administration budgets over the years. The first wave of grants will start in the spring of 2022 and will be mainly identified through/side by side with our current projects. The pioneer grants committee will be our current Executive Board until the need arises to establish a new one.

3. Podcasts as a way of telling the grassroots story and engaging our followers in what we do:

Over the most of 2021 we have gained great experience from running the Coming to the Nordics Podcast, which has brought good listenership from varied audiences in our network. We have now decided to continue recording stories of willing migrants and building a stronger – more grounded narrative around integration – with the people we debate about having a voice in this debate.

We will also start another podcast – *“Development from the Grassroots”* – where we will take talks with different grassroots civil society actors globally on how to make development more responsive to the needs of the people, we go out to develop.

4. Borrow our staff/experts, program:

It is as straightforward as it sounds, get expert support from our staff for free.

Part of our community/sector give back and social sustainability is that our staff must by contract volunteer 20% of their salaried time to support another entity we have found needing such support. For this to count, such an entity needs to apply to Civil Connections or be recommended by one of our staff, and then a decision taken by our Board on how and

who of our team supports them. The entity can also suggest who they see fitting such a role by matching themselves with the profiles of our experts.

2.1. Defining the organization further – for more efficiency:

We have in our new strategy elaborated Civil Connections internal structuring and processes to give our members, partners, funders, followers, and other stakeholders a good overview of who we really are, and how we work. Read more about this here below.

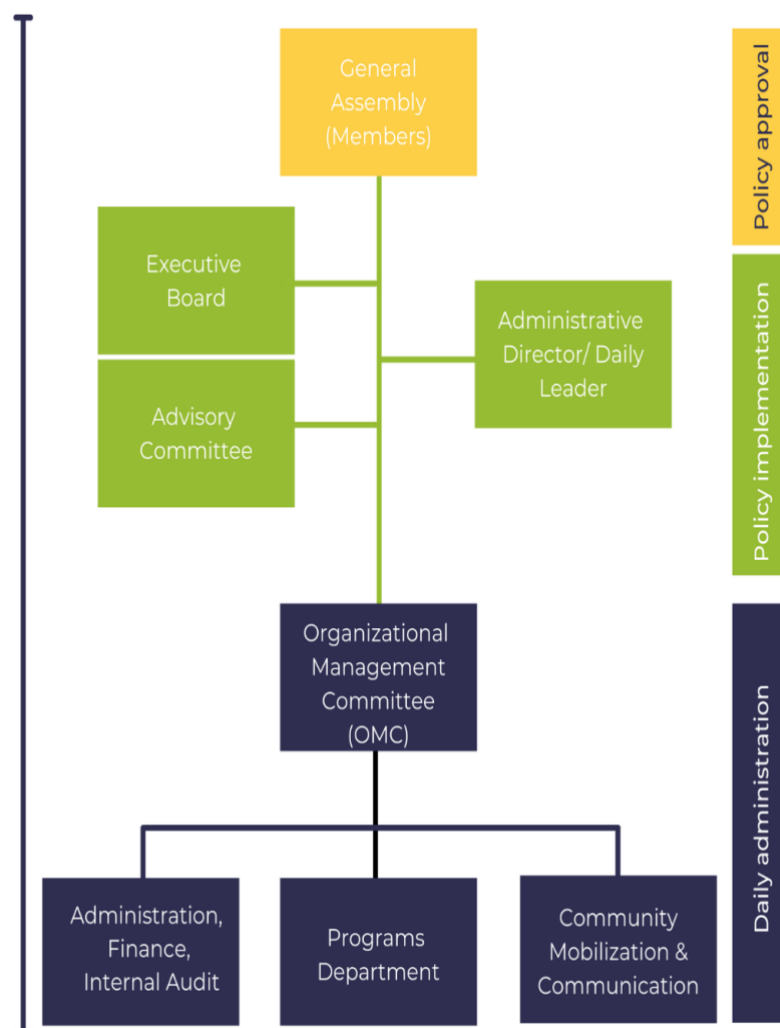
i. Organizational structure and Management:

The overall responsibility of the functioning of CCCF rests with the Executive Board, which is a policy-making body composed of 5 members and 2 substitutes. The Board, as a representation of all

members (General Assembly), ensures that the organization's statutes remain true to the original cause, and that the organization is managed well.

The day-to-day running of the organization is however done by the Secretariat, composed of:

- An Administrative Director or Daily Leader, and
- Other staff, including volunteers, interns etc.



Notes on these below:

The Administrative Director delegates/distributes tasks to other members of the secretariat based on their passion and competencies to manage these tasks. This is done in a transparent and dialogue guided way. The secretariat is formed into working groups as follows:

- Administration (the Administrative Director, Administrative Assistant, Bookkeeper, Auditors),

- Programs Department (Comprised of all people concerned with projects and programs)
- Communication, community Mobilization, and Marketing (who work around communication strategies and aspects, marketing of CCCF and our products, and recruiting members and followers to the organization among others).

Each of these groups has a Coordinator, all the coordinators then are together with the Administrative Director/Daily Leader and Administrative Assistant formed into a:

- Secretariat based **Organizational Management Committee (OMC)** that oversees the activities of the organization and sets the framework for day-to-day implementation and follow-up.
- The OMC is also responsible for internal controls, monitoring of activities and projects, reflecting on progress and evaluation, incorporating learnings into organizational planning, developing and renewing plans, financial checks, etc.

ii. Organizing around international cooperation:

- International cooperation and related partnerships at CCCF are initiated by the strategic direction of, and in mutual interest with other like-minded organizations.
- In the first instance, when an idea for a project or activity arises, the OMC assigns the development of a concept around the idea,
- Which is then shared with the Executive Board for commentary, once this is passed,
- Then the OMC assigns for a survey of the CCCF network for suitable partners to work with around such a project idea or activities.
- When a suitable partner is identified, the OMC develops Terms of Cooperation with the partner stipulating how the partnership shall be run, responsibilities in the partnership, resource issues in the partnership, copyrights, etc.
- Once the two or more come to an agreement the Administrative Director and Board Chairperson then go ahead to sign the Partnership agreement and work begins.
- Such cooperation and contracts are then placed within the ecosystem of internal strategic management described above, though with the conscience that our partners are treated with respect and equal rights within this cooperation.

2.2. Clearer and more detailed strategic objectives:

To give you a start, we here below present you with the main lines and supportive actions of the four main strategic objectives we will be working with for the next three years.

Remember to read more in details in the strategy documents itself:

Our strategic objectives:

1. Identify and make known/visible local community initiatives from the different locations we work in, that would otherwise find it difficult to gain such visibility to global stakeholders.







To aid the achievement of this strategic objectives we will take the following actions:

- Develop a database of known well-meaning local development facilitators and publish their profiles as well as the development initiatives, so it is easier for interested stakeholders to find them.
- Facilitate matchmaking and contact-making between and among potential collaborations with the identified local initiatives as a way of tagging their work to support mechanisms and partnerships that could amplify this.

- Implement other focused information activities that will further aid the publicization of commonly unseen causes/practices of local development facilitators, including:
 - o Publication of timely newsletters where local unpublicized good practices and their proponents are announced and detailed written about.
 - o Run a blog dedicated to stories and reflections from local actors as a channel through which they can input ideas to the global development discourse.
 - o Implement timely public conferences, seminars, and workshops as platforms for local actors to showcase their work & interaction with other actors.
 - o Intentionally represent these local good practices in spaces they have difficulty to access and talk about their existence and achievements in their local communities.
2. Facilitate the strengthening of capacities of the identified local actors to be able to sustain as well as multiply their good achievements in their local communities as well as to the global level.
- This strategic objective will be achieved through the following actions:
- Identify realistic needs for capacity strengthening for the identified local partners and develop plans for delivering on closing these.
 - Develop and run strategic training in line with the capacity requirements of the local partners as a way of contributing to their capacity development.
 - Facilitate possibilities for other forms of capacity gaps closing through for example sharing of experiences and best practices with like-minded actors.
 - Implement matchmaking between the local partners and experienced practitioners and volunteers both locally and globally, as a way of closing human resources needs commonly lacking in local rural community contexts.
 - Run mentoring and motivation programs for partners where need is identified.
3. Support in resource mobilization and joint fundraising as a way of closing resource needs that commonly hinder longer-term survival and sustained expansion of good meaning local initiatives.
- Identify resource needs and fundraise within our glocal networks.
 - Identify grant opportunities & support local partners in tendering proposals for such.
 - Develop joint funding proposals with local partners to support their work.
 - Stand as trustees for our partners where funders or other support mechanisms pose requirements that our local partners have difficulty to achieve.
 - Seek funding and run programs that facilitate the achievement of our mission.
 - Join networks/partnerships that will sustainably contribute to our mission.
4. Implement a development stories and knowledge hub/journal, aimed at building further awareness around aspects of the ecosystem of local community initiatives.
- Form a committee/steering group of development interested practitioners and academics that will guide the further development of this component.
 - Establish publishing rights or license with free channels e.g., Creative Commons.
 - Put into process mechanisms for gaining quality and honest publications, ascertaining these, and publishing them.
 - Create a public database of our publications and think through ways to popularize this.
 - Look into possibilities of engaging enthusiastic students to publish with us, and or creative partnerships with universities and other knowledge hubs.

2.3. Our strategy and the SDGs

The foundation of our work over the next three years will draw strong inspiration and probably fully be based on the UN Sustainable Goals as these give an elaborate set of indicators and structuring that is intended to bring the world out of poverty without leaving anyone behind. We believe this is important to have a central motivation especially in our work with local grassroots that are commonly marginalized. Below is a snapshot of how our work fits into and supports the SDGs.

Focus	Targets	Connecting Actions	CCCF Strategic Objectives
 1 NO POVERTY	1.1 1.2 1.a 1.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internally work and live a sustainably • Establish partnerships and projects that target SDGs 1 – 5 & 17 • Mobilizing and bringing in funding to local communities around these • Resource mobilize through memberships, sponsors, partners, etc • Engage in policy analysis, follow up, advocacy in support of the SDGs • Strengthen capacities of partners and local actors around the related SDGs • Engage in and mobilize diaspora groups to remit to their home countries • Join, start, and facilitate supportive partnerships • Advocate for policies that make it easier for remittances to contribute to development in recipient countries • Follow up and advocate for better utilization of international aid and foreign investments 	1. Identify and publicize/amplify local community initiatives and actors that would otherwise find it difficult to gain such visibility to global stakeholders
 2 ZERO HUNGER	2.1 2.4		2. Facilitate strengthening of capacities (knowledge, skills, structures, or resources) of the identified local actors to be able to sustain and multiply their achievements
 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	3.3 3.4		3. Support in resource mobilization as a way of closing resource needs that commonly hinder longer-term survival and sustained expansion of good meaning local initiatives.
 4 QUALITY EDUCATION	4.2 4.6 4.7 4.c		4. Implement development stories and knowledge hub, aimed at building further awareness around aspects of the ecosystem of local community initiatives.
 5 GENDER EQUALITY	5.1 5.5 5.6 5.b&c		
 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	17.3, 17.5 17.7, 17.9 17.17 17.18		

3.0. A call to membership

We hope we get you interested in becoming part of our community of activists determined to build robust communities... We have made this our mission in pursuit of a sustainable world and future for all.

Your membership of **100 DKK per year** enables us to reach this obligation.

Choosing a membership with Civil Connections ensures that you are part of:

- A global network of passionate and determined global citizens who are committed to reaching the most marginalized communities and creating enabling environments for development
- You are working with a group of activists that have wide and varied experience within the development field and have through their careers been witnesses to what works, and the importance of open dialogue about this. You also become a central player in this dialogue
- We are committed to developing models that are easy to replicate and tailored to different contexts; this means that your support will create wide and long-term impact—you are supporting something scalable and sustainable
- Our model is lean, saving you from supporting unnecessary costs for unnecessary overheads. We emphasize impact at the heart of your support and we thus work directly with recipient communities—this reduces the middleman effect and related expenses

Join us here: <https://civilconnections.org/become-a-member/>

Or contact us to hear more: <https://civilconnections.org/contact-us/>



Conclusion:

Our future aspiration – to stabilize Civil Connections as a model, not just an NGO: What we want to achieve is not just results but a way of building others and local grassroots communities to be in charge of their own development, on their own terms, in a robust way.

And yes, we have been asked what 'Robust' means several times. For us it simply means that someone no matter the resources they have is in charge of their decisions and aspirations at all times. That they know that even when they do not have resources and have to depend on support from other people, then it is a sacrifice/compromise they do with clear awareness. And that they do not lose their agency to aspire – their aspirations need to be kept alive.

So, as we say, we are striving to reveal to all other actors that when you meet people where they are – for us especially rural marginalized contexts and look them in the eyes and ask them for what works for them, and honestly believe in them, you have a higher chance of not only paving way for their aspirations and agency, but also for co-creating change together with them than bringing the change to them. The earlier (co-creating with them) is for us the more sustainable one – and it is the foundation of creating not just developing communities but equal communities both locally, but also across boundaries, especially in closing the power gaps between funders and local marginalized communities.

Thank you for your support in 2021, we look forward to continuing our cooperation in 2022 and beyond.

The Board:



Andrew Julius Bende
Chairperson



Rebecca Maria Campbell
Treasurer



Stine Hofman Eilers
Board Member



Rita Tisdal
Vice Chairperson



Keith Gondwe
Board Member

Pictorial Highlights through 2021



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Civil Connections

Building robust communities

