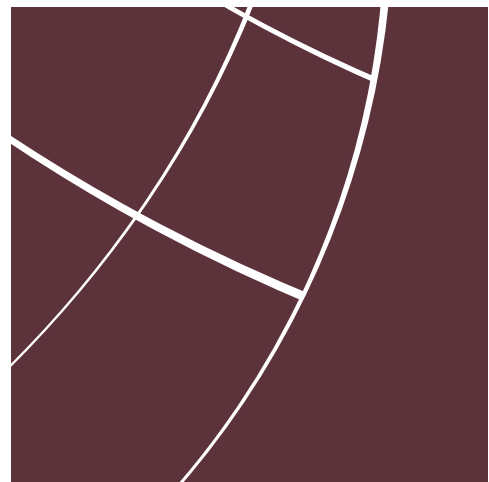




**LOCALLY
ROOTED,
GLOBALLY
CONNECTED**



**INTRAC'S STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK
2024 - 2028**



intrac
for civil society
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1 Our vision for 2028

Civil society actors, organisations and movements across the world can develop, engage with others and do what they want to do, better: supported to deliver just, equitable and sustainable societies for all.

WHO WE ARE

INTRAC is unashamedly for civil society. We are a mission-driven, not-for-profit organisation, focused on the core belief that vibrant, diverse and inclusive civil societies are essential catalysts for a world where everyone can thrive.

We help achieve this by strengthening skills and knowledge for and with civil society, supporting organisations, networks and individuals to work as effectively as possible in addressing poverty and inequality. We have over 30 years' experience championing and supporting strong, equitable civil societies across the world, providing sector-leading consultancy, research, learning and training with a focus on locally determined, led and owned development.

We work with:

- 1. Civil society support providers** (consultants, support organisations, networks) who are part of national and global systems of civil society support. We adapt our offer to the needs and priorities of different support providers, offering spaces for learning, reflection and thought-leadership, capacity strengthening and professional development, relationship brokering and networking. We also develop initiatives for deepening understanding, sense-making and collective action for system strengthening.
- 2. Global actors** (INGOs, donors, trusts and foundations) who partner with and invest in civil society. We particularly prioritise organisations actively looking to 'shift the power' and adapt their roles, relationships and practice, in order to support locally determined, led and owned development.
- 3. Civil society actors** (individuals, organisations, movements, networks), supporting them to strengthen their resilience, leadership, impact, legitimacy, sustainability, partnering capacity and technical skills, in for example monitoring and evaluation, strategy and advocacy.



“As someone who works with local civil society organisations and believes in the importance of supporting them fulfill their aspirations, it is encouraging to have an organisation like INTRAC that is demonstrably invested in the development of these organisations and their eco systems.”

Caroline Nyamu, consultant and member of INTRAC’s network

OUR VALUES

We live our values through our work.



Our staff and network specialise in monitoring, learning and evaluation, strategy design, impact assessment, organisational change and development, and partnership, bringing their expertise to a diversity of areas including child rights, migration, climate change, gender, education, health, human rights and fragile contexts.

OUR EXPERTISE

Highlights of our recent work include:

- Supporting the Swiss Red Cross in their responsible transition process as they prepared to phase out work in Malawi.
- Engaging with partners in 13 countries across Africa and the Middle East on Strengthening Civil Courage, a multi-country, five-year human rights, conflict transformation and peace-building programme.
- Leading a participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning programme for seven members of the Climate Ambition Support Alliance.
- Partnering with long-term network member AGAR to support new and emerging CSOs dedicated to developing a more democratic and innovative civil society sector in Ethiopia.
- Designing and delivering training on promoting locally led change, decolonising safeguarding and partnership capacity strengthening.
- Convening sector-wide discussions on progressive funding and decolonising consultancy.
- Collaborating with partners in Ghana and Indonesia to strengthen and transform civil society support infrastructure by catalysing networks of locally rooted, globally connected ethical and values-driven consultants; and working with cohorts of consultants around the world to support their ability to ‘consult with soul’.

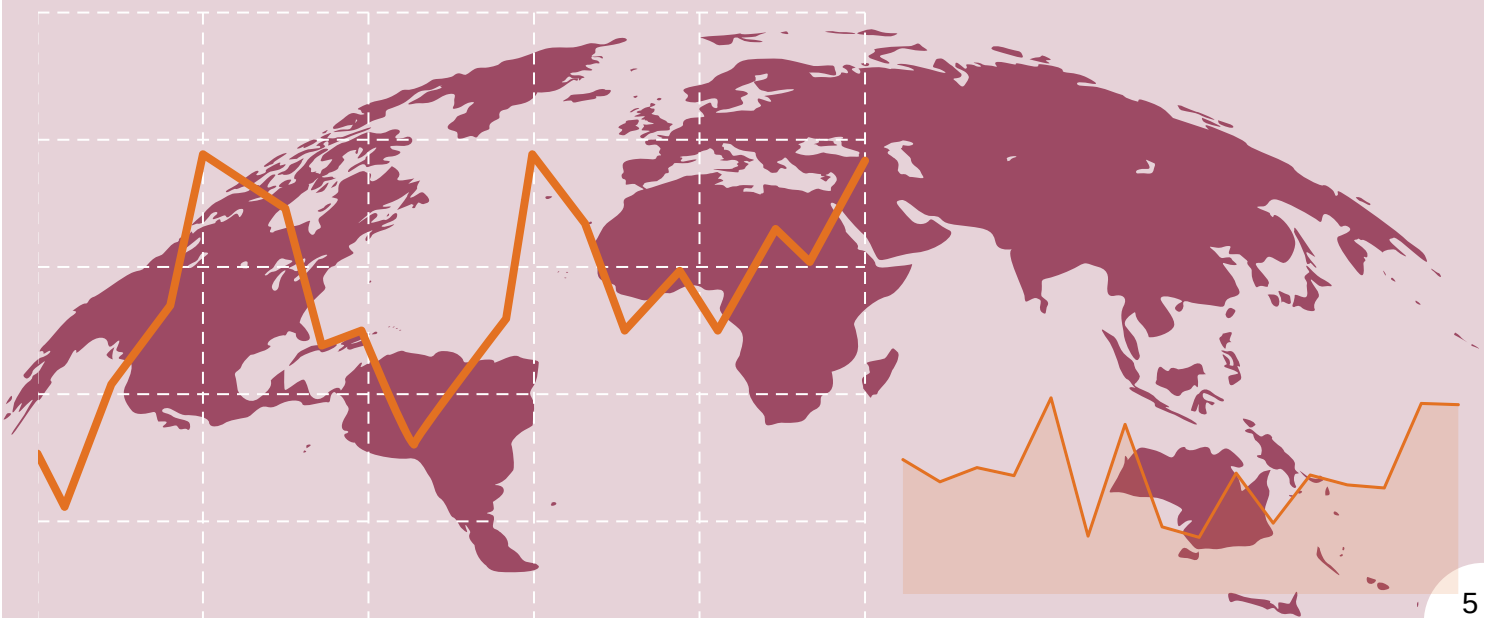
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The global context for our work

In 2023 [CIVICUS noted](#) that, globally, civic space is now more restricted than ever, with increasing numbers of countries where civil society is under 'severe attack', and a serious decline in the quality of civic space. This affects both national and global actors. National actors face threats to their personal security and human rights, constrained in their ability to pursue their social agendas, while international NGOs have been forced to leave countries including Russia, India, Nicaragua, Myanmar and Ethiopia. The [world peace index](#) worsened in 2023. Sudan now has [over eight million people internally displaced](#), and, as we write this strategic framework, the horrendous impact of conflict in Gaza dominated our screens. 2023 was also officially the [hottest year on record](#), leading to ever more extreme climate vulnerability. Although there has been progress towards the sustainable development goals extreme poverty remains outrageously high at [over 700 million](#) people worldwide. The [2023 SDG report](#) emphasised how progress towards achievement of the SDGs is far off track, with only 2 of the 36 targets reviewed likely to be achieved and eight showing deterioration; exacerbated by recent and ongoing crises such as Covid-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine and rising cost-of-living and debt. Every one of these factors, both separately and together, affect the operations of civil society, creating a substantial and unsustainable increase in people depending on humanitarian support.

Meanwhile, countries across Europe are grappling with domestic challenges that squeeze the space for public engagement and political support of international development. In the UK, [nearly a third of the international aid budget](#) was spent on domestic issues in 2023, while donations to international development charities [almost halved over the last 10 years](#).

At a time of such complex, unprecedented and interlinked crises, the role of civil society is more important than ever. But to rise to the challenge, the sector must reimagine how it works, evolving to recognise and start to repair its colonial past. There are green shoots that suggest that the development sector is transforming. The huge rise in engagement with the movement [#ShiftThePower](#), which aims to put communities in charge of their own development, suggests an increased interest in alternative development models. The [RINGO](#) initiative focuses explicitly on systems change to transform global civil society, encouraging reflection and action on the purpose, structures, power and positioning of INGOs. Closer to home, we have been aware as INTRAC of the level of participation and feedback we receive for our own work on shifting the power, modelling progressive funding and decolonising consultancy. Funders are adapting their approach to enable locally led development, and initiatives such as the [Pledge for Change](#) are taking hold and encouraging some of the bigger INGOs to rethink their practices.



3

Why civil society support is vital

If civil society organisations are to deliver on this urgent need for social change and build the inclusive, diverse and equitable societies we all want to see, they will need support. Support to respond to their changing environments, to become the sort of organisations they imagine themselves to be, to understand whether and how their programmes are having the impact intended, and to be resilient, impactful and legitimate into the future.

This is especially vital in the face of the growing recognition across the sector that many organisations, relationships and practices reflect historic injustices and a continuation of the structural racism and power dynamics that underpinned colonialism. If the international development sector is to reckon with its history and respond to the positive ideas and intention for global solidarity movements, then reimagining civil society support is a key part of the picture.

That's why we believe strengthening and transforming the support available to civil society is essential, recognising both the value of locally rooted and contextually driven understanding, perspectives and knowledge, as well as the importance of global connections. The interaction between local and global knowledges is essential if support is to enable organisations to evolve and increase their impact.

How can this make a difference? Well, while many organisations have recognised the importance of gender mainstreaming and feminist approaches in theory for many years, practice lags far behind. This manifests internally – who is in leadership roles and how much staff are paid – and externally, in terms of programme focus, resources available and the extent to which organisations actively seek to champion women's rights and priorities. This likely plays out in other areas of work too, on issues such as anti-oppression, with organisations putting out bold statements relating to their commitment to become anti-racist, but struggling to realise their intentions in practice. Meanwhile, the climate emergency is increasingly discussed at every level, but the very real challenges of building climate-resilient organisations remain at best partially addressed. Learning across boundaries about how others have moved from ideas to practice is important, but contextually rooted knowledge is vital to navigate the complexity of any given context and to make these ideas a reality.

If civil society support is to contribute to fundamental shifts in international development, to enable space and investment for locally determined and owned practice and long-term sustainable rooted civil society, that support needs to be available nationally; and that is why it is so important to strengthen and transform local eco-systems of civil society support.



4 Our strategic framework 2024-2028

Against this backdrop, our ambitious new framework will help us deliver our vision of transformative change to civil society eco-systems, so that local and global organisations are supported to develop, engage with others, and do what they want to do, better, to deliver just, equitable and sustainable societies.

We will achieve this through four strategic goals:

1. Strengthen civil society by building strong, dynamic support eco-systems rooted in local culture, practice and knowledge, which are strengthened through global connections for sense-making, learning and collective action.
2. Transform the role and reputation of consultancy across the international development sector, by driving demand for and strengthening the status and supply of locally rooted, globally connected, ethical and values-driven consultants.
3. Support global and national actors to reimagine their roles and relationships, stand alongside and collaborate with others to develop advisory and support services for those actively seeking to decolonise and shift the power.
4. Evolve our organisational model – including our funding streams, skills and capabilities – and our culture, with a focus on becoming truly diverse, anti-racist and feminist.

We will do this by building and evolving our four core areas of expertise, putting locally led, ethical and values-driven approaches at the heart of our work:



Build a locally led and globally connected network, whose members lead on INTRAC consultancy, training and research. The majority of new network members will come from and be rooted in Africa, Middle East, Asia, Latin America or Eastern Europe, connecting globally to amplify learning and impact.



2. **Establish and champion ethical and values-driven consultancy, and consolidate our reputation for high-quality consultancy.** We will seek out and champion consultants who are actively challenging dominant practices in their approach, in line with our ethical and values-driven consultancy framework, and a consulting with soul approach.

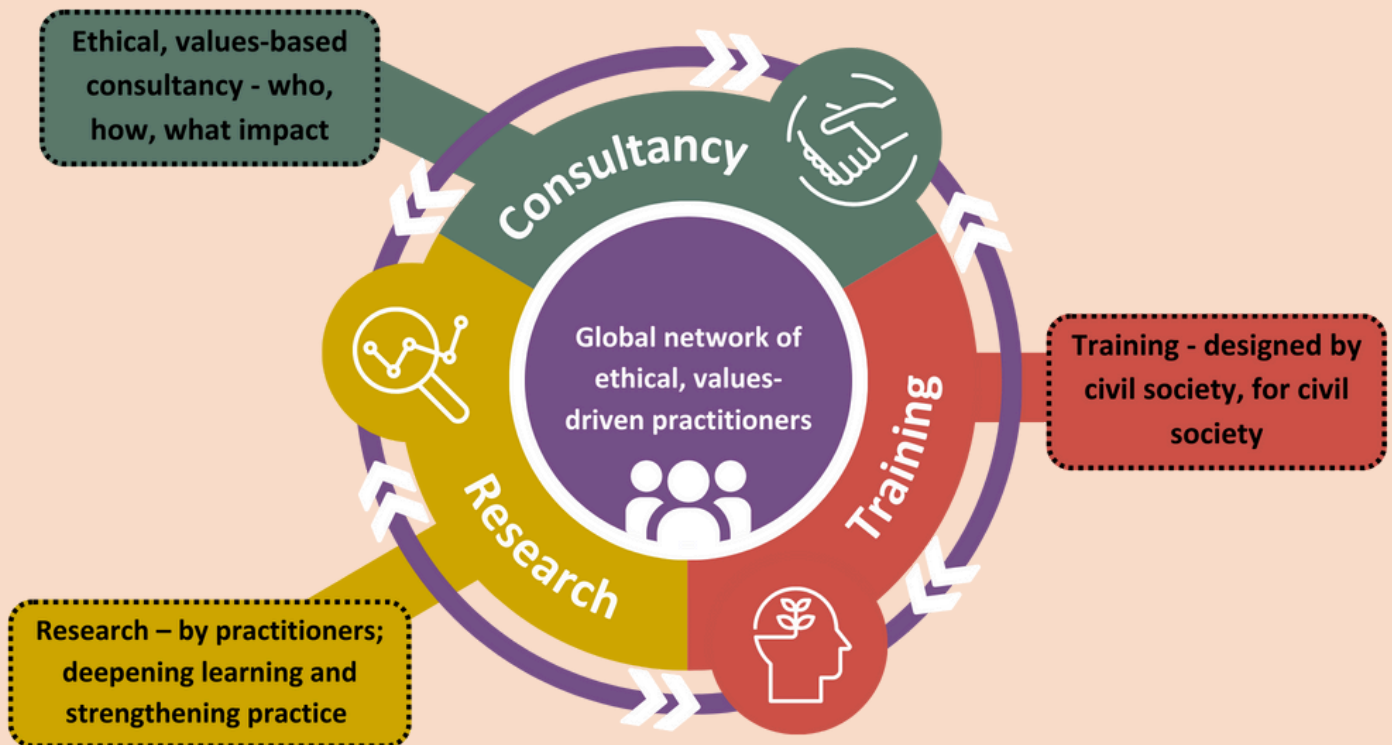


3. **Become the go-to for training for those working with and within civil society,** designed and delivered by a diverse set of trainers across the globe, including a core training offer (professional development) for network members.



4. **(Re)-establish our role as a knowledge hub,** developing a practitioner-focused research programme that creates spaces and opportunities for diverse voices to share knowledge and experience.

INTRAC's work in consultancy, training and research are tightly interconnected, and each supports the other. Over the period of the strategic framework these activities will be increasingly led by a global network of ethical and values-driven practitioners, members of the INTRAC global network.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ETHICAL AND VALUES-DRIVEN CONSULTANCY?

We recognise that there are differing opinions on the role and practice of consultancy. There is extensive critique of certain types of consultancy, especially when it diverts budgets to 'global experts' and fails to value local priorities, understanding, skills and experience. Yet our experience shows us that, if delivered through an ethical and values-driven lens, consultancy can both support more sustainable, impactful civil society, and contribute to decolonising and shifting the power within the aid system.

We deliver ethical and values-driven consultancy through focusing on three main areas:

- The knowledge, skills and experiences each consultant brings. Lived experience and context-based knowledge are valued equally alongside technical skills.
- Promoting an open, honest, trusting relationship with those we are working with in order to get to the heart of the matter, facilitating and supporting the changes and development they are defining and seeking, and recognising that the approach needs to respond to the distinct needs and realities of the context.
- Shifting power, building inclusivity, diversity and equity – both within our own organisation through the work we do and how we do it, and in wider civil society through challenging approaches that reinforce unequal power – as core to enabling sustainable, legitimate, impactful organisations as part of a vibrant civil society.

“Developing a strategic framework is a process of learning, reflecting and imagining. We were deeply privileged as INTRAC staff to engage with so many different voices and perspectives as we developed our understanding how best we might contribute to civil society support. I am excited to walk alongside and collaborate with these actors as we work towards delivering our vision.”

Kate Newman, INTRAC Chief Executive

Not so long ago, INTRAC turned 30. It was a good moment to reflect on what we had achieved over the last three decades, and to think about how we could make the biggest impact in the future. We engaged in conversations with stakeholders across the globe; asking for their perspectives on civil society, on the value of INTRAC, and on emerging issues we should consider. We identified three core drivers for our strategy process:

- **Reconnect** with our core purpose, to ensure we are creating maximum impact.
- **Respond** to challenges and opportunities provided by the increasing understanding of structural racism and movements to shift power and decolonise.
- Shore up and **strengthen our financial resilience** and stabilise our income.

We developed alternative potential futures for our organisation and tested them with INGOs, funders, consultants and civil society actors. We received their responses and refined our thinking. Through these discussions emerged the model we are taking forward: the ‘Network+’ model.

The Network+ model means that over the coming years, an increasing percentage of our training, consultancy and research will be delivered through a network of consultants, rooted locally and connected nationally and globally through networks and strategic partnerships. We will develop a network mindset and become a network-led organisation, influenced and informed by the priorities, insights and aspirations of both our network members and the networks we interact with. Together we will work to shift how civil society support is conceived and delivered, strengthening locally rooted and globally connected eco-systems of civil society support.

There are two reasons underpinning our commitment to this model. Firstly, we are driven by our analysis of colonialism and structural racism in the international aid sector – addressing our historic power and privilege means that shifting to a network is the **right thing to do**. Secondly, our experiences, expertise and understanding suggest that taking a networked approach **will be more effective**, in terms of supporting and enabling civil societies that can catalyse just, equal and sustainable communities where everyone can thrive.

Our starting point is to build and extend our current global network of over 150 consultants. We will create spaces and processes for them to access work, professional development support, peer-to-peer relationships and learning, and take action together to bring about change in how civil society organisations are enabled and supported. We will also seek to work with early-career consultants, supporting them as they grow to become future leaders. All consultants will bring their own expertise, relationships, reputation and knowledge, helping to create a new and vibrant network committed to building resilient, impactful, sustainable CSOs that are legitimate in their own contexts, have agency in their partnerships, and are effective in their work to create positive social change.

Our vision is that INTRAC will evolve to provide a service and added value to the work delivered by independent consultants and other actors committed to strong civil society, over time reducing and shifting the role of UK-based staff in consultancy work, as we seek to work in complementary, value-added ways that ultimately increase impact.

6 Making our goals a reality

To achieve our goals, we will deliver our work across four areas: network; consultancy; training, and research and learning. Through our test and learn approach we are focused on being clear about what we are working towards over the next five years, and how we will start our journey; recognising that we will learn and adapt as we go.

NETWORK

Build a locally led and globally connected network of consultants and support providers to:

- **Broker relationships and collaborate to deliver ethical, values-driven consultancy**, based on shared principles, but adapted and responsive to different civil society contexts.
- **Disrupt current assumptions about how core aspects of consultancy, such as 'quality' 'legitimacy' and 'impact' are understood**, ensuring that context-based knowledge, perspectives and approaches are centered and valued alongside other traditional dimensions.
- **Provide opportunities for continuing professional development**, identifying new consultants and providing opportunities for shadowing, training and learning, including a possible 'kite mark' accreditation.
- **Share learning, engage and network** on technical and thematic aspects of consultancy, practice and practices relating to the shifting of power through consultancy and our core areas of work.
- **Build evidence and influence**, consolidating insights, perspectives and trends, and share learning from and with civil society stakeholders at global, regional and network levels.

By 2028 we intend to have more than 75% of network members based in Africa, Middle East, Asia, Latin America or Eastern Europe, all coming together as a vibrant and dynamic network that drives forward thinking and practice in how to best support civil society actors.

CONSULTANCY

Establish and champion ethical and values-driven consultancy, and consolidate our reputation for high-quality consultancy. We will:

- **Develop an ethical, values-driven consultancy framework**, so we can shift our practice by proactively identifying who we want to work with and how, targeting progressive actors who want to reimagine their roles and practice in international development.
- **Work as advocates and influencers**, using our reputation and connections to open up space and support those commissioning consultancy to think differently about their approach.
- **Model ethical and values-driven consultancy in our own practice**, adapting what we offer and how we work in response to different types of civil society support systems – ie whether they are strong, emerging, weak, or across multiple contexts.
- **Bring our values to life in how we convene and drive new thinking** in our core areas of expertise – evaluation, learning, impact and organisational development – to contribute to locally owned and led civil society that is inclusive, diverse and equitable.

We aim for the majority of our consultancy work to be led and delivered by network members based across Africa, Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe by 2028, actively contributing to resilient, effective and legitimate local and global civil society.

TRAINING

Become the go-to body for training those working with and as part of civil society, with training designed by civil society and international development practitioners and delivered by a diverse set of trainers across the globe. We will:

- **Establish training partnerships** with a variety of organisations (training providers, civil society support organisations, academia, network consultants) to diversify our training offer.
- Develop a **core (potentially accredited professional development) training offer for our network members** built around our approach to consultancy.
- Develop a range of training responding to audience interests, priorities and need involving facilitated and self-directed content, master classes and use of new technology and communications media.
- Fully embed our **equity, diversity and inclusion** principles and approaches, informing who designs and delivers the training, and how we create inclusive and equitable spaces within it.
- Be **responsive to shifting trends and issues as they emerge** in the sector, including global challenges such as climate change and the post Covid-19 landscape; as well as sector challenges, such as building equitable partnerships and relationships that #shift the power.

By 2028 we aim to have developed a highly-regarded training programme, delivered by network members from across the globe, that helps to further increase numbers of ethical, values-driven consultants and empower global and local actors to reimagine their roles, ultimately supporting civil society to become more effective.

RESEARCH AND LEARNING

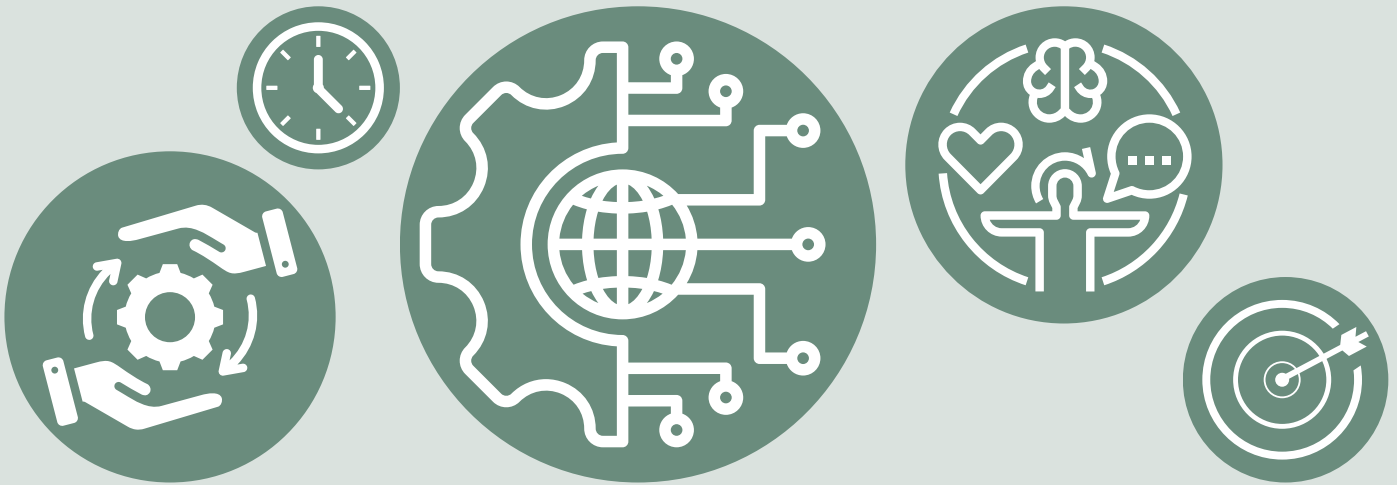
(Re)-establish our role as a knowledge hub – developing a practitioner research programme that creates space and opportunities for diverse voices to influence through their knowledge and experience of working with, and as part of, civil society. We will:

- Become the **place for civil society organisations and those seeking to progressively work with them to answer 'how' questions...** for example: how can the sector navigate civic space issues or respond to the climate crisis?
- Frame our **research agenda around key issues for civil society**, informed by and developed with our network, and building on our experiences of interacting with a range of organisations working with and as part of civil society.
- **Value practitioner experience and knowledge**, convening spaces and support to enable their experience and insights to influence policy and practice, deepen learning and understanding, and centre those voices traditionally excluded or marginalised.
- **Produce practitioner resources**, to ensure that our learning is captured in meaningful and accessible ways in order to influence practice, through training, our communications platforms, open access materials and consultancy practice.

By 2028 we intend that those interested in supporting civil society will actively look to the INTRAC network as a space that provides deep insight and practical ideas about how best to work with civil society, to build inclusive, resilient, effective organisations and address key challenges facing civil society organisations.

7

Transforming our organisation



We recognise that achieving our goals will require a fundamental rethink of how we work as an organisation. As a first step, we need to move our focus away from delivering consultancy from the UK, to building a global network to increasingly lead on this role. We know this will be challenging. Modelling our values and approach, building the equitable and ethical partnerships we will rely on, and securing appropriate funding will be critical.

We aim to be bold and clear in our ambition, while being ‘incrementally radical’ in our approach. Over the next five years our organisational form will shift, as will our revenue streams. Pursuing a hybrid organisational model is complex, especially with an endpoint that is not as yet clearly defined. This means being pragmatic about the pace and scale of change, and being brave in facing what we need to build or let go of to enable our positive contribution into the future. We will be clear and deliberate in our strategic direction; but attentive and iterative as we work to get there, learning as much from failure as success.

The following four areas will be core to our success:

BUILDING A FEMINIST AND ANTI-RACIST CULTURE AND PRACTICE

At the heart of our strategic framework is a commitment to work differently, to transform to help us contribute to a fairer, more equitable civil society for all. A feminist and anti-racist culture will guide our mindsets, our approaches, the work we take on, the way we work, the partnerships we develop, our relationships with each other and the way we articulate and deliver consultancy, research, training and network building

BECOMING NETWORK-MINDED AND LED

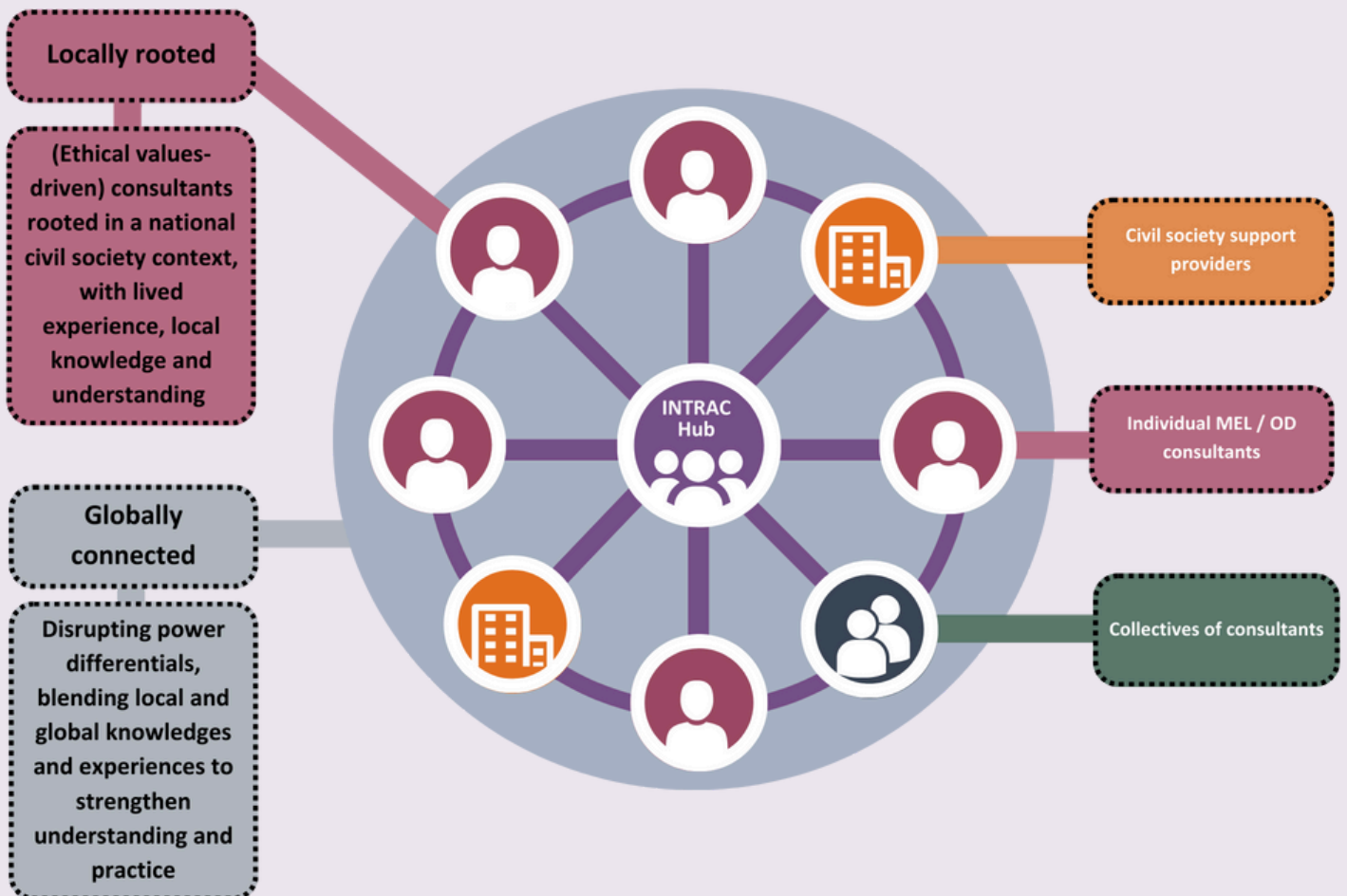
We will develop our understanding of what it means to be network-minded, review our internal processes – from recruitment to performance management, from finance to consultancy processes, and re-engineer these to ensure that they are contributing to network-led practice.

DIVERSIFYING OUR REVENUE STREAMS

We will invest in our fundraising capacity in order to move away from being consultancy funded towards having a range of revenue streams. We will build staff capacity in fundraising, and review our business development expectations and processes. Fundamentally, we will focus on quality of income alongside quantity, to ensure we are bringing in increasing resources to enable delivery of our strategy. This includes identifying progressive funders and partners who share our vision of a transformed and strengthened civil society.

BOARD, LEADERSHIP AND COLLECTIVE STAFF SELF-CARE

The role of each will shift and change during the strategy period, as we agree the governance relationship with the network and the role and function of INTRAC as an organisation. This process of change asks all those involved to think from the perspective of the bigger picture, being open to a future model that does not include them. A deep focus on collective self-care, on emotional and physical wellbeing, will underpin imaginative and disruptive thinking to help us evolve our organisational form, relationships and practice.



An illustration of how the INTRAC network will be rooted locally and connected globally, involving individuals, collectives and organisations, all part of the eco-system of support to civil society.

8 Building an adaptive strategy

While we can control our own ambitions, we are aware there is also a high level of external uncertainty. The pace and scale of change continually increase, and yet trends come and go. Managing in today's world requires an evolving approach to strategy development and delivery.

We want to be attentive to insights from our practice and external shifts, to be learning-focused and agile, guided by our ultimate ambition, but flexible in our response. This means our strategy design has taken on aspects of social innovation – blending the development and implementation phase and ensuring short feedback loops so we can test and learn from success, failures, challenges and new opportunities.

We will invest in developing a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework that encourages us to reflect, analyse and adapt, to make sense of our experiences. This includes enhancing our willingness and ability to take measured risks, and to pay as much attention to failures as successes. This as much about organisational culture as a strategic practice. Learning from our experiences, and being clear in our long-term vision will enable us to search for and respond to opportunities as they arise, where they fit with our strategic direction.

THE INTRAC ETHOS

“In every situation we try to bring the best of who we are - our creativity, our experience, our commitment, our belief in people – to walk alongside our clients, both CSOs and their funders. That is the spirit at the heart of INTRAC; to work wholeheartedly to support others to do what they want to do, better.”

Principal Consultant **Rick James**, who joined INTRAC in 1992

CONCLUSION

As we embark on our new strategic framework and anticipate the journey we are setting out on, we also celebrate what we continue to hold onto – we are building on 30 years of experience, and our long-held values, not changing them. But the strategy is responsive to changes in the sector and the needs of civil society. We are formalising and embodying practices we have long argued for.

We believe that our starting point of being unashamedly for civil society, and of championing locally led development and a fairer, more equitable civil society for all, will lead to increased social, economic and environmental justice. The ways we work – as consultants, facilitators and advisors, offering training, capacity strengthening and practitioner-focused learning and research, remain central to enabling and supporting civil society organisations, networks, movements and individuals to navigate their environments and be effective in their efforts to bring about positive change. We are convinced that our work remains as necessary and important as ever, especially given the increasing threats to civil society, the narrowing civic space and continuing injustices that challenge our world today.

We cannot deliver this strategy alone. It will depend on our ability to develop and nurture partnerships and relationships, drawing on our valued friends and colleagues, and those who share our view that a well-supported civil society is essential to enable the transformative change needed in the world today. We believe we can contribute effectively in this space, that together we can transform and strengthen civil society support, and thereby enhance the role of civil society in delivering equity, inclusivity, diversity and justice.



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