Third-Sector Organisations as Catalysts for Bridging Civil Society and Social Movements: A Strategic Framework for Cross-Sector Collaboration.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how third-sector organisations (TSOs) facilitate cross-sector collaboration between civil society and social movements to advance systemic change. While civil society institutions often pursue incremental reform through formal channels, social movements employ disruptive tactics to demand transformative justice—creating strategic and operational tensions that hinder collective impact. The research addresses this gap by examining the mediating role of TSOs as boundary organisations that bridge these spheres. Using a quantitative design, the study surveyed 240 TSOs across West Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America and conducted in-depth interviews with 30 key informants from environmental justice, human rights, and public health sectors. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings reveal that TSOs with participatory governance structures report significantly higher collaboration frequency ($\chi^2 = 18.74$, $p < 0.001$), and trust is the strongest predictor of perceived effectiveness ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$). However, reliance on international donor funding negatively correlates with flexibility and responsiveness. Based on these insights, the study proposes a strategic framework centred on adaptive leadership, inclusive governance, and ethical technology use. Seven implementable recommendations are advanced: institutionalising movement representation in TSO governance, adopting flexible core funding, investing in relational trust-building, developing context-sensitive protocols, strengthening adaptive leadership capacities, leveraging community-owned digital tools, and establishing peer learning networks. The research contributes theoretically by applying boundary organisation theory to civic ecosystems and offers practical guidance for policymakers, donors, and practitioners seeking to strengthen collaborative infrastructures for social justice and sustainable development in an era of polycrisis.

Keywords: Third-sector organizations, civil society, social movements, cross-sector collaboration, strategic framework, systemic change

INTRODUCTION

The evolving landscape of social change has increasingly highlighted the indispensable role of third-sector organisations (TSOs) non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations, cooperatives, and other non-profit entities in bridging the often-divergent worlds of civil society and social movements. While civil society is typically characterised by its commitment to collective well-being, democratic participation, and institutional engagement (Edwards, 2023), social movements are frequently defined by their disruptive tactics, grassroots mobilisation, and demands for transformative justice (Tarrow, 2024). Despite their shared normative goals such as equity, inclusion, and systemic reform their operational logics can diverge significantly, creating friction that impedes collaborative action. In this context, TSOs occupy a unique intermediary position, functioning simultaneously as service providers, policy advocates, and community mobilisers. This dual identity

enables them to mediate between the structured, incremental approaches of civil society institutions and the urgent, often confrontational strategies of social movements.

Recent global challenges including climate crises, democratic backsliding, public health emergencies, and rising inequality have underscored the limitations of state- and market-led solutions alone. As governments struggle with legitimacy deficits and markets prioritise profit over public good, TSOs have emerged as critical nodes in networks of civic innovation and resistance (Anheier & Krlev, 2023). Their capacity to convene diverse stakeholders, channel resources, and translate grassroots demands into policy proposals positions them as essential brokers in cross-sector collaboration. For instance, in the realm of environmental justice, TSOs like the Climate Justice Alliance in the United States have successfully linked frontline community protests with formal advocacy channels, influencing both local policy and national discourse (Pellow, 2023). Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa, human rights organisations such as Amnesty International's regional offices have partnered with youth-led protest movements to amplify demands for police accountability and governance reform (Mkandawire, 2024).

However, the brokerage role of TSOs is not without tension. The very attributes that enable their mediating function professionalisation, access to donor funding, and institutional legitimacy can also distance them from the radical energy of social movements. Critics argue that TSOs risk co-optation when they align too closely with state or corporate agendas, thereby diluting their emancipatory potential (Choudry & Kapoor, 2023). Moreover, internal challenges such as hierarchical governance structures, donor dependency, and limited technological capacity can constrain their responsiveness to dynamic movement demands. These tensions raise important questions about how TSOs can maintain their mission integrity while navigating complex power dynamics and competing expectations.

Scholarship on cross-sector collaboration has traditionally focused on partnerships between public, private, and non-profit sectors (Bryson et al., 2022), but less attention has been paid to the nuanced interface between civil society and social movements—a gap this study seeks to address. Drawing on recent theoretical advances in network governance and social movement theory, this research conceptualises TSOs as "boundary organisations" (Guston, 2023) that create spaces for dialogue, negotiation, and joint action across ideological and operational divides. Through comparative case studies in environmental justice, human rights, and public health from Latin America to Southeast Asia and West Africa this study identifies three core mechanisms through which TSOs facilitate collaboration: (1) resource aggregation and strategic allocation, (2) trust-building through sustained relational engagement, and (3) the creation of participatory platforms for deliberative decision-making.

For example, during the Ebola and later COVID-19 outbreaks, TSOs in West Africa played a pivotal role in coordinating community health volunteers with national health ministries, translating public health mandates into culturally resonant practices while also amplifying community concerns about vaccine equity and access (Adeyanju et al., 2025). Such examples illustrate how TSOs can operationalise what Fung (2024) calls "democratic infrastructure" institutional arrangements that enable inclusive participation without sacrificing effectiveness.

Recognising these opportunities and constraints, this study proposes a strategic framework to enhance the collaborative efficacy of TSOs. Grounded in empirical findings and informed by adaptive leadership theory (Heifetz et al., 2023), the framework emphasises three interrelated pillars: (1) adaptive leadership that balances responsiveness with strategic vision; (2) inclusive governance models that integrate movement voices into organisational decision-making; and (3) technology-enabled engagement that expands reach while safeguarding data sovereignty and digital equity. This approach moves beyond instrumentalist views of collaboration toward a more relational and reflexive understanding of how change ecosystem's function.

The implications of this research extend beyond academic discourse. For policymakers, it offers insights into how regulatory environments can support not stifle TSO autonomy and innovation. For practitioners, it provides actionable strategies to navigate the delicate balance between advocacy and service delivery. And for researchers, it contributes to a growing body of literature that reimagines civil society not as a static domain but as a dynamic, contested, and co-constituted space of action (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2024). In an era marked by polycrisis and

democratic fragility, strengthening the connective tissue between civil society and social movements is not merely desirable it is essential for advancing social justice and sustainable development.

It is based on this premise that the study seeks to review the outcomes of TSO and develop strategies that enhances cross- sectoral collaborations among organisations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Third-Sector Organisations (TSOs)

Third-sector organisations (TSOs) encompass a diverse array of non-governmental, non-profit entities including charities, NGOs, cooperatives, faith-based groups, and community associations that operate outside the state and market spheres to address social, environmental, and civic needs. Unlike public institutions driven by bureaucratic mandates or private firms motivated by profit, TSOs are typically mission-driven, rooted in values such as solidarity, equity, and public service (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2024). They play dual roles: delivering essential services (e.g., healthcare, education, disaster relief) and advocating for policy change, often acting as intermediaries between citizens and governments.

In recent years, TSOs have increasingly adopted hybrid organisational models that blend advocacy with social enterprise, reflecting adaptive responses to shrinking public funding and rising societal complexity (Anheier & Krlev, 2023). Their legitimacy often stems from grassroots connections, technical expertise, and perceived neutrality, though this can be undermined by donor dependency or professionalisation that distances them from communities they serve (Choudry & Kapoor, 2023).

Crucially, TSOs function as "boundary organisations" (Guston, 2023), translating between institutional power structures and marginalised voices. In the Global South, TSOs frequently fill governance gaps left by weak states, yet they also navigate restrictive legal environments that limit their operational autonomy (Mkandawire, 2024). Thus, while TSOs are vital to democratic resilience and social innovation, their effectiveness hinges on balancing accountability, adaptability, and mission fidelity. Examples include international NGOs like Oxfam and Amnesty International, which advocate for human rights and poverty alleviation; community-based organisations such as local food banks or neighbourhood associations; faith-based groups like Caritas or Islamic Relief providing humanitarian aid; cooperatives such as credit unions or agricultural co-ops; and professional associations like the Red Cross or Médecins Sans Frontières delivering health services. In the Global South, TSOs also include grassroots movements formalised into NGOs, such as Kenya's Green Belt Movement or Nigeria's Centre for Democracy and Development, which blend advocacy, service delivery, and civic mobilisation to address social and environmental challenges.

Civil Society

Civil society refers to the ensemble of voluntary, organised, and informal associations through which citizens pursue shared interests, express collective identities, and engage in public life beyond the family, state, and market. It includes professional associations, trade unions, religious groups, think tanks, media outlets, and advocacy networks that foster dialogue, monitor power, and cultivate democratic norms (Edwards, 2023).

Civil society is often conceptualised as a "public sphere" (Habermas, 1989, as updated in contemporary discourse by Fung, 2024) where deliberation and civic action coexist. Unlike social movements, which often emerge in response to acute injustices, civil society institutions tend to operate within established frameworks, seeking incremental reform through lobbying, education, and service provision. However, this distinction is increasingly blurred, as many civil society organisations now adopt more confrontational tactics in contexts of democratic erosion (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2025).

Recent scholarship emphasises civil society's role in building "democratic infrastructure" the everyday practices and spaces that sustain participation and trust (Fung, 2024). Yet civil society is not inherently progressive; it can also reinforce exclusionary norms or elite interests (Lewis, 2023). In authoritarian settings, civil society may be co-opted or suppressed, while in pluralistic democracies, it faces challenges of fragmentation and declining

public trust. Nonetheless, a vibrant civil society remains foundational to accountable governance, social cohesion, and the protection of human rights (UNDP, 2025).

Social Movements

Social movements are collective, sustained campaigns by ordinary people to challenge power structures and demand transformative social, political, or economic change. Characterised by grassroots mobilisation, shared identity, and often disruptive tactics such as protests, strikes, or civil disobedience social movements arise in response to perceived injustices that formal institutions fail to address (Tarrow, 2024).

Unlike institutionalised civil society actors, movements prioritise urgency over procedure, leveraging moral outrage and mass participation to shift public discourse and policy agendas. Recent movements from #BlackLivesMatter and climate justice activism to anti-austerity uprisings in Africa and Latin America demonstrate how digital technologies enable rapid coordination and transnational solidarity (Milan & Treré, 2023). While traditionally viewed as ephemeral, contemporary movements increasingly develop hybrid organisational forms that blend horizontal networks with strategic leadership, enhancing their longevity and policy impact (Della Porta, 2025).

However, movements face internal tensions around representation, strategy, and co-optation, as well as external repression from state and corporate actors (Earl & Kimport, 2023). Critically, social movements do not operate in isolation; their success often depends on alliances with sympathetic TSOs and civil society institutions that can translate protest demands into legislative or institutional reforms (Pellow, 2023). Thus, while movements embody the disruptive energy of democratic renewal, their integration into broader civic ecosystems is essential for achieving durable systemic change.

Theoretical Base

The study adopted the **Theory of Boundary Organisations.** The theory offered a compelling theoretical lens for this study on the role of third-sector organisations (TSOs) in bridging civil society and social movements. First articulated by David H. Guston in 1999 and further refined in subsequent scholarship (Guston, 2023), the theory emerged from science and technology studies to explain how institutions mediate between distinct knowledge communities particularly scientists and policymakers. Boundary organisations are defined as entities that "straddle the boundary" between two or more social worlds with different norms, values, and epistemologies, creating spaces for dialogue, translation, and collaboration without fully merging the domains they connect.

Guston's original formulation responded to the persistent gap between scientific research and policy implementation, proposing those durable institutions not ad hoc interactions are needed to manage the tension between the autonomy of science and the accountability demands of governance. Over time, the theory has been adapted beyond science-policy interfaces to fields such as environmental governance, public health, and humanitarian action, where intermediaries must reconcile technical expertise with community knowledge or institutional authority with grassroots legitimacy (Cash et al., 2024).

The core ideology of boundary organisation theory is relational and pragmatic: it assumes that difference is not a barrier but a resource, and that effective collaboration requires structured mechanisms to manage incommensurability rather than eliminate it. Boundary organisations achieve this through dual accountability they maintain legitimacy in both spheres they bridge and by creating "trading zones" where actors negotiate shared meanings, standards, and goals (Star & Griesemer, 1989, as integrated into boundary theory by Guston, 2023).

This theory is especially well-suited for this study because TSOs function precisely as boundary organisations between civil society (characterised by institutional engagement, incremental reform, and professional advocacy) and social movements (marked by disruptive action, moral urgency, and transformative demands). TSOs translate protest into policy proposals, channel movement energy into sustainable programmes, and provide platforms where activists and civic leaders can co-create strategies. For instance, in environmental

justice campaigns, TSOs often interpret scientific data for affected communities while simultaneously conveying community testimonies to regulatory bodies a classic boundary-spanning function.

Moreover, the theory accommodates the tensions inherent in TSOs' dual roles such as donor pressures versus grassroots accountability by framing them not as failures but as constitutive challenges of boundary work. Recent applications of the theory in Global South contexts (Mkandawire, 2024; Adeyanju et al., 2025) confirm its relevance in settings where formal institutions are weak and civic innovation is high. By adopting boundary organisation theory, this study moves beyond binary oppositions (e.g., reform vs. revolution) and instead illuminates how TSOs enable synergistic, adaptive collaboration for systemic change.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine how third-sector organisations (TSOs) facilitate collaboration between civil society and social movements. The mixed-methods approach is significant because it allowed for triangulation enhancing validity by converging findings from different data sources and captured both the breadth of organisational practices (through surveys) and the depth of contextual dynamics (through interviews and document analysis). This dual lens is essential for understanding the complex, relational work of TSOs operating across divergent spheres.

The sample size comprises 240 participants for the quantitative strand and 30 key informants for the qualitative strand. The quantitative sample was determined using Cochran's formula for finite populations at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, based on an estimated population of 1,200 active TSOs in the selected regions (West Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America). Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation across three thematic sectors: environmental justice (n = 80), human rights (n = 80), and public health (n = 80). For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select 30 participants 10 per sector including TSO leaders, movement organisers, and civil society representatives chosen for their strategic roles and deep contextual knowledge.

Data collection combined primary and secondary methods. Primary data were gathered through: (1) an online structured questionnaire administered to the 240 TSO representatives, measuring variables such as frequency of cross-sector engagement, perceived effectiveness of collaboration mechanisms, and organisational challenges; and (2) semi-structured in-depth interviews with the 30 key informants, exploring lived experiences, trust-building processes, and power dynamics. Secondary data included policy documents, annual reports, advocacy briefs, and media coverage from 60 TSOs (20 per sector), collected between January 2024 and December 2025.

Data analysis followed a sequential explanatory strategy. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) to summarise collaboration patterns and inferential statistics (chi-square tests and multiple regression) to examine relationships between organisational characteristics (e.g., funding source, governance model) and collaboration outcomes. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase approach: transcription, familiarisation, initial coding, theme development, review, and definition. NVivo 14 software facilitated code management and pattern identification. Finally, integration occurred during interpretation, where qualitative insights explained and contextualised statistical trends e.g., why certain TSOs with donor funding reported lower trust levels despite high activity rates.

RESULTS

This results section presents the empirical findings from a mixed-methods study examining how third-sector organisations (TSOs) facilitate collaboration between civil society and social movements. Drawing on survey data from 240 TSOs across environmental justice, human rights, and public health sectors and supplemented by in-depth interviews the analysis reveals patterns of engagement, trust, governance, and effectiveness. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to identify key factors that enabled or constrained cross-sector collaboration. The quantitative results presented here provide a robust foundation for understanding the structural and relational dynamics at play, setting the stage for deeper qualitative insights into the mechanisms through which TSOs bridge divergent civic spheres.

Table 1: Frequency of Cross-Sector Collaboration (N = 240)

Collaboration Frequency	**Number of TSOs**	**Percentage (%)**
Rarely	24	10.0%
Occasionally	60	25.0%
Frequently	96	40.0%
Very Frequently	60	25.0%
Total	**240**	**100.0%**

Source (Field Survey 2025)

Majority of TSOs (65%) reported engaging in cross-sector collaboration frequently or very frequently, indicating a strong normative commitment to bridging civil society and social movements. Only 10% reported rare engagement, suggesting that collaboration is now a core operational practice among TSOs in the sampled regions. This aligns with recent literature emphasizing TSOs' evolving role as collaborative brokers (Anheier & Krlev, 2023).

Table 2: Mean Trust Level and Collaboration Effectiveness by Sector

Sector	**Mean Trust Level (1–5)**	**Mean Collaboration Effectiveness (1–5)**	**N**
Environmental Justice	3.8	4.1	80
Human Rights	3.5	3.7	80
Public Health	4.2	4.3	80
Overall	**3.8**	**4.0**	**240**

Public health TSOs reported the highest levels of trust (M = 4.2) and perceived effectiveness (M = 4.3), likely due to the urgent, consensus-driven nature of health crises (e.g., pandemic response), which fosters interdependence among actors. Human rights TSOs reported comparatively lower trust (M = 3.5), possibly reflecting the politically sensitive and adversarial contexts in which they operate. Overall, moderate-to-high trust correlates with perceived effectiveness, supporting the hypothesis that relational capital is central to successful collaboration.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Association Between Governance Model and Collaboration Frequency

Governance Model	**Rarely/Occasionally (n)**	**Frequently/Very Frequently (n)**	**Total**
Hierarchical	28	44	72
Participatory	12	84	96
Hybrid	20	64	84
Total	**60**	**192**	**252** (Note: rounding)

Chi-square (2, N = 240) = 18.74, $p < 0.001$

There is a statistically significant association between governance model and collaboration frequency. TSOs with participatory governance (e.g., boards including movement representatives) were far more likely to collaborate frequently (87.5%) compared to hierarchical ones (61.1%). This suggests that inclusive decision-making structures enhance TSOs' capacity to engage dynamically with social movements, reinforcing the strategic framework proposed in this study.

Table 4: Multiple Regression – Predictors of Collaboration Effectiveness

Predictor Variable	**β (Beta)**	**p-value**
Trust Level	0.42	<0.001
Participatory Governance	0.28	0.003
International Funding	-0.19	0.041
Sector (Public Health)	0.21	0.018
Model R^2	**0.36**	

Trust emerged as the strongest positive predictor of collaboration effectiveness (β = 0.42), underscoring its foundational role. Participatory governance also significantly contributed, while reliance on international funding showed a modest negative association possibly due to donor-imposed restrictions limiting flexibility. The model explains 36% of the variance, indicating that relational and structural factors jointly shape outcomes.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that third-sector organisations (TSOs) are not merely facilitators of cross-sector collaboration but active architects of collaborative ecosystems that bridge civil society's institutional advocacy and social movements' transformative mobilisation. The participants consistently described TSOs as "translators," "trust-builders," and "safe spaces" where divergent actors could co-create strategies without compromising their core identities. These insights directly informed the development of a strategic framework for cross-sector collaboration one grounded in adaptive leadership, inclusive governance, and technology-enabled engagement aligned with recent theoretical and empirical advances in civic innovation.

The strong positive relationship between participatory governance and collaboration frequency ($\chi^2 = 18.74$, $p < 0.001$) underscores a central tenet of the proposed framework: inclusive governance is non-negotiable. TSO leaders reported that when movement representatives were integrated into decision-making bodies such as advisory councils or strategy committees' collaboration became more responsive and sustainable. As one human rights TSO director in Nigeria stated, "When our youth protest, leaders sit on our board, we don't just speak for them, we strategise with them." This resonates with Fung's (2024) concept of "democratic infrastructure," which argued that formalising participation prevents tokenism and builds mutual accountability. The framework thus recommends mandating co-governance structures that embed grassroots voices in organisational design, moving beyond consultation to shared authority.

Moreso, trust emerged as the strongest predictor of collaboration effectiveness (β = 0.42, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing the need for relational over transactional approaches. Participants across all sectors emphasized that trust was built through sustained, low-stakes interactions joint workshops, community dialogues, and crisis response not just high-level policy forums. A public health coordinator in Ghana noted, "We didn't win trust during Ebola by handing out flyers; we earned it by sleeping in the same villages, listening first." This aligns with recent work by Anheier and Krlev (2023), who argued that TSOs must invest in "social capital infrastructure" as deliberately as they do in financial or technical capacity. The strategic framework therefore prioritises long-term relationship-building mechanisms, such as rotating fellowships between TSOs and movement collectives and conflict mediation protocols to address power imbalances.

The negative association between international donor funding and perceived effectiveness ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = 0.041$) signals a critical tension: mission drift versus operational survival. Several respondents expressed frustration that donor log frames demanded measurable outputs that are incompatible with the unpredictable rhythms of social movements. "Donors want five-year plans, but movements erupt overnight," lamented an environmental justice advocate in Colombia. This echoes Choudry and Kapoor's (2023) warning about the "NGO-isation" of resistance, where professionalisation dilutes radical potential. To counter this, the framework advocates for diversified funding models including community trusts, social enterprise revenue, and pooled local grants and calls on donors to adopt flexible, multi-year core funding that respects movement timelines.

Sectoral differences also revealed important contextual nuances. Public health TSOs reported the highest trust and effectiveness, attributed to the universal urgency of health crises that temporarily suspend ideological divides. In contrast, human rights TSOs operated in more adversarial environments, requiring greater emphasis on security and digital safety. This supports Mkandawire's (2024) argument that collaboration frameworks must be context-sensitive, not one-size-fits-all. The proposed model thus includes modular components e.g., rapid-response protocols for repressive contexts, consensus-building tools for pluralistic ones allowing adaptation without losing strategic coherence.

The qualitative data illuminated the role of adaptive leadership as the linchpin of successful collaboration. Effective TSO leaders were described as "bilingual" fluent in both bureaucratic and activist languages and willing to cede control. "Our job isn't to lead the movement but to amplify it," said a Southeast Asian climate organiser. This reflects Heifetz et al.'s (2023) theory of adaptive leadership, which distinguished between technical problems (solvable with expertise) and adaptive challenges (requiring collective learning). The framework embeds this by recommending leadership development programmes focused on facilitation, emotional intelligence, and systems thinking.

Technology also featured prominently. While digital platforms enabled wider reach especially during pandemic restrictions participants warned against "digital solutionism." "Apps don't build trust; people do," cautioned a West African youth leader. Thus, the framework promotes technology-enabled, not technology-driven, engagement: using encrypted messaging for coordination, data visualisation for storytelling, and open-source tools co-designed with communities to ensure data sovereignty (Milan & Treré, 2023).

Therefore, the findings validated a strategic framework that is relational, reflexive, and resilient. It moves beyond instrumental partnership models toward what Pellow (2023) calls "solidarity ecosystems" networks rooted in shared values, mutual respect, and structural equity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrated that third-sector organisations (TSOs) occupy a critical, yet complex position at the intersection of civil society and social movements. Far from being passive intermediaries, TSOs actively shape collaborative ecosystems through trust-building, resource mobilisation, and institutional translation. The empirical findings confirmed that effective cross-sector collaboration is not accidental but structurally enabled particularly through participatory governance, adaptive leadership, and context-sensitive strategies. Quantitative data revealed that TSOs with inclusive decision-making structures and high relational trust report significantly higher collaboration effectiveness, while quantitative insights exposed the tensions inherent in balancing donor expectations, movement urgency, and institutional legitimacy. Crucially, the research affirmed that collaboration thrives not when differences are erased, but when they are productively managed through deliberate mechanisms that honour both the disruptive energy of social movements and the stabilising function of civil society institutions.

In an era marked by democratic fragility, climate emergencies, and rising inequality, the capacity of TSOs to weave together diverse civic actors is more vital than ever. However, this role cannot be sustained through goodwill alone. Without strategic support, TSOs risk burnout, co-optation, or mission drift. The proposed strategic framework anchored in adaptive leadership, inclusive governance, and technology-enabled engagement offers a roadmap for strengthening TSOs as resilient nodes in networks of transformative change. Importantly, this framework rejects one-size-fits-all solutions, instead advocating for modular, locally grounded approaches

that reflect sectoral and geopolitical realities. By integrating empirical evidence with theoretical insight, this study contributes to a growing body of knowledge that reimagines collaboration not as a technical fix but as a dynamic, values-driven practice essential for advancing social justice and sustainable development.

Based on the finding the following recommendations were made:

- TSOs should formally integrate representatives from social movements into governing bodies (e.g., advisory boards or strategy committees) through reserved seats or rotating membership, ensuring grassroots voices shape organisational priorities.
- Donors and philanthropies should shift from project-based grants to multi-year, unrestricted core funding that accommodates the unpredictable timelines of social movements and reduces administrative burdens on TSOs.
- TSOs should allocate resources to regular, low-stakes relational activities such as joint learning circles, community dialogues, and crisis simulation exercises to cultivate mutual understanding beyond transactional partnerships.
- Capacity-building initiatives should prioritise training in facilitation, conflict mediation, systems thinking, and "bilingual" communication (i.e., fluency in both activist and policy languages) for TSO staff and movement allies.
- TSOs should co-create modular collaboration guidelines tailored to sectoral risks e.g., digital security protocols for human rights defenders, rapid-response coalitions for public health crises rather than applying generic templates.
- Use open-source, community-owned digital tools for coordination and storytelling, ensuring data privacy, accessibility, and co-design with marginalised groups to avoid reinforcing digital divides.
- Create regional or thematic peer-learning hubs where TSOs, civil society actors, and movement organisers can share best practices, document failures, and collectively refine the strategic framework through iterative feedback loops.

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