



Outreach and sustainability strategy

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Executive Summary

CiviConnect, the West Africa Online Platform for Civic Space as an open collaborative space is a solution designed to foster civic space in the region and support change makers in their efforts to build an inclusive and open society. By providing a digital space for interaction, experimentation, innovation, and collaboration, the platform offers a powerful tool for individuals and organizations working towards positive social impact in the region. To ensure the platform's long-term success and impact, a well-defined Outreach and Sustainability Strategy is essential.

The outreach strategy is designed to popularize the platform and mobilize the target audience (whether from civil society, the media, academics, human rights defenders and activists) for input aimed at driving meaningful reforms in the civil society sector and positive social impact. This will be achieved through a combination of digital campaigning, media outreach, community building, and partnerships with relevant organizations and stakeholders.

The sustainability strategy for the platform will ensure its long-term resilience, maintenance and financial viability. This will be achieved through the definition of the platform's management model, a combination of grants, sponsorships, partnerships, as well the development of a financial model that outlines the sources of funding.

The items outlined in this strategic plan are intended to be turned into tangible action plans and to ensure the effectiveness of the outreach and sustainability strategies, regular evaluations should be conducted, and the platform will be continuously iterated and improved based on feedback from users and the results of the evaluation process.

CiviConnect, the West Africa Online Platform for Civic Space represents a community of practice providing a unique and valuable opportunity to support change makers in their efforts to build an inclusive and open society in West Africa and has the potential to drive positive social impact.

However, to achieve this impact, it is essential that the platform has a well-defined outreach and sustainability strategy in place. With a well-defined outreach and sustainability strategy in place, the platform is poised for long-term success and impact, and will be a valuable resource for change makers for years to come.

A- Background and Methodology

a. Background

West Africa has a rich history of civic engagement and social activism, but in recent years, many countries in the region have seen a decline in civic space, with increased restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and association. This has resulted in a decrease in the ability of individuals and organizations to drive positive social impact and a growing sense of disillusionment among those who are committed to making a difference.

The West Africa Online Platform for Civic Space has been developed as a response to these challenges. The platform provides a digital space for change makers to interact, experiment, innovate, and collaborate in their efforts to push for meaningful reforms and to build an inclusive and open society. By connecting individuals and organizations from across the region and providing them with collaborative resources, the platform has the potential to contribute to the efforts made by various stakeholders to reverse the trend of civic space closure and promote social activism in West Africa.

The platform is designed to be open, collaborative, and innovative, and it brings together the region's most dedicated change makers. Through a combination of functionalities and resources, the platform provides a powerful tool for individuals and organizations to drive positive social impact and to make a real difference in their communities

b. Methodology:

To define an outreach and sustainability strategy for The West Africa Online Platform for Civic Space, the following steps have been taken:

- *Conducting a Needs Assessment:* The first step was to understand the current needs of the platform and assess the existing opportunities and potential challenges. The information has been gathered through focus groups and stakeholder interviews.
- *Defining the Target Audience:* Based on the results of the needs assessment, the target audience has been defined and segmented into different groups based on their needs, interests, and goals.
- *Developing a Unique Value Proposition:* The platform must have a clear and compelling value proposition that addresses the needs of the target audience.
- *Defining the Outreach Strategy:* The outreach strategy has been developed based on the target audience, the value proposition, and the platform's goals.
- *Designing a Sustainability Model:* To ensure the long-term sustainability of the platform

Implement and Evaluate: Once the outreach and sustainability strategies have been defined and adopted, the next step is to implement them and regularly evaluate their effectiveness. This can be done by monitoring key metrics such as website traffic, engagement rates, and conversions, and making adjustments as needed.

Continuously Iterate: The platform should be continuously iterated and improved based on feedback from users and the results of the evaluation process. This will ensure that it remains relevant and effective in supporting change makers in their efforts to build an inclusive and open society.

I- OUTREACH STRATEGY

A. Key strategic clusters

The outreach strategy of the platform as proposed is structured around 5 key clusters:

1. ***Increase Awareness and enhance outreach:*** *Raise awareness of the platform and its value to change makers and activists in West Africa.*

Increasing awareness and enhancing reach refers to the efforts to target a larger and more diverse audience, to raise awareness of the platform and its value, and to attract new users. To do so, the comprehensive strategy proposed should be developed and implemented around a mix of marketing efforts, public relations, content marketing, and social media engagement.

2. ***Foster Community:*** *Foster a sense of community among users of the platform and strengthening collaboration.*

Fostering the platform's community is an important component of the proposed outreach strategy. It refers to the creation and cultivation of a supportive and engaged user base that is dedicated to using and promoting the platform.

A strong and engaged community can provide numerous benefits to the digital platform, including increased user engagement and loyalty, the creation of user-generated content, and the promotion of the platform through word-of-mouth.

It is equally important to ensure that the community is inclusive and supportive, with clear guidelines for acceptable behaviour and a process for resolving conflicts. This can help to create a positive and welcoming environment for all users.

3. ***Improve Engagement:*** *Enhance engagement among users, promoting their active participation and contributing on the platform.*

Improving engagement refers to the efforts to increase user interaction and participation on the platform, to keep users coming back, and to encourage them to spend more time on the platform.

To improve engagement, the platform should focus on delivering a positive user experience, with intuitive and user-friendly features, regular updates and improvements, and responsive customer support. The platform should also strive to offer valuable and relevant content, such as articles, and forums, to keep users engaged and coming back.

Another important aspect of improving engagement is personalization. Personalizing the platform experience, such as offering personalized recommendations, can help to make

the platform more relevant and appealing to users, and can increase their engagement with the platform.

4. ***Strengthen Relationships:*** *Build strong relationships with key stakeholders, including journalists, academic institutions, and government entities, to support the platform's mission.*

Strengthening relationships refers to the efforts to build and maintain strong, positive, and lasting connections with users, stakeholders, and other key partners.

To strengthen relationships, the platform should prioritize communication and engagement with its users. This can be done through regular updates, newsletters, and other forms of outreach, such as online forums, webinars, social media engagement, and in-person events.

The platform should also strive to understand the needs and preferences of its users, and to tailor its features accordingly. By doing so, the platform can better meet the needs of its users and can build a stronger and more positive relationship with them.

Another important aspect of strengthening relationships is to be transparent and trustworthy. The platform should be transparent about its policies, procedures, and business practices, and should take steps to protect the privacy and security of its users' data.

Building and maintaining strong, positive, and lasting connections with users, stakeholders, and other key partners is essential for the success and growth of the platform. Prioritizing communication and engagement, understanding user needs and preferences, and being transparent and trustworthy are all key to strengthening relationships and building a positive and supportive community.

5. ***Measure Success:*** *Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to measure the success of the outreach strategy, allowing for continuous improvement and refinement.*

Measuring success involves tracking and analyzing key metrics to assess the effectiveness of the platform's outreach efforts and to identify areas for improvement.

To measure success, the digital platform should establish clear goals and objectives for its outreach strategy, and should track relevant metrics, such as user engagement, retention, and conversion rates. The platform should also track the success of specific outreach campaigns and initiatives, such as email newsletters, social media posts, and events.

It is also important to regularly review and analyze the data collected, to identify trends and patterns, and to make informed decisions about future outreach efforts. This can help the platform to continuously improve its outreach strategy, to better reach its target audience, and to achieve its goals.

Tracking and analyzing key metrics, establishing clear goals and objectives, regularly reviewing and analyzing data, and continuously improving the outreach strategy are all essential for the success and growth of the platform. By regularly assessing the effectiveness of its outreach efforts, a digital platform can ensure that it is reaching its target audience and achieving its goals, and can make informed decisions to drive future growth and success.

B. Outreach activities

Outreach activities refer to the specific initiatives and tactics that the platform could employ to reach and engage with its target audience and to achieve its outreach goals and objectives.

1. On increasing awareness & enhancing Reach :

- a. *Social Media Campaigns:* Develop and execute targeted social media campaigns across multiple platforms (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) to increase awareness about the platform, its goals and how to use it.
- b. *Content Creation:* Create and share blog posts, infographics, and other types of content that educate people about civic space trends in West Africa. The content created should be shared both on CiviConnect platform and on other websites.
- c. *Influencer Outreach:* Partner with influential individuals and organizations in the West African region to help spread the word about the platform and its functionalities.
- d. *Event Organization and Participation:* Organize series of webinars focused on: the latest trends on Civic Space in the region, the major political, social, economic and cultural development with an impact on Civic Space and the latest campaigns, resources and other collaborative items shared on the platform.

Attend and speak at relevant events, such as conferences and forum on topics related to civic space to raise awareness about the platform, its goals and to drive the engagement of key stakeholders.

- e. *Email Marketing:* Create and distribute monthly email newsletters to a targeted list of individuals and organizations to keep them informed about the platform, its content and the news from its users.
- f. *Media Outreach:* Reach out to local and regional media outlets to secure coverage about the platform, its mission and the last campaigns, resources and other collaborative items share on the platform.

2. On Fostering Community:

- a. *Online Community:* Nurture the online community around the platform by encouraging users to connect, collaborate, and share their experiences and ideas through the platform's forum.
- b. *User-Generated Content:* Encourage users to share content on the platform, such as blog posts, resources, campaigns ... to foster a sense of community and collaboration.
- c. *Community Engagement:* Host regular community events and initiatives, such as webinars, workshops, and meetups, to encourage real time interaction and collaboration between users.
- d. *User Feedback:* Encourage users to provide feedback and suggestions on how to improve the platform and create a more supportive and collaborative community.
- e. *Collaborative Projects:* Encourage users to collaborate on projects and initiatives that address civic space closure and promote an open society in West Africa.
- f. *Volunteer Program:* Develop a volunteer program to allow users to get involved and contribute in meaningful ways to the management of the platform.
- g. *Knowledge Sharing:* Encourage users to share their knowledge and expertise with others on the platform.
- h. *Community Guidelines:* Develop clear community guidelines to set expectations and create a safe and supportive environment for all users.

3. On Improving Engagement:

- a. *User Feedback:* Encourage users to provide feedback and suggestions on how to improve the platform and their overall experience.
- b. *User Testing:* Conduct regular user testing to identify areas for improvement and make updates based on user feedback.
- c. *Interactive Content:* Create interactive content, such as quizzes and polls, to engage users and encourage participation.
- d. *Community Engagement:* Host regular community events and initiatives, such as webinars, workshops, and meetups, to encourage real time interaction and engagement between users.
- e. *User-Generated Content:* Encourage users to share content on the platform, such as blog posts, resources, campaigns ... to foster a sense of community and collaboration.

- f. *Social Media*: Use social media to engage with users and encourage them to share their experiences and content on the platform.
- g. *Collaborative Projects*: Encourage users to collaborate on projects and initiatives that address civic space closure in West Africa.

4. On Strengthening Relationships:

- a. *Stakeholder Outreach*: Conduct regular outreach to key stakeholders, including journalists, academic institutions, and government entities, to build strong relationships and promote the platform's mission.
- b. *Media Relations*: Establish and maintain strong media relationships to ensure that the platform and its content are accurately and effectively represented in the media.
- c. *Academic Partnerships*: Form partnerships with academic institutions to promote research and collaboration on the issue of civic space closure and the sharing of key academic reports on the platform.
- d. *Collaborative Initiatives*: Launch collaborative initiatives with key stakeholders , including journalists, academic institutions, and government entities, such as joint advocacy projects to build stronger relationships between users and promote the platform's mission.
- e. *Stakeholder Feedback*: Quarterly gather feedback from key stakeholders to understand their needs and concerns and address them through the platform's outreach and communication efforts.
- f. *Networking Events*: Facilitate networking events and opportunities for key stakeholders to connect and build relationships with each other.
- g. *Stakeholder Meetings*: Schedule quarterly meetings with key stakeholders , including journalists, academic institutions, and government entities, to maintain open lines of communication and ensure that the platform's mission is being effectively supported.
- h. *User Stories*: Share user stories and testimonials to showcase the impact of the platform and strengthen relationships with users.

5. On Measuring Success:

- a. *Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)*: Identify key performance indicators to measure the success of the platform and its outreach and communication efforts.

- b. *User Feedback*: Regularly gather and analyze user feedback to understand how the platform is being used and identify areas for improvement.
- c. *User Analytics*: Use analytics tools to track user engagement and activity on the platform, including pageviews, time on site, and conversion rates.
- d. *Social Media Analytics*: Monitor and analyze social media metrics, such as reach, engagement, and follower growth, to measure the success of social media outreach efforts.
- e. *Content Analytics*: Measure the success of content marketing efforts by tracking the performance of blog posts, videos, and other types of content.
- f. *Campaign Analytics*: Track the success of specific outreach and communication campaigns by measuring the number of impressions, clicks, and conversions.
- g. *Community Metrics*: Track metrics such as community size, engagement, and collaboration to measure the success of community consolidation efforts.
- h. *Surveys*: Conduct regular surveys to gather user feedback and measure satisfaction with the platform and its outreach and communication efforts.

II- SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

A- Management Model

CiviConnect, the West Africa Online Platform for Civic Space can be managed effectively through a four-tiered management model that involves Host Organisations, Country Focal Points, a Volunteer Corps, and a Community of Users. This model is proposed to promote collaboration, inclusivity, and accountability, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the platform.

a. The Host organisations

It is suggested that the platform be hosted by one or several Civil Society Organisations based and operating in the West African region. The host organisations should play a crucial role in the management of the platform as primary responsible of providing technical, organizational, administrative, and financial support to the platform, which is essential to its sustainability and growth.

- **Technical Support:** The host organisations should provide technical expertise and infrastructure to support the platform's development and maintenance. The following are the core technical support duties that host organisations should provide to the platform:
 - **Web Hosting:** The host organization should provide a secure and reliable web hosting environment for the platform, ensuring that the platform is accessible and functioning properly at all times. This includes setting up servers, managing network infrastructure, and monitoring the site for performance and security.
 - **Software Development:** The host organisations should provide software development services, which may include customizing existing software, developing new software, and integrating the platform with other systems. The host organization should also provide training and support for volunteers and users on how to use the platform.
 - **Data Management:** The host organisations should provide data management services, which includes setting up databases, managing data storage, and ensuring data security and privacy. The host organisations should also work with the platform's stakeholders to ensure that data is accurate, up-to-date, and accessible to those who need it.
 - **Technical Support:** The host organization should provide technical support to the platform's volunteers and users, which includes troubleshooting technical issues, providing training and guidance, and responding to user feedback and questions.
 - **Software Maintenance:** The host organisations should provide software maintenance services, which may include updating software, fixing bugs, and addressing security vulnerabilities. The host organisations should also work with the platform's stakeholders to ensure that the platform remains up-to-date and secure over time.

- **Administrative and organisational support:** The host organisations play a crucial role in ensuring the platform's success by providing the following administrative and organisational support duties:
 - **Project Management:** The host organisations should provide project management services, which may include defining project goals, setting project timelines, and coordinating with donors, volunteers and other stakeholders. The host organisations should also ensure that projects are completed on time and within budget.
 - **Resource Allocation:** The host organisations should provide resource allocation services, which may include identifying and securing funding sources, managing budgets, and allocating resources to support the platform and its projects.
 - **Communication:** The host organisations should provide communication services, which may include creating and distributing information to stakeholders, facilitating discussions and collaboration, and responding to user feedback and questions.
 - **Administration:** The host organisations should provide administrative services to the platform, which may include managing contracts and agreements, maintaining records and archives, and handling the day-to-day operations of the platform.
 - **Stakeholder Engagement:** The host organization should provide stakeholder engagement services, which includes engaging with volunteers, users, governments, and other stakeholders to build relationships and foster collaboration.

In addition to providing technical, organizational, administrative, and financial support, the host organisations should also be responsible for overseeing the overall management of the platform and for ensuring that it is aligned with its mission. This includes setting goals and objectives, developing policies and procedures, and working with external stakeholders to ensure that the platform is accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the community of users.

b. The Country Focal Points

The Country Focal Points should play a significant role in ensuring the platform's success and can serve as the main point of contact for the platform in their respective countries, ensuring that the platform's wider adoption. Additionally, CFPs can help to promote the platform and increase its visibility within their countries, which can help to ensure its long-term sustainability. By establishing Country Focal Points, CiviConnect can build strong partnerships with local organizations and communities, ultimately leading to a more effective and impactful platform.

The responsibilities of Country Focal Points may include:

- **Facilitating communication and coordination:** The Country Focal Points serve as a point of contact between the Host Organizations, Volunteer Corps, and Community of Users, helping to facilitate communication and coordination between these different groups. This includes relaying important information, responding to questions and concerns, and helping to resolve any issues that arise.
- **Providing localized support and guidance:** Country Focal Points are responsible for providing localized support and guidance to users in their respective countries. This may involve answering questions, providing technical assistance, and helping to troubleshoot any issues that arise. They may also be responsible for organizing training and capacity-building activities to help users make the most of the platform.
- **Promoting the platform:** Country Focal Points play a key role in promoting the platform and increasing its visibility in their respective countries.
- **Collecting and sharing feedback:** Country Focal Points are responsible for gathering feedback from users in their respective countries and sharing this feedback with the Host Organizations. This helps to ensure that the platform is responsive to the needs of its users and that it continues to evolve and improve over time.
- **Mobilizing volunteers:** The Country Focal Points for can also play a key role in mobilizing volunteers for the Volunteer Corps. As representatives of the platform in their respective countries, CFPs can identify and reach out to potential volunteers in their who have the skills and experience needed to support the platform's work.

To identify and select the Country Focal Points for CiviConnect, a call for expression of interest can be published. This call can be advertised widely through various channels, including social media, online platforms, and local organizations. The call for expression of interest can outline the specific roles and responsibilities of the Country Focal Points, as well as the qualifications and experience required. It can also provide information on the selection process, including the timeline and criteria for evaluation and ensure that the CFPs selected are highly qualified and committed to the success of the platform, ultimately contributing to its long-term sustainability.

c. The volunteers corps

The volunteer corps is a critical component of the proposed management model, as they bring a wealth of skills, knowledge, and experience to the platform and should be composed of volunteers who embrace the mission of the platform and are inclined to work with the host organisations in running it.

The following are some of the key responsibilities of volunteers:

- **Content Creation:** Volunteers should create and contribute content to the platform, such as articles, blog posts, and other forms of content that engage and inform the platform's users.
- **Community Engagement:** Volunteers should help foster community engagement by participating in discussions, responding to questions and comments, and providing support and assistance to other members of the platform.
- **Event Planning and Management:** Volunteers should help plan and manage events, such as workshops, webinars, and other initiatives that engage the platform's users and build community.
- **Research and Analysis:** Volunteers should support the platform's research and analysis efforts by conducting research, collecting and analyzing data, and preparing reports and other materials.

The volunteers for the Volunteer Corps can be mobilized through a call for expression of interest facilitated by the Country Focal Points in their respective. The call should be advertised through various channels, outlining specific roles and responsibilities, qualifications, and the selection process. This involvement can result in a more diverse and inclusive Volunteer Corps that can contribute to the platform's long-term sustainability and impact.

Overall, the volunteer corps should play a crucial role in the success and sustainability of the platform and the host organisations should provide the necessary support and resources to help volunteers succeed in their duties.

d. Community of Users

The Community of Users is a central component of the platform, as they are the primary beneficiaries of the platform's services and resources. The following are some key inputs expected from the Community of Users on the platform:

- **Participation:** Encouraging and enabling members of the community and other stakeholders to participate in discussions, contribute content, and provide feedback and suggestions to improve the platform.
- **Collaboration:** Fostering collaboration and teamwork among members of the community, to work towards common goals, such as improving the civic space, promoting good governance, and advocating for change.

- **Knowledge sharing:** Sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices with others in the community, to build a collective understanding of the issues facing the civic space in West Africa and strategies to address them.
- **Engagement:** Engaging with other members of the community to build relationships, foster collaboration, and drive positive change in the civic space in West Africa.
- **Advocacy:** Advocating for change and improvements to the civic space in West Africa, using the platform as a tool to raise awareness and mobilize support.

By participating and collaborating with the platform and other members of the community, the users can play a central role in the success of the platform. It is important for the platform to recognize and support the role of the community of users, and to provide the resources and tools needed to enable them to make a positive impact.

B- Maintenance Model

The maintenance of the platform is a critical aspect of ensuring its sustainability and longevity. A well-planned and executed maintenance strategy helps to ensure that the platform remains functional, secure, and user-friendly. The proposed maintenance model includes a plan for software updates, disaster recovery, performance monitoring, user testing and feedback, documentation, security, scalability, and continuous improvement. This section of the strategy document outlines the key elements of a comprehensive maintenance model for the platform, and provides guidance on how to implement and monitor these elements to ensure the long-term success of the platform.

- Software updates:** *Keep the platform software and any integrated tools up to date to address security and bug issues. Schedule regular updates and conduct thorough testing after each update to ensure that everything is working correctly.*

Software updates are a crucial component of the maintenance model as regular updates help to ensure that the platform remains secure and free of bugs, and that users have access to the latest features and functionality. To effectively manage software updates, it is important to have a structured process in place. This includes scheduling monthly updates, testing the platform after each update, and communicating the updates to users. Updates should be tested thoroughly to ensure that they do not cause any unintended issues with the platform's functionality or performance. It is also important to consider the impact that updates may have on users. This can include changes to user interfaces, functionalities, or data structures. To minimize the impact of updates on users, it is important to provide clear and concise information about the updates to the users.

- Backup and disaster recovery plan:** *Establish a regular backup schedule and disaster recovery plan to ensure that data can be recovered in the event of a problem. This includes daily backups and regular testing of the recovery process.*

A backup and disaster recovery plan helps to ensure that data can be recovered in the event of a disaster, such as a cyberattack, hardware failure, or other incidents.

To develop a robust backup and disaster recovery plan, it is important to consider the types of incidents that may occur and the impact they could have on the platform and its users. This includes regular backups, cross-location storage of backup files, and regular testing of the recovery process.

A backup schedule should be established to ensure that data is backed up weekly, and that older backups are removed to save storage space. Cross-location storage of backup files helps to ensure that the data can be recovered even if the primary location is unavailable. Regular testing of the recovery process helps to ensure that backups can be restored in a timely manner, and that the data is complete and accurate.

In addition to data backup, it is important to have a plan for recovering the platform's software. A robust backup and disaster recovery plan helps to ensure that data can be recovered in the event of a disaster, and that the platform can be quickly restored to full functionality.

- c. ***Performance monitoring:*** Regularly monitor the platform's performance to identify and resolve any issues that may affect user experience or functionality. This includes monitoring server response times, user session lengths, and error rates.

Regular performance monitoring helps to identify and resolve issues that may affect the platform's performance, user experience, and functionality.

Performance monitoring includes monitoring server response times, user session lengths, and error rates. This information can be used to identify trends, detect potential issues, and make adjustments to improve performance. In addition, performance monitoring can help to identify the root cause of performance issues, allowing the development and support teams to take appropriate action to resolve the issue.

It is important to have a system in place for tracking and recording performance metrics, and for regularly reviewing this information to identify trends and potential issues. The performance monitoring system should also be integrated with the platform's support and troubleshooting processes, to ensure that any issues are promptly addressed and resolved.

Monitoring performance helps to ensure that the platform remains functional, secure, and user-friendly, and that any issues are promptly identified and resolved.

- d. **User testing and feedback:** *Obtain regular feedback from users to identify and resolve any issues they are facing, and to continually improve the platform's functionality and user experience. This includes user surveys, focus groups, and regular interactions with the support team.*

This process helps to ensure that the platform meets the needs and expectations of its users and provides a seamless experience. User testing can be carried out in various ways, such as focus groups, surveys, usability testing, and A/B testing.

Feedback from users is also crucial in the maintenance process. This can be gathered through various channels, such as support tickets, online forums, and social media. User feedback helps to identify areas that need improvement and provides valuable insights into the users' needs and experiences. It also helps to prioritize maintenance tasks and ensures that the platform remains relevant and user-friendly.

Incorporating user testing and feedback into the maintenance strategy helps to improve the overall quality of the platform and to provide a better user experience. It is essential to regularly collect and analyze user feedback to ensure that the platform continues to meet the changing needs and expectations of its users.

By regularly collecting and analyzing user feedback, digital platforms can ensure that they remain user-friendly and relevant, providing a seamless experience for their users.

- e. **Documentation:** *Maintain updated documentation of the platform's architecture, code, and processes to assist in troubleshooting and maintenance. This includes technical and functional specifications documentation and training materials.*

It provides users with information about the platform's features, functionality, and usage, as well as technical details for developers and administrators.

Having comprehensive and up-to-date documentation helps to ensure that users can fully utilize the platform and resolve any issues that may arise. Documentation should be easily accessible and understandable for users of all technical levels, including non-technical users.

Incorporating documentation into the maintenance model also helps to improve the overall quality of the platform. Documentation can be used to capture best practices, provide step-by-step instructions for common tasks, and outline the platform's architecture and design. This information can then be used to inform future updates and improvements to the platform.

It is essential to monthly review and update the documentation to ensure that it remains relevant and accurate. This can be done through user feedback, internal

review processes, and regular updates to the platform's features and functionality.

Comprehensive and up-to-date documentation helps users to fully utilize the platform, resolve issues, and improves the overall quality of the platform by capturing best practices and providing technical details for developers and administrators.

- f. **Security:** *Implement regular security audits and implement appropriate security measures to protect user data and prevent unauthorized access to the platform.*

Security is a critical aspect of a maintenance model for the platform. It is responsible for protecting sensitive information, such as user data, from unauthorized access and potential security threats.

Having a robust security system in place helps to minimize the risk of data breaches, cyberattacks, and other security incidents. The security system should be designed to detect and prevent potential threats and to respond quickly in the event of a security incident.

Incorporating security into the maintenance model also helps to improve the overall quality of the platform. Regular security audits and assessments can be used to identify vulnerabilities and to ensure that the security system is up-to-date and effective. Security updates and patches should be regularly applied to address known vulnerabilities and to keep the platform secure.

It is essential to regularly evaluate the security system to ensure that it is meeting the needs of users and providing a high level of protection. This can be done through internal security audits, penetration testing, and monitoring of security incidents.

A robust security system helps to minimize the risk of security incidents, protect sensitive information, and improve the overall quality of the platform by ensuring that it is secure and protected from potential threats.

- g. **Scalability:** *Plan for the platform's growth and scalability needs to ensure that it can handle increased traffic and demand. This can include regular performance tuning, load testing, and capacity planning.*

Scalability is a critical aspect of a maintenance model for the digital platform. It refers to the ability of the platform to grow and handle increased traffic and usage without sacrificing performance or reliability.

Having a scalable platform is essential as it allows to meet the growing needs of users and to accommodate increased traffic and usage. Scalability should be

incorporated into the design and architecture of the platform from the beginning to ensure that it can handle growth and change.

Incorporating scalability into the maintenance strategy also helps to improve the overall quality of the platform. Regular performance monitoring and assessments can be used to identify areas of the platform that need improvement and to ensure that it is performing optimally. The platform should be designed to be modular and flexible, allowing for the addition of new features and functionality as needed.

It is essential to quarterly evaluate the scalability of the platform to ensure that it is meeting the needs of users and providing a high level of performance and reliability. This can be done through performance monitoring, load testing, and the implementation of scalable architecture patterns.

A scalable platform allows to meet the growing needs of users, accommodate increased traffic and usage, and improve the overall quality of the platform by ensuring that it is performing optimally and can handle growth and change.

- h. **Continuous improvement:** Regularly review and assess the maintenance strategy to identify areas for improvement and to ensure that the platform remains relevant and effective. This can include regular meetings with the development and support teams, and continuous analysis of platform usage and performance data.*

It refers to the ongoing process of evaluating and improving the platform to meet the evolving needs of users and to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

Incorporating continuous improvement into the maintenance model helps to ensure that the platform remains up-to-date and relevant, with the latest features, functionality, and best practices. This can be done through regular performance monitoring, user testing, and feedback, and incorporating the results into future updates and improvements to the platform.

Continuous improvement also helps to improve the overall quality of the platform. Regular performance monitoring and user feedback can be used to identify areas of the platform that need improvement and to prioritize updates and improvements based on user needs and feedback.

It is essential to make continuous improvement a key part of the maintenance strategy and to allocate the necessary resources to ensure that it is effective. This can be done through regular performance monitoring, user testing and feedback, and the implementation of agile development methodologies.

The ongoing process of evaluating and improving the platform helps to ensure that it remains up-to-date and relevant, with the latest features, functionality, and

best practices, and improves the overall quality of the platform by incorporating user needs and feedback into future updates and improvements.

C- Financial Model

The Financial model is a critical component for the successful of the platform and should insure that the platform is able to continue to operate effectively, grow, and make a positive impact on the civic space in West Africa, now and in the future. The financial model is designed to address how the platform will be funded.

The proposed Financial Model is strongly inspired by the findings of focus groups held with potential users of the platform with users suggesting the platform to go further than providing a dedicated digital space to facilitating collaborative projects within the Community of Users. Indeed, Focus group discussions drew attention on the fact that over the last years, technology has also been used to "suppress, surveil and harass dissidents, political opposition, human rights defenders, activists and protestors, and to manipulate public opinion". New technologies including "the Internet of Things, open data, artificial intelligence and robotics" are significantly impacting civic space. Digital tools have been employed to hinder civic participation in numerous ways, including arbitrary limits imposed by cybercrime legislation, Internet shutdowns, control and manipulation of information flows, mass digital surveillance, smear campaigns, and online harassment. There is a pressing need to coordinate efforts to design, regulate and manage the governance of digital technologies.

The discussions also revealed that Civil Society Organisations have limited awareness and knowledge of digital rights, information technology, and digital tools. There is a lack of policy on digital technology and social media use, limited digital security capacities, and Civil Society Organisations are vulnerable to attacks. Civil Society Organisations are also often not fully aware of their rights online, and there are capacity gaps on technological issues as well as on the exercise of fundamental freedoms online. The participants raised the possibility for the CiviConnect to act at this level through capacity building and other actions. A webinar schedule on different aspects of digital technology was mentioned.

The proposed strategy seeks not only to ensure the mobilization of the necessary resources for the operation of the platform but also for the development of various collaborative projects for the benefit of the Community of Users.

The proposed financial model involves a combination of the following components:

- a. **Partnerships:** The platform could seek partnerships with other organizations in the region that share similar goals and objectives. These partnerships could lead to joint fundraising efforts, collaboration on projects, and cross-border of initiatives.

The described partnership strategy involves the following steps:

- ❖ *Identify potential partners:* Look for organizations that share a similar mission or interest in promoting civic engagement and have the resources to support the platform.
 - ❖ *Define the value proposition:* Clearly articulate the benefits that the platform provides to potential partners, such as increased visibility, access to a targeted audience, or the opportunity to support a cause.
 - ❖ *Negotiate mutually beneficial agreements:* Work with partners to create agreements that provide financial support while also delivering value to the partner, such as access to unique data and insights.
 - ❖ *Foster strong relationships:* Maintain open and transparent communication with partners, and actively seek feedback to continuously improve the platform and meet their objectives.
- b. Crowdfunding:** The platform could launch crowdfunding campaigns to raise funds from its community of users. Crowdfunding campaigns can be a powerful tool for engaging users and raising funds for also specific initiatives or projects.
- c. Collaborative projects:** The platform could develop collaborative projects with its community of users, such as initiatives that aim to solve pressing social and political issues in the region. The platform could also provide resources and support to help users launch their own initiatives, and share its expertise in community-building and mobilization.

By partnering with relevant stakeholders, the platform can access funding sources, expand its user base, and enhance its impact. Collaborative projects can also provide opportunities to pool resources and expertise, creating economies of scale and improving overall efficiency. Additionally, partnerships can help to establish the platform as a trusted and authoritative source of information and can increase its visibility and credibility in the region.

It is important to approach collaboration carefully, taking into account the interests of all parties involved and finding ways to align these with the platform's goals and mission.

- d. Fundraising:** This component involves pursuing grants from philanthropic organizations, corporations and government agencies that support civic initiatives in the region. It could identify organizations that align with its mission and values and apply for grants that support its initiatives and programs.

The proposed fundraising strategy for the platform revolves around the following key components:

- ❖ **Identify potential funders:** Research foundations, government agencies, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector to identify potential funding sources that align with the platform's goals and mission.
- ❖ **Develop a compelling case for support:** Clearly communicate the platform's value proposition, impact, and objectives to potential funders, and show how their support can help achieve these goals.
- ❖ **Build relationships:** Establish and maintain strong relationships with potential funders and partners to foster trust and create opportunities for future collaborations.
- ❖ **Create a fundraising plan:** Develop a detailed plan that outlines the goals, tactics, and timelines for the fundraising campaign. This should include regular reporting and communication with donors, as well as plans for using the funds effectively.
- ❖ **Foster transparency and accountability:** Ensure that the platform's financial management processes are transparent and accountable, and that regular financial reporting and audits are conducted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, CiviConnect the West Africa platform for Civic Space effective outreach and sustainability strategy to achieve its mission and goals. The platform must engage with relevant stakeholders to expand its reach and impact. At the same time, it must secure the necessary

resources to support its ongoing operations and growth through a comprehensive fundraising strategy.

The outreach strategy should focus on leveraging technology to connect with users and partners in a meaningful and efficient way. This can involve creating a user-friendly interface, leveraging social media and other online platforms to reach new audiences, and developing targeted communication campaigns to engage with specific groups.

The sustainability strategy should include a mix of fundraising sources, including grants, philanthropic donations, partnerships, and alternative funding models such as crowdfunding. The platform should also have strong financial management processes in place, including transparent and accountable financial reporting, to demonstrate its commitment to responsible stewardship of resources.

A successful outreach and sustainability strategy will require careful planning, persistence, and a commitment to the platform's mission. By combining the power of technology with effective outreach and fundraising efforts, a digital and collaborative platform for civic space in West Africa can make a positive impact in the region and secure its long-term financial sustainability.

APPENDIX A – IDENTIFIED DONORS & POTENTIAL FUNDS SOURCES

❖ Internet Freedom Fund

- Donor : Open Tech Fund

The Internet Freedom Fund is OTF's primary way to support projects and people working on open and accessible technology-focused projects that promote human rights, Internet freedom, open

societies. OTF aims to support technologists and activists bring to life ideas that advance inclusive and safe access to global communications networks, counteract censorship and surveillance, and mitigate digital security threats to Internet freedom specifically for at-risk-users, journalists, human rights defenders, civil society activists and others living in repressive environments.

<https://www.opentech.fund/funds/internet-freedom-fund/>

❖ **The Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF)**

- *CIPESA*

The Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF) offers flexible and rapid response grants to select initiatives in Africa to implement activities that advance digital rights, including advocacy, litigation, research, policy analysis, digital literacy and digital security skills building. Round three of the ADRF is particularly interested in proposals for work related to Covid-19 response measures, how they affect the internet rights landscape, and how to redress any resulting harms to rights and freedoms. This effort is essential because, even in pandemic times, governments must respect rights and not abuse emergency powers. Moreover, many actors need access to credible information and research to inform their own work on awareness-raising and holding authorities to account during and in the aftermath of Covid-19.

<https://cipesa.org/the-africa-digital-rights-fund-english/>

❖ **Community and Network Fund**

- *Donor : Digital Defenders Partnership / Hivos*

To support initiatives for building skills, capacities, collaboration, and exchange among organisations and individuals working on internet freedom, rapid response and digital or holistic security for human rights defenders.

What does this fund cover?

Hosting meetings or conferences to strengthen collaboration between rapid responders.

Capacity-building and training within the holistic security trainers communities or among rapid responders networks to digital threats.

Creating, translating, or maintaining useful creative-commons guides, repositories or resources for learning.

Set up or maintaining help desks or helplines.

<https://www.digitaldefenders.org/community-and-network-fund/>

❖ **Project Shield - Protecting free expression from digital attacks**

- *Donor : Project Shield*

Project Shield, created by Google Cloud and Jigsaw and powered by Google Cloud Armor, provides free unlimited protection against DDoS attacks, a type of digital attack used to censor information by taking websites offline.

<https://projectshield.withgoogle.com/public/>

❖ **Project Galileo**

- *Donor : Cloudflare*

Founded in 2014, Project Galileo is our response to devastating cyber attacks launched against important yet vulnerable targets, like artistic groups, humanitarian organizations, and the voices of political dissent.

Through Project Galileo, Cloudflare provides free, robust security to enterprises that are the targets of DDoS and other cyber attacks.

The Internet is a powerful tool for spreading and expanding ideas. When journalists, social activists, and minority groups are flooded with malicious traffic in an attempt to knock them offline, the Internet stops fulfilling its promise.

Such organizations often face attacks from powerful and entrenched opponents, yet operate on limited budgets.

<https://www.cloudflare.com/galileo/>

❖ **twilio.org Grand program**

- *Twilio.org*

Twilio.org supports nonprofits, social enterprises, healthcare, and education institutions serving half a billion people every year with Twilio technology and funding. Our aim is to amplify your organization's reach over digital channels and extend your expertise to help more people.

<https://twilio.org/>

❖ **Internet Hardening Fund**

- *Donor : NLNET Foundation*

Many benefits of the internet have materialised for its users despite of this- as witnessed by everyday usage of the internet by billions of people. But at the same time fundamental design issues come up again and again, showing the need for a structural solution if we want to continue and grow those benefits. As a technical community we need to revisit the security and privacy properties of the underpinning standards, and after that we need to make sure that those standards are actually deployed.

<https://nlnet.nl/internethardening/>

❖ **PUBLIC INTEREST TECH**

- *Donor : The Prototype Fund*

Developers from civil society create technologies that focus on the needs of users and are freely available. These technologies - regardless of their (financial) usability - form the basis of our (digital) coexistence and create added value for society.

The Prototype Fund is a funding program of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) that is managed and evaluated by the Open Knowledge Foundation Germany.

<https://prototypefund.de/en/about-2/>

❖ **ACCESS NOW GRANTS**

- *Donor : Acces Now*

We provide flexible and grantee-driven funding to grassroots and frontline organizations fighting for human rights in the digital age. We pursue this work at a time when civil society around the world is working under increasingly difficult circumstances, from targeted censorship, to restrictions on operations, to threats to physical safety. It is also a time when the digital space has become a critical battleground in broader human rights struggles, as well as a place where marginalization, societal discrimination, and violence can be reproduced and even amplified. We aim to strengthen the global digital rights community by expanding, diversifying, and empowering the movement at the grassroots.

<https://www.accessnow.org/grants/>

❖ **CIVIC RIGHTS IN A DIGITAL AGE**

- *Donor : Hivos*

Across the regions we work in, we observe shrinking civic space and freedom, the spread of narratives that divide people and undermine truth, deepening exclusion of the most marginalized people, and collapsing trust in democratic institutions.

Corruption and tax avoidance remain major scourges. These challenges relate intimately to a global economic system that incentivizes exploitation of people and natural resources. They are magnified by rapid, unequal digitalization of our societies.

<https://hivos.org/impact-area/civic-rights-in-a-digital-age/>

❖ **Media Democracy Fund**

- *Donor: New Venture Fund*

Media Democracy Fund is a catalyst for an open, secure and equitable internet. We bring together diverse voices to design inclusive and responsible solutions, and empower public interest advocates to create an environment where digital technologies and the internet have a long-term, positive impact on society.

<https://mediademocracyfund.org/>

❖ **Creative Commons Community Activities Fund**

- *Donor : Creative Commons*

The Community Activities Fund is a mini-grant program aimed at supporting individuals and communities pursuing activities aligned with the network values and principles stated on the new Creative Commons Global Network Strategy. These grants are meant to provide quick, practical-level support for activities, projects, and events done by supporters and advocates of

Creative Commons – from kick-starting projects, facilitating travel and mentorships, to supporting the organization of CC- themed events around the globe.

<https://creativecommons.org/2017/06/13/community-activities-fund/>

❖ **LEARNING FOR CIVIC ACTION CHALLENGE**

- *Donor: MIT*

The MIT Solve community is looking for eight technology-enabled solutions that help learners take effective action on community and global issues by deepening civic knowledge and practicing collaborative problem solving. To that end, Solve seeks solutions that:

Provide access to improved civic action learning in a wide range of contexts with educator support for classroom-based approaches, and community-building opportunities for out of school, community-based approaches.

<https://solve.mit.edu/challenges/learning-for-civic-action-challenge>

❖ **The RAITH Foundation Grant program**

- *The RAITH Foundation*

RAITH is a South African funder that provides grants to NGOs and Universities. Grants vary in size and can be completed over a short time frame or a maximum of 3 years.

They offer the following types of grants:

- Core Grants
- Emergency Grants
- Discretionary Grants
- Institutional Development Grants

<https://raith.org.za/apply/>

❖ **OSIWA Grants Program**

- *Donor : Open Society Initiative for West Africa*

OSIWA supports efforts to engage citizens in West Africa not just in voting, but in being engaged, vocal citizens that ensure governments respond to the needs of citizens. Key subthemes under this area of work include:

Civic Engagement and Inclusive Participation in Democratic Governance: We contribute to building social movements and increasing the quality of citizen participation in regional, national and local governance processes.

Elections: We promote credible elections and effective citizen accountability mechanisms.

<https://www.osiwa.org/what-we-do/#grantsAnchor>