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Tip sheet: *How to Collaborations with Civil Society Organizations as a journalist*

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Session: How to: Collaborations with Civil Society Organizations

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Introduction to the Topic (2-3 sentences)

Working with civil society organizations (CSOs) can open doors to hard-to-reach communities, government officials, and sensitive information. For investigative journalists, these collaborations often serve as a bridge between the newsroom and real-world impact — but they also require a clear sense of independence and ethical boundaries.

Things to do

- **Build trust gradually.** Spend time attending CSO events, panels, or talking to understand their priorities and identify credible partners.
- **Clarify roles early.** Define what kind of collaboration you're seeking — information sharing, field coordination, or data access — and make sure all parties agree.
- **Verify independently.** Always cross-check CSO-provided data or claims with other sources such as government officials, academics, or on-the-ground observations.
- **Maintain communication.** Keep regular contact beyond publication. Long-term relationships help you stay updated on developments and potential new leads.
- **Ensure transparency with editors.** Keep your newsroom informed about your interactions and agreements with CSOs to prevent conflicts of interest.

Things to watch out for

- **Advocacy bias.** Many NGOs operate within specific funding goals and advocacy frameworks. Be aware of their agendas so they don't shape your reporting angle.
- **Overreliance on one source.** Relying too heavily on a single organization can narrow your perspective and weaken journalistic balance.
- **Perception of activism.** Avoid becoming too closely associated with any group. Maintain professional distance to preserve your credibility and independence.
- **Data limitations.** CSO data may not always be comprehensive or up to date; treat it as a starting point rather than a final fact.
- **Be transparent with the public** — disclose your collaboration and support where relevant, while keeping editorial independence and source safety at the core.

Examples/Case Studies of investigative stories (if relevant)

In 2023, collaboration with Immanuel Foundation led to the story [“Scammed, Enslaved, Arrested: The Triple Tragedy of Thailand's Cyber Scam Victims”](#). The partnership provided access to survivors and key government officials, while highlighting the need to balance CSO narratives with state perspectives.

Further Reading/Resources

Full article; [How to: Collaborations with Civil Society Organizations as a Journalist](#)