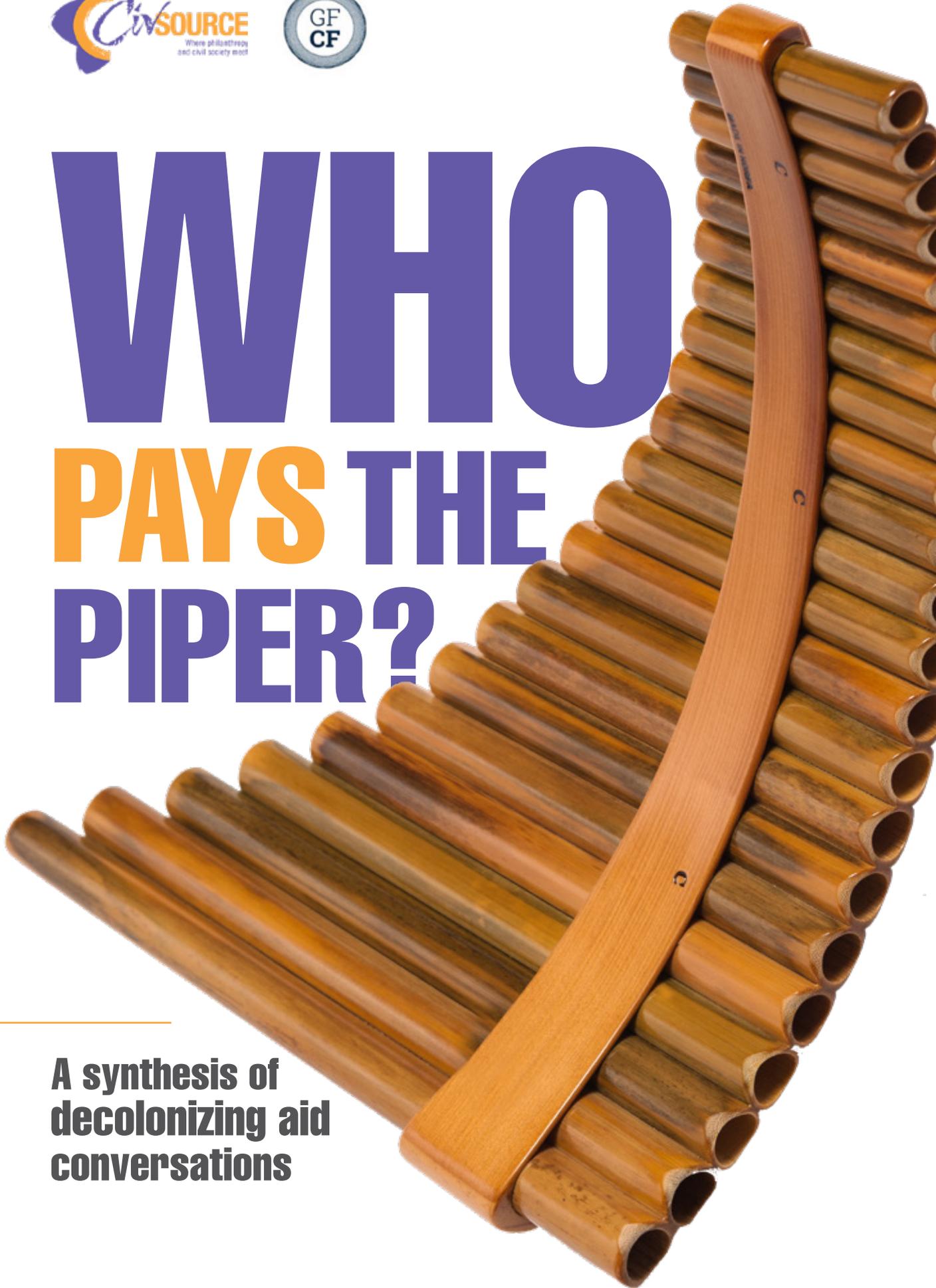




WHO PAYS THE PIPER?

**A synthesis of
decolonizing aid
conversations**





So now we just sing and wait for the lorry to approach us instead. The waiting is painful... After we sit, the man starts taking pictures with his big camera. They just like taking pictures, these NGO people, like maybe we are their real friends and relatives...They don't care that we are embarrassed by our dirt and torn clothing, that we would prefer they didn't do it; they just take the pictures anyway, take and take. We don't complain because we know that after the picture-taking comes the giving of gifts.

- An excerpt from 'We need new names' by NoViolet Bulawayo



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List of acronyms

CSA
INGOs
NGOs

CivSource Africa Limited
International Non-Governmental Organisations
Non-Governmental Organisations



Executive summary

CivSource Africa (CSA) is a feminist Pan African organisation that occupies the delicate space between philanthropy and civil society organising. By virtue of its placement, CSA has provided advisory services to donors (local and international) that are desirous of supporting civil society organisations in Uganda. Additionally, CSA has occupied the position of a funder applying feminist principles through its grantmaking arm, CivFund. From these positions, as an organisation we have been exposed to the issues of structural inequities, biases and racism within the international development aid sector which manifest as rigid conditionalities, short term funding, that plague aid earmarked for the African continent. These manifestations are underscored by traditional funding models which not only inhibit local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from addressing, meaningfully, the social gaps that they wish to, but also, strip local NGOs of their dignity by having their integrity and ability to manage funds questioned long before they are entrusted with any resources. The power imbalances exhibited between funders and local partners trickles down to the communities that are usually the end beneficiaries of these programs. We have witnessed the myriad ways in which colonial systems continue to manifest in civil society practice and organising, a case of the one paying the piper calling the tune.

It is against this backdrop that CSA curated conversations with local NGOs and INGOs working in Uganda in an introspection and soul searching exercise. This intervention targeted local and foreign civil society actors undertaking various social justice issues like land governance, women's rights, and natural resource rights. The conversations focused on the need to interrogate oppressive aid systems and reimagine different ways of undertaking aid. The general consensus among the participants was that the aid system as is is an impediment to realizing significant social change in the communities that are the so-called 'benefactors' of aid. This document is a synthesis of the six conversations that have taken place thus far. It is our aspiration to continue to use the space we occupy to have critical conversations about how we can transform donor-civil society relations and civil society organising in ways that do not perpetuate unhealthy power relationships. We hope to create tools to help the social justice field to (Re)humanise and decolonize the sector and our work.

Acknowledgments

This report has been prepared by a team of two - Olum Lornah Afoyomungu and Ainembabazi Madonna Vicky who also co-facilitated and served as rapporteurs for the workshops and convenings from which the primary meeting reports were derived. Additional support was rendered by Dr. Caroline Adoch, Malcolm Mпамizo, George Bogere, Lillian Tamale, and Bweme Antonio who offered extensive and excellent advice and all of whom also contributed to the review of the draft synthesis report.

The work was conducted under the keen guidance of Jacqueline Asimwe, the CEO, CivSource Africa, who charted the course of systems change work at the international NGO level before cascading the conversations to the Ugandan context with the boldness that is atypical of CivSource Africa.

The team greatly benefited from a range of consultations from various development and social justice stakeholders whose organisational or individual names will be withheld for confidentiality purposes due to the fairly sensitive nature of the disclosures made. Generally, and for context, the stakeholders span women's rights organisations, grassroots organisations, general civil society and land justice sectors. CivSource Africa wishes to thank participants in these workshops, videoconferences, and discussions, which included staff in country offices, researchers, staff of Non-Governmental Organisations with whom this has been possible.

The report design and production was undertaken by Stuart Nsingwire and ably coordinated by Ednah Rebecca Namugere.

Part I: Background and Introduction

The history of aid

Aid has a long-standing colonial history. To understand the aid system in the 21st century, it is pertinent to understand its colonial past. The wealth disparity between Africa and the Western world can be directly attributed to colonization following the Berlin Conference of 1884 - 1885. Colonization justified and enabled the extraction of resources in the form of slave labour and minerals to support the industrialization of the West. Upon flag independence, many African nations were plagued by poverty, disease, poor governance, and weak institutions mainly because of the violence of attaining independence. During the 1970s, aid was used to alleviate poverty on the continent through Poverty Reduction Initiatives.¹ This subsequently culminated in the development of the culture of aid as a solution to Africa's problems to date.²

Generally, there are three types of aid, that is, humanitarian or emergency aid, charity-based aid and systematic aid.³ Charity-based aid/philanthropy, the subject of this report, is aid 'disbursed by charitable organizations to institutions or people on the ground.'⁴ The very existence of aid therefore implies inequality.⁵ 'Poor people' and communities have inadvertently become the 'client group' of poverty alleviation initiatives.⁶ These initiatives centre a Eurocentric development agenda underscored by the racist narrative that Africans are Africa's biggest problem and that embedded in their natural DNA is the inability to develop on their own without external assistance and supervision.⁷ The institutionalization and replication of this narrative has created a culture of structural racism within the aid sector that affects local NGOs in their engagements with INGOs and other development partners.⁸

¹I.G Shivji, 'Reflections on NGOs in Tanzania: What we are, what we are not, and what we ought to be' *Development in Practice*, Vol. 14, No. 5, August 2004, 689-695.

²D Moyo (2009) *Dead Aid*, 24.

³As above, pg. 21.

⁴As above, pg. 21.

⁵L Groves & R Hinton (eds.) (2004) *Inclusive Aid: Changing power and relationships in international development*.

⁶As above, pg.6.

⁷D Moyo (2009) *Dead Aid*.

⁸Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation, A report by Peace Direct, Adeso, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, and Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security. Available at <https://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf> (accessed 19 January 2023).

Understanding decolonizing aid

Decolonization, in its primary definition, is the process of undoing colonization.⁹ It is a transformative social theory through which colonialism and its manifestations may be understood and countered.¹⁰

Recently though, decolonizing aid has been used by practitioners and academics as a framework for action to understand the monopoly, misuse, or abuse of power in the mainstream humanitarian sector.¹¹ It is a call for addressing issues of structural racism, power imbalances, and decentering Western power within the aid sector.¹²

While money channelled through philanthropic institutions can be used to bridge service provision gaps in poorer nations, it can also create harm if the institutions through which philanthropy is carried out maintain and reinforce the colonial design and social architecture with no regard for the local contexts. Decolonization is not a one-off event, rather, it is a continuous process that involves learning, unlearning, and relearning. Villanueva suggests the following seven steps to healing and decolonizing institutions and processes around money.¹³

a

Grieving and acknowledging the trauma caused and endured by colonized communities.

b

Apologizing for the hurt caused.

c

Listening to those systematically excluded and exploited by the system.

d

Relating with and respecting each other.

e

Representing by building new decision-making tables instead of settling for taken places,

f

Investing money in our value systems; and

g

Reparations: using money to heal and prevent further pain.

The steps laid out above are not linear and are not a quick fix to the complexity of the colonial system of aid. Pursuant to Villanueva's decolonisation model, CSA's intervention enabled listening, relating, grieving, representing, and using money to heal communities.

⁹E Villanueva (2018) Decolonizing wealth, pg. 33.

¹⁰C Ngwenya (2022) 'Decolonising Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights: Laying a foundation for an African-Centered Approach, A paper prepared for Ahaki Afya na Haki. Available at <https://www.afyanahaki.org/decolonising-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights/> (accessed 19 January 2023).

¹¹T Aloudat & T Khan, 'Decolonising humanitarianism or humanitarian aid?' PLOS BLOGS, July 13, 2021. Available at <https://speakingofmedicine.plos.org/2021/07/13/decolonising-humanitarianism-or-humanitarian-aid/> (accessed 19 January 2023).

¹²The call for a shift from harmful Eurocentric interventions and white saviourism is not new. There are a plethora of examples showing how harmful these interventions are. See, N White, The Independent, 'Amnesty International UK is 'colonialist and institutionally racist, damning inquiry concludes' 16 June 2022. Available at <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/amnesty-uk-inquiry-institutional-racism-b2102523.html>.

P Dodds, The New Humanitarian, 'Oxfam accused of 'rotten' work culture in Congo by former staff,' 6 April 2021. Available at <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2021/04/06/oxfam-accused-rotten-work-culture-congo-former-staff>.

T.P Bigirwa, Lawkena, 'If Black Lives Matter why has Renee Bach faced no consequences?' 18 June 2020. Available at <https://lakwena.org/2020/06/18/if-black-lives-matter-why-has-renee-bach-faced-no-consequences/>.

¹³E Villanueva (2018) Decolonizing wealth, 10.

The decolonizing aid conversations and consultations with local development stakeholders were carried out under various themes to situate the conversations. Two of the meetings were held under the theme “Reimagining donor-partner relations – a heart to heart,” while the rest were held under the themes, “Decolonisation: What’s in it for us?” and “Leveraging Donor Partnerships.” Each theme has its own meeting report. It is from these reports that this synthesis brings to the fore, the key manifestations of colonial tendencies in the funding terrain of development and social justice work in the Ugandan context as put forward by the participants in the consultations.

The report is based on six(6) decolonising aid consultations held in Uganda both in-person and online through the use of a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide consisted of eight (8) questions to which participants responded in a free-flowing manner. The responses were documented in six(6) meeting reports that form a source of the information from which the succeeding findings are derived.

The participants in the conversations were purposively selected through a simple random sampling technique from local and international non-governmental organisations, grassroots organisations, and civil society organisations involved in land governance, women’s rights and natural resource rights. The selected sample handles sensitive issues that have grave ramifications on governance, people and policy. Each conversation consisted of 13 to 20 participants per meeting, with a total of about 100 participants. This small sample size was chosen to facilitate in-depth discussions and ensure the representation of diverse perspectives within the sample population.

The findings from the International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) were derived from two (2) of the six (6) meeting reports. The initial session on anti-racism in development work held at the INGO level, a semi-structured interview guide methodology was utilised to elicit first-hand experiences, opinions, and recommendations from the participants. The second anti-racism meeting was conducted using the case study approach. In this case, one organisation shared their learnings in institutionalising and implementing anti-racism policies in their development work as an organisation from which the participants derived and shared opinions, experiences, and next steps

Problem analysis: Who calls the tune?

Given that aid flows from former colonial powers to formerly colonized regions; it is safe to assume that that power and resources are still concentrated in the Global North. It is therefore almost inevitable that Philanthropic institutions operating in the Global North today mirror the design and social architecture of colonialism through their attitudes and practices.¹⁴ Some of the manifestations include arbitrary limitations on overhead spending for local NGOs (usually 10%)¹⁵, complex grant application and reporting processes, exclusionary decision-making resulting in top-down grants, and short-term inflexible funds, among others. These practices have, unfortunately, become the norm within the development aid sector and local NGOs are forced to adapt to access funding, regardless that such funding would not result in significant social impact.¹⁶ They must dance to the piper's tune!

What, then, does rethinking the white supremacist organizational structures embedded in INGOs and other philanthropic institutions look like? The conversations tease out a reimagined future for aid underpinned by decolonial theory.

¹⁴T.P Birgirwa, Segal Family Foundation, 'Decolonization cannot be cosmetic: Moving the development industry beyond rhetoric', 15 March 2022. Available at <https://segalfamily.medium.com/decolonization-cannot-be-cosmetic-moving-the-development-industry-beyond-rhetoric-8f978e8349f2> (accessed 19 January 2023).

¹⁵K Opalo, 'Claims about USAID's localization agenda' 9 January 2022, An Africanist Perspective. Available at <https://kenopalo.substack.com/p/claims-about-usaids-localization> (accessed 25 January 2023).

¹⁶Birgirwa (n13 above).



**Part II:
Who dances to the
tune? - Experiences
from local development
partners**

The reports from the conversations held presented a pattern of four core manifestations of colonial tendencies in the funding landscape of the development and social justice sectors in Uganda as reported by the participants. Summarily, funders imposed stringent conditions, championed a Euro-centric development agenda with no modification to the local contexts, and did not provide sufficient funding for the administrative costs of the organisations they are funding. Additionally, it was found that funders operated in racist and patronising way while interacting with the organisations and held a deep mistrust for the organisations and the leaders. They also treated the organisations in ways that were devoid of dignity, a behavior that manifested in varying forms.

The succeeding paragraphs expound on the four common manifestations of said colonial tendencies in the funding landscape of Uganda's development and social justice sector as well as recommendations on how to address them, as suggested by the participants.

Manifestation 1: Restrictive Funding

Participants from all four categories of stakeholders reported restrictive funding as a common experience that typified their dealings with donors in the funding terrain of their development and social justice work. Restrictive funding was manifested in stringent funding conditions brought forward by participants in all four meetings. Some of the conditions identified included the requirement to return surplus funds at the end of the donor fiscal year, limited flexibility to permit budget reallocation or unplanned expenditure on the same project, limited or no funds directed to operational and administrative costs such as salaries and medical insurance for project staff, rigid, duplicative and frequent reporting requirements. Restrictive funding was also epitomised by rigorous and lengthy grant application processes and prerequisites, the asset and equipment return policies upon completion of the programs and projects, inflexible project durations even when no-cost extensions were requested and the short-term projects instead of long-term projects with more sustainable impact.

Restrictive funding led to organisations spending a significant amount of time on meeting reporting requirements, which took away from the implementation of project activities. Additionally, inadequate funding for administrative costs resulted in organisations being unable to afford, motivate or retain quality talent to carry out development projects. In other instances, the shortage of salaries meant the staff were overworked, often leading to burnout of development workers.

Manifestation 2: Imposition of Euro-centric development agenda in an African context.

The imposition of euro-centric development and social justice agendas presented in various ways. The participants cited the logical frames used in the monitoring and evaluation models, the predefined thematic scope of the projects the donors sought to fund - projects whose goals tended to differ from the needs on ground. The Euro-centric development agenda showed in the trainer-student mentality that donors had; requiring that staff working on their projects undertake mandatory project-specific training to enable them implement or report on these projects. It showed in the short project timelines and lack of flexibility in extending the duration of some projects. It showed in the calls for proposals which made organisations bend the needs of the community to align with the thematic scopes that prioritised the interests of the aid-providing nations and donors over those of the communities they sought to fund.

Manifestation 3: Racism and patronising behaviour of funders

Racism was depicted in divide and rule workplace politics - pitting Ugandans against each other to protect the interests of white donors. In one instance, donors were reported to have pitted Ugandan staff against one another through requesting investigations of fraud, which further eroded trust and damaged relationships amongst the staff to the ultimate detriment of development work. It was also displayed in the systematic indoctrination of Ugandans working for INGOs and donor institutions to treat fellow Ugandans in ways that perpetuated the undignifying treatment. Racism was depicted in exploitation of the labour of Ugandans in the development sector for the benefit of the aid-giving nation or organisation. This was through the provision of aid for the implementation of the project without factoring in salaries for the staff that were required to undertake the work. Further, there was a compensation disparity between expatriates from the aid-giving nations and the local consultants doing similar work in the communities which was attributed to have arisen from the racial stereotyping of Africans.

The participants decried the allocation of inadequate sums of aid to communities and causes that needed it the most. In one case, more funding was directed to easily accessible geographical areas and the hard-to-reach places overlooked. This decision had been justified by the difficulty in obtaining acceptable or formal receipt from suppliers in these areas - which donors preferred over cash acknowledgement forms.

Manifestation 4: Mistrust of local NGOs and grass-roots organisations

The participants in the study revealed that there existed a deep mistrust between donors and the NGOs and organisations they funded in Uganda. This mistrust manifested itself in various forms, such as the imposition of stringent financial reporting requirements, which were perceived as an indirect form of micromanagement that eliminated trust between donors and partners. The donors tended to operate with a presumption that local NGOs mismanage finances and are fraudulent. In light of this, the funders develop lengthy application processes with rigorous prerequisites in which NGOs have to prove a good track record among other things. The funders also policed the organisations in an attempt to enforce the implementation of the programs and projects, something that undermined the self-determination, good governance, agency and empowerment of the organisations.

Additional findings

While the synthesis focuses on the four common colonial manifestations that appeared in all four meetings with local stakeholders, we would like to point out that, there were other ways in which colonial tendencies manifested in these organisations beyond the common patterns expounded above.

These included failure on the part of funders to provide aid to the most marginalised and vulnerable communities and the ease with which funders can end relationships with the organisations without taking into account the sustainability of the work or the community left behind.

Collective recommendations addressing the key manifestations of colonial philanthropy

Our heavy reliance on aid continues to place development and social justice work in a precarious position in which the agenda can neither be determined nor advanced with the agency that would come with self-funding. Issa G. Shivji posits that it remains difficult to remain firm under the pressures of external funding and ultimately, whoever pays the piper calls the tune.¹⁷ With this understanding, we invited the participants to make recommendations that would counter the existing manifestations of colonialism in development aid.

Recommendations for local NGO action

- Cognizant of their unhealthy dependence on aid to undertake development work, the NGOs recommended that they adopt profit-making models such as social enterprises or offering paid-for services through which they could obtain the resources necessary to implement their objectives. This would be one step towards self-sustenance and sustainability of both the work and the organisations.
- The NGO participants also sought to shift their focus from foreign donors and tap into the power of local philanthropy.
- Pushback, renegotiate or say no to donors with restrictive funding and stringent terms.
- Dissociate the organisation's core activities and development plans from donor funding such that the organisation and communities' priorities are not overtaken by euro-centric development priorities.
- Pay at least one million shillings annually to the Uganda NGO Forum for them to advocate for the decolonization of aid for Uganda's development sector at global and international platforms.
- NGOs should reimagine alternative concepts of providing development interventions in the communities they serve to unlearn the logical frameworks that have been imposed on the sector over the years.

¹⁷Shivji (n1 above) 689.

Recommendations for Donors

- Donors should direct funding to the areas that need it the most; both geographically and thematically.
- Adopt multiyear (long-term) partnerships rather than short-term projects for more impactful and effective development interventions.
- Consider the administrative costs required to implement the work prescribed in the grants such as salaries, rent, medical insurance, and security costs.
- Commit to better communication with development partners in the global south – communication that is not only invoked to penalise NGOs in instances of non-compliance with stringent terms, but to also build relationships where feedback can be given and taken by both parties.
- Adopt flexible, trust-based funding.
- Global South development aid actors should resist emulating western-based practices of carrying out philanthropy. If we define and measure philanthropy in colonial/western ways, then we create colonial philanthropy.
- Decolonization of development aid should expand to cover language, power and behaviour. Language: Linguistic imperialism that others and reinforces the Global North as well as the epistemic hierarchies that place Western knowledge at the top of thought leadership and viewed as the sole custodians of knowledge should be changed. Most global development discourses are conducted in English, French or Spanish, none of these are inclusive of the rich dialects from the Global South.¹⁸ The metaphors used like “capacity-building”, “beneficiaries”, “grantees”, “expats” bare biases of Western superiority within development aid.
- There is a need for mindfulness to ensure that decolonial praxis is not applied as a one size fits all, rather, that there is recognition of the context in local giving systems that are not a part of the philanthropy industry.
- Localisation of INGOs should go beyond merely moving INGO offices to the Global South while reciprocating colonial social architecture such as having white people or people from the Global North heading these organisations.

¹⁸A Hendrix-Jenkins, “It’s time to put an end to supremacy language in international development”. available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/its-time-to-put-an-end-to-supremacy-language-in-international-development/> (accessed 02 November).

Recommendations for Philanthropy Support Organisations

- Accelerate the dialogue: PSOs should convene these discussions with INGOs and donors for two-way dialogue to change the course of development aid.
- Propel the conversations: It was recommended that smaller and more reflection meetings be held to raise the consciousness of colonialism in aid amongst local organisations. These meetings would also serve to provide ideological clarity and cast a shared vision of a new era of better aid and effective development work amongst local development stakeholders.
- Research and writing on the subject were encouraged to spread this message of change and bring to light the realities of how aid has been experienced over time.
- Empower civil society leaders to push back against restrictive and colonial grantmaking models.



Part III: Who calls the tune? - Experiences from International Non-Governmental Organisations

At the INGO level, two meetings were held. The first was an introductory meeting to chart the course for future meetings discussing anti-racism in development work at INGO level and a brief sharing of experiences of racism by professionals in the sector. The second was a knowledge sharing session in which one of the INGOs shared best practices they had adopted to address racism internally and externally which later prompted participants to share their experiences of racism and where they stood in dealing with it. This report shares our key findings and one core manifestation of racism that was shared by the participants, the best practices INGOs are employing to address it and recommendations for further action.

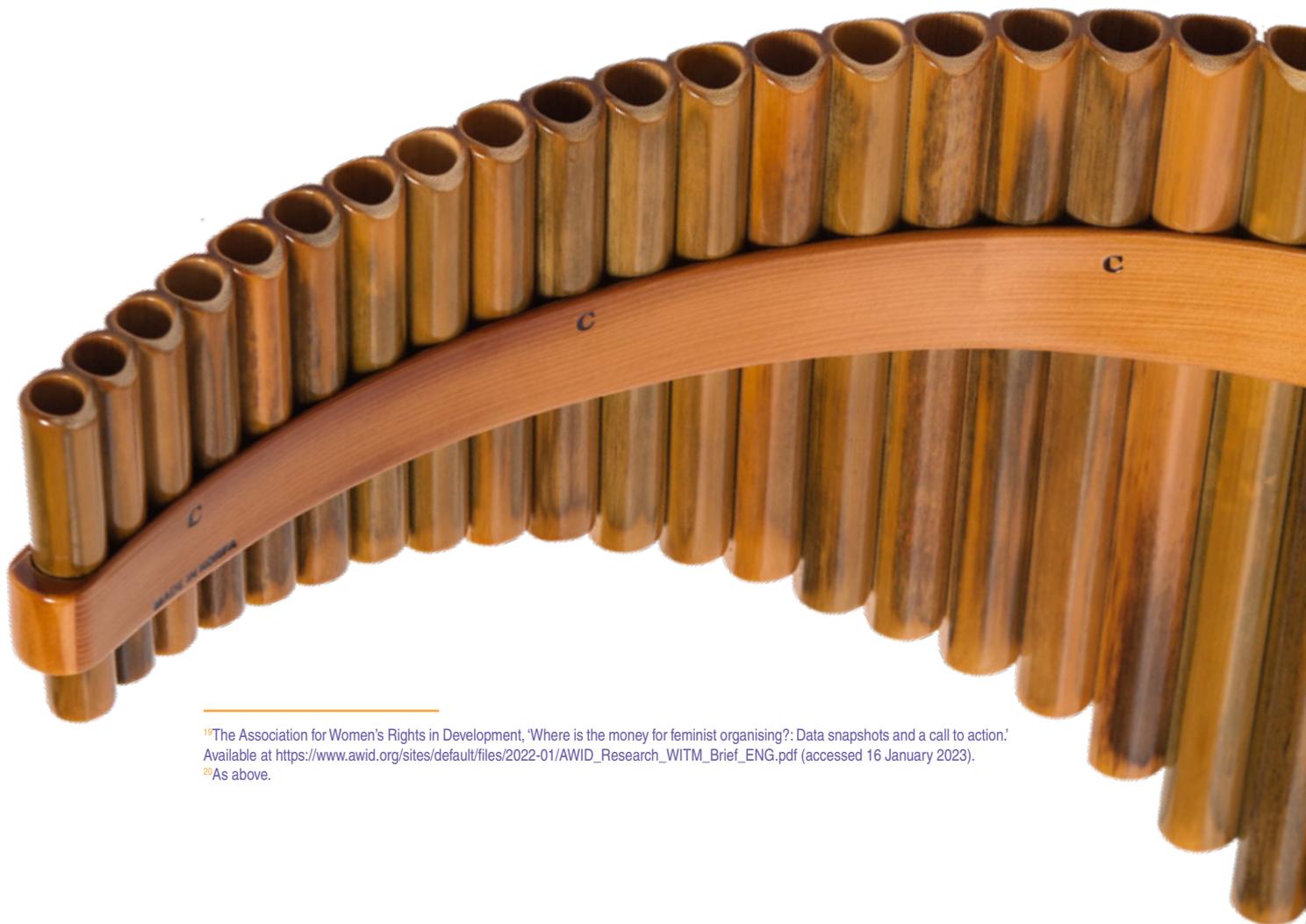
Manifestation 1: Predominance of white leadership in development agencies in the Global South

The manifestation of racism within development agencies that provide funding to the global south was observed in the form of a predominance of white individuals occupying leadership positions within these organisations. One participant observed that top leadership positions within these organisations appeared to be reserved exclusively for white individuals, with African leaders occupying lower-level roles. While this has gradually changed over time, it remains a prevalent characteristic of development agencies and INGOs to be led by white individuals. Flowing from this, INGOs also witnessed discriminatory tendencies in the form of a remuneration disparity between expatriate staff and domestic staff even in roles that were similar or in staff with matching competence with the former being paid more than the latter. While these observations were made, the underlying causes of these disparities were not explored further, leaving open the possibility that they may be rooted in both the predominantly white leadership and racial stereotyping of African development professionals as lacking the necessary competence.

Positive examples and best practices:

In recognition of the impact of white supremacy and structural racism in international development aid, some of the INGO actors have taken a number of steps to address these issues institutionally, for instance by:

- Adopting a global framework based on feminist principles. Data from the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) indicates that women's rights organisations receive only 0.13% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and 0.4% of all gender-related aid.¹⁹ Additionally, only 0.42% of foundation grants are allocated towards women's rights.²⁰ This gap in funding can be closed by providing funding that aligns with feminist principles and seeks to bridge the funding gap that excludes marginalized communities.
- Passing board resolutions to address racism.
- Creating awareness among those working in the INGOs to be mindful of implicit and explicit biases.
- A group of INGO leaders in Uganda have created an Anti-racism & Social Justice Sub-Committee to address matters of structural racism in undertaking development aid.



¹⁹The Association for Women's Rights in Development, 'Where is the money for feminist organising?: Data snapshots and a call to action.' Available at https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/AWID_Research_WITM_Brief_ENG.pdf (accessed 16 January 2023).

²⁰As above.

Reflections on this journey

It is worthwhile noting that the move towards shifting the power within the aid sector is not a new one. There are several other organisations, locally, regionally, and internationally that have been involved in the move towards decolonising aid. We were privileged, during the course of the year, to engage in several webinars and spaces curated to facilitate these conversations. These meetings enabled institutional learning that significantly inspired and enabled us to host these decolonising aid conversations. Organisations like the NGO Forum in Uganda, Alliance Magazine, Catalyst 2030 and the African Philanthropy Network Conference (November 2022) for instance curated discussions around shifting the power from the Global North to communities in the Global South through the years. The #ShiftThePower hashtag introduced in 2016 subsequently led to the #ShiftThePower Manifesto whose overarching objective is to facilitate a move away from the top-down systems of international development and philanthropy and towards equitable/people-based development heavily influenced these conversations as well.

While undertaking this work, we have come to appreciate the depth of our personal conditioning as well as that of the staff, leadership, and organisations that participated in the conversations. We become more aware of the extent to which our own personal perspectives and those of the staff, leadership, and organisations involved in the discussions have been shaped by existing norms and practices of aid. The deeply ingrained ways in which development and aid are approached have created a level of rigidity and discomfort when contemplating alternative approaches.

It was on this premise that we modified the last conversation we held in this series to spur the imagination of participants through what we referred to as a “What if” segment. Through this session, we sought to foster greater creativity and encourage participants to consider more radical possibilities of reform in the sector. Our findings indicated that the stringent conditions attached to grants had created a routine and set of rules that organisations, staff, and leaders had grown familiar with, resulting in responses that focused on improving current systems rather than imagining fundamentally new ways of addressing the present challenges faced by the social justice and development sector.

A risk-averse perspective tended to characterise the initial parts of the conversations held. In one way, the heavy reliance on aid by NGOs made it difficult to criticise the proverbial hand that feeds them. In other ways, the risk aversion showed up in the fear of losing the little aid they had while trying to renegotiate or pushing back against a donor's stringent grant conditions. From our perspective as a philanthropy support organisation facilitating these conversations, we grew more conscious of the privilege with which we came to this conversation and the power dynamics at play due to our position as funders through the funding arm of CivSource Africa. To mitigate any risk, we ensured the anonymity of the participants and organisations while drafting the meeting reports, referring to them only by sector to avoid any negative consequences from their funders.

CivSource Africa's mission is to refine the practice of philanthropy and the footprint of civil society in Africa. The findings of this study present CivSource with an opportunity to further the work of systems change by organising more series of reimagining aid and the financial systems of aid across various social justice focus areas ahead of a Funder-NGO Symposium on the decolonization of aid. Further to that, the conversations held presented the need to demonstrate alternative funding models that have already been adopted by progressive funders. By CivSource Africa providing a platform for these funders to model alternatives and share their learning, we could deal with the conditioning and risk-averse attitudes that were presented in some of the INGOs and NGOs we interacted with. Our objective is to move beyond the mere exchange of experiences and towards a greater sense of accountability and shared responsibility for transforming oppressive aid systems within the development and social justice sectors in Uganda. As we pursue this objective, we also aim to disseminate our findings and contribute to the national and continental effort to shift power dynamics and decolonize aid.

Conclusion

Knight criticises the fact that the field of development and philanthropy is poor at managing knowledge thus jumping into fads and fashions without being aware that each of them has a history.²¹

The problem, as postulated in the conversations held and the reports documented, highlight the shortcomings of international development aid structures currently justifying the need for a fundamental shift in the way aid is delivered and evaluated. While a close-up examination may show that aid has worked, there is a need for an overarching interrogation of the systems that enable international development aid actors, INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, communities, and governments to appreciate the need for a shift of power to the communities that are in closest proximity to the social issues they seek to resolve in the long run.

To walk the talk of this shift, it is crucial to critically apply decolonial theory and praxis within international development aid. This includes shifting away from centralized procedures, valuing alternative resources such as indigenous knowledge, time, human and material resources, and allowing communities to lead their own development. Additionally, there must be a willingness to unlearn the Western concept of development and challenge the notion that it should be perceived as universal. Instead, recognize and value alternative perspectives and approaches to development, change the direction of accountability by shifting it away from centralized systems and towards the communities that are affected by social issues. It is ultimately pertinent that we adopt a long-term goal of making international development aid finite with the purpose of solving the structural causes of poverty and social justice issues to ultimately eliminate the need for handouts. The measurement of the effectiveness of aid therefore, should move from how much money was disbursed or spent to whether there has been a significant contribution towards long-term, sustainable growth for people and for the communities in which they live.

²¹B Knight, 'Systems to #ShiftThePower' Global Fund for Community Foundations. Available at <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SystemsToShiftThePower.pdf> (accessed 4 October 2022).

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2. Edgar Villanueva (2018) *Decolonizing wealth*.
3. Leslie Groves & Rachel Hinton (eds.) (2004) *Inclusive Aid: Changing power and relationships in international development*.

Papers, reports, blogs

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Annex 1 - List of Meetings Held

1. Decolonisation: What's in it for us?
2. Reimagining Donor-Partner Relations in Grassroots Organisations:
A heart-to-heart.
3. Leveraging donor Partnerships
4. Anti-Racism & Social Justice in Aid and Development
5. Anti-Racism & Social Justice
6. Reimagining Donor-Partner Relations in the Land Justice Sector:
A heart-to-heart.

