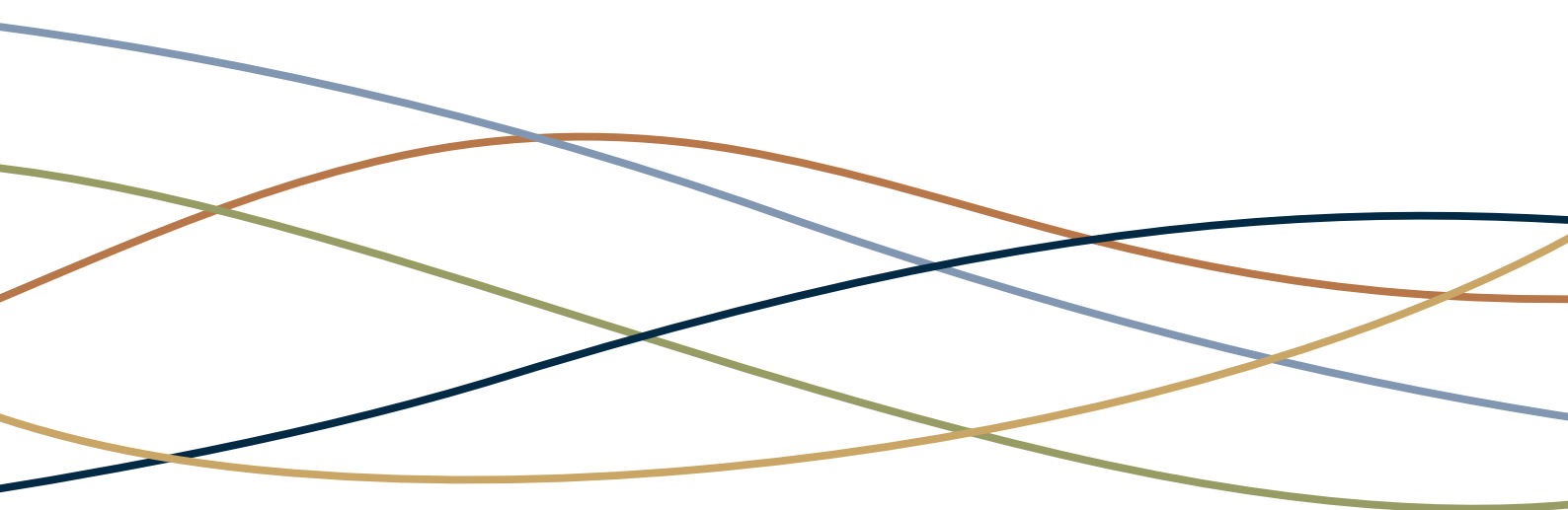


Envisioning an Alternative Ecosystem for Global Development and Humanitarianism

Consultation Series #1

Responses from Community Organizations from the Global South

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Supported by:



Background

Envisioning an Alternative Ecosystem for Global Development and Humanitarianism was published in September 2023 with the support of the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, Australia.¹ The goal of this concept paper was to try and devise a more tangible way of addressing global inequality and development beyond the oft-repeated, but vague calls and programmes for the ***“decolonization”*** and ***“localization”*** of aid and development and ***“shifting the power”*** from the Global North to the Global South.

The concept paper laid out a framework which:

1. Removed the distinctions between governments, donors, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc. to view all actors working in global development and humanitarianism as ***“State and Civil Society Entities”*** or SCSEs.
2. Removed ***“international”*** from the vocabulary and viewed all countries as equal and global in scale.
3. Removed the distinction between the so-called² ***“Global North”*** and the ***“Global South”*** to move towards a more regional perspective.

The concept paper concluded by calling for a series of feedback loops and / or consultations with the following, in this order of importance:

1. National governments of the Global South.
2. Civil society organizations (CSOs) – both independent and coalition-based groups – in the Global South.
3. Multilateral and bilateral donors in the Global North.
4. Philanthropic and charitable donors in both the Global North and Global South.

Following this, the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) collaborated to support the author in realizing consultations with CSOs in the Global South – the second

set of feedback loops in the priority list above. As a coalition of community philanthropy organizations in the Global South and founders of the #ShiftThePower movement, the GFCF was able to draw on its vast network to make introductions. This report summarizes those consultations.

¹ The complete paper is available to download [here](#).

² The concept paper refers to the Global North and Global South as “so-called” due to the challenges posed to the terminology, its creation and interpretation. This geographic distinction, the most commonly used, is seen as greatly problematic as it forcibly creates a single line between continents, regions and nations, based on a Eurocentric understanding of wealth and power. Many countries in the so-called Global South actually do not qualify to be placed under this category, as their wealth and political status is similar to many countries in the so-called Global South. As a result, it is clear that this distinction is arbitrary and inappropriate. For further elaboration, see; [Khan et al, How we classify countries and people – and why it matters, BMJ Global Health, 2022.](#)

Methodology

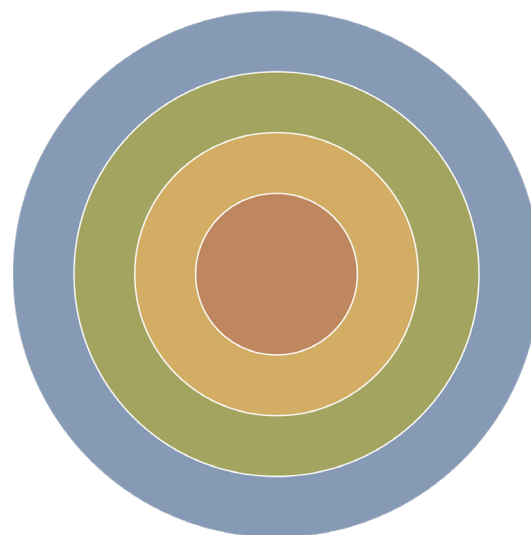
The consultations were based on a set of interviews conducted with a select set of grassroots community philanthropy organizations in various regions of the Global South. These organizations were identified with the help of GFCF and its network of partners, via an open call placed by the GFCF, and the author's own professional network. The GFCF also facilitated introductions to #ShiftThePower Fellows, individuals working with CSOs in different parts of the world selected for support through the GFCF's annual Fellowship scheme. A number of #ShiftThePower Fellows also participated in a focus group discussion on the concept paper.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted with representatives of community organizations. Two group discussions were held with #ShiftThePower Fellows. These were conducted between October and November 2023 (see Annex 1 for the full list of respondents). The concept paper was circulated among all respondents in advance for their review.

The interviews and groups discussions were all conducted online using Zoom. Four key concepts that framed the overall paper were shared with respondents and were used to guide the discussions:

1. Those working in global development and humanitarianism are holistic entities instead of being compartmentalized into different categories, for example, government, NGO, INGO, community-based, etc.
2. Countries as the core of change and entities within these countries as the drivers of that change.
3. Regional partnerships driving cooperation and funding.
4. A complete change in funding sources/ diversification into non-conventional forms where donor funding may or may not be only one form of funding.

The Radiating Core of Global Impact³



- Global impact/effect
- Regions: Africa, Europe, North America, etc.
- Sub-Regions: Carribean, East Asia, Eastern Europe, Middle East, South Asia, West Africa, etc.
- Country(ies) and independent states

³ Source: Khan, T; Envisioning a new Ecosystem for Global Development and Humanitarianism; Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, Australia (2023).

Responses

Responses received to these four concepts formed the crux of the feedback loop from community and civil society organizations in this consultation, as follows.⁴

Organizations as more inclusive / holistic entities (SCSEs)

“Progressive social movements facilitate change. Not governments.”

Madonna Vicky Ainembabazi, CivSource Africa / 2023-2024 #ShiftThePower Fellow, Uganda

The intention of this concept was to broaden the understanding and definition of “**organization**” and make it more inclusive. The term State and Civil Society Entities (SCSEs) was tentatively coined with the emphasis being on the word “**entity**” to indicate the inclusion of not just structured, formal groups, but also informal citizens movements and other groupings.

Respondents had varied opinions on the terms, with most agreeing on the semantics, saying that the terminology was more in line with where most organizations reside, i.e. in the Global South, and had the potential to reduce the power imbalances implicit in the current terminology.

Some key points raised include the importance of considering both individuals and organizations as entities, as individuals are usually ignored in discussions around formality / informality. Some raised concerns about the challenges of implementing such a concept at the nation-state level. They also sought clarity on the definition of SCSEs and whether it could include the private sector, and entities such as the International Federation of the Red Cross and the World Bank.

Other more specific points raised by respondents included:

Social movements – and formal / informal entities

Respondents emphasized the importance of including social movements as “**entities**”, they are often not seen as civil society actors in their own right, rather simply as means to an end. However, some respondents questioned whether a

[formal] organization would be able to stay true to the roots of a social movement, if the organization began in that way.

One respondent cited the example of the women’s movement in Latin America as the region’s strongest and most relevant social process – and one that was created by different generations, formal and informal organizations, groups and collectives. Some 35% of women’s organizations in the region are considered to be informal,⁵ according to Florencia Roitstein of ELLAS Mujeres y Filantropía, a 2023-2024 #ShiftThePower Fellow from Argentina.

Donors and social movements

An important observation made by respondents was that donors are now also interested in funding social movements, who are themselves also looking for resources – but one respondent, Cecilia Melisi of the Global Change Center, Argentina, said that movements should view these approaches with caution: “**The premise should be for social movements to use these resources to start a conversation, not (for the movements) to project-ize themselves like NGOs did 30 years ago [when they began receiving funds from external donors.]**”

“**Give each entity a responsibility. For example, entities may become auditors.**” This was the view of Elizaphan Ogechi of Kenya’s Nguzo Africa Community Foundation and a 2022-2023 #ShiftThePower Fellow. This would allow domestic entities to take over the role of auditing funds and approaches, which is currently only done by external donors.

Applying the term in practice

Respondents raised concerns about the challenges of adopting the use of the term SCSEs at the nation-state level because of all the various political challenges that nations face. Some respondents noted that there were many movements that are now questioning issues such as nationhood, and asked whether they would fit into the definition of SCSEs? Respondents raised concerns that unless SCSEs are financially independent they won’t be successful – and how can they become self-reliant? Distrust between governments and civil society in many countries was also a challenge to the goal of creating the inclusivity that the term envisions.

⁴ This section presents only the respondents own views to the concepts and questions asked. The authors’ own analysis to these responses is presented in Section IV of this paper, “Common threads.”

⁵ Building the field of philanthropy and gender justice in Latin America and the Caribbean; Andrés Thompson and Florencia Roitstein; ELLAS Mujeres y Filantropía, September 2022 (Spanish) https://www.ellasfilantropia.org/_files/ugd/c4d5a2_69b28842bfcc49f49b46d0d39778949f.pdf

There was also the fear – which was also articulated in the concept paper – that entities can become very big when they have multiple funding sources, thus replicating the current power structures we are trying to dismantle.

Clarifying the definition

Respondents sought greater clarity in terms of who could (or should) be included in the definition of SCSEs, such as the private sector, and bodies like the International Federation of the Red Cross and the World Bank. Amjad Mohammad Saleem of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, Switzerland, noted that this was particularly relevant as organizations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent claim to be a local entity in different countries. Some questioned whether the World Bank could be an **“entity”** in this new ecosystem. Infrastructure development such as the construction of dams and wells, or road repair, is the responsibility of governments – but **“entities”** like the World Bank sometimes take over these functions in many countries of the Global South. **“What does that make them?”** asked Elizaphan Ogechi of the Nguzo Africa Community Foundation, a 2022-2023 #ShiftThePower Fellow from Kenya.

Respondents also pointed out that civil society cannot do the work alone. Governments have to be involved in the discourse. Ambika Satkunanathan of the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, Sri Lanka, cited the pressure put on the Sri Lankan government by the European Union, which withdrew its (controversial) anti-terrorism bill twice.

Countries as the core of change

“Many of our nation states were not of our own doing.”

Jackie Asimwe, CivSource Africa, Uganda

The second concept that was discussed with respondents and the groups was countries as the core of change, viewing nations as the central location and driver of change, supported by their own domestic SCSEs. This would mean the country where the development is happening would be the central actor, rather than the driver being a global institution or organization based in the Global North (or the Global South). By and large, respondents agreed with the concept of the country as the driver for change.

Other points raised by respondents included:

How different countries’ approaches vary

Several respondents observed that different countries might vary in their suitability to drive change. Okore Emmanuel Chinonso of Médecins Sans Frontières, Rwanda, cited the example of Rwanda, which has a framework and policy that informs external organizations – meaning that their plans

and programmes must conform to the National Strategic Plan if they are to operate in the country. By contrast, the Nigerian government is less concerned with regulating or auditing INGOs operating in the country. This effectively gives INGOs much greater freedom to implement their own plans and programmes. Likewise, a government standing order on disaster management in Bangladesh now allows space for Bangladeshi civil society to coordinate amongst each other and with the government on disaster management, according to Ehsanur Rahman of the National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors Bangladesh, Bangladesh.

Challenges of working with national governments

Many of the respondents acknowledged that there are many issues that affect the capacity of countries in the Global South to be at the core of change. Nations are often the source of many malpractices, many suffer from weak governance and lack of trust in civil society. Furthermore, who would drive change within a given country? Gunjan Veda of the Movement for Community-led Development, United States feared that viewing nations as the sole locus of change could be highly problematic and risky. Many countries in the Global South have deep-rooted biases and inequalities that are a mix of historical and colonial systems, which control their current governance systems. The real drivers of change are in fact those associated with community processes. Gunjan said: **“The unit of decision-making and thought lies with the community and the local government, rather than the national government.”**

Another respondent pointed out the challenges within countries, such as when provinces don’t often work together, so coordinating – for instance – disaster management at a national level becomes problematic. Similarly, one respondent was of the view that while Latin America is a vibrant hub for regional social movements, it was hard to see change really being driven (by national governments). Florencia Roitstein of ELLAS Mujeres y Filantropía, Argentina, and a 2023-2024 #ShiftThePower Fellow said: **“INGOs always viewed Argentina as a developed country so never really gave aid to the country. But that isn’t the reality (given the country’s current economic situation: 50% of the population is poor). Argentina has a huge IMF debt it is unable to repay, so they (the IMF) are running the show.”**

Structural challenges facing Global South countries

One respondent observed that governments in the Global South have been trying to meet their own development needs since the end of the Second World War, but that they continue to face enormous political and structural challenges, often not of their own making. Where many countries in the Global South have tried in the past to assert themselves they have been met with resistance from more powerful national and global actors. **“In 1986, the Ugandan President tried to barter trade with countries around them to rebuild**

a war-ravaged economy. He was laughed out of town,” said Jackie Asiimwe of CivSource Africa, Uganda. However, Kamala Chandrakirana of Indonesia for Humanity, Indonesia argued that the principle of universality – with certain values protected by all countries – and transnationalism were critical if countries were to be successful in leading change.

The challenge with sustaining change

Another very important observation made was that countries are a good place to start the process of internal change, but are countries the right place to keep change going? Is the country leadership conscious of what needs to be done? Country contexts also vary dramatically, making it hard to generalize this concept. Magdalena Pocheć of Poland’s FemFund, and a 2023-2024 #ShiftThePower Fellow, gave a personal example: **“Poland was a very young democracy in 1989 with a lot of money coming into the country in the 1990s. But in the 2000s, when the country joined the European Union (EU), everyone left and EU funding was tricky. This had a huge impact on civil society as the philanthropic sector wasn’t very invested in the long-term, and a country like Poland was not seen as a needy country.”**

Regional partnerships driving cooperation and funding

“One of the challenges of regional blocs is that most African boundaries are artificial. So there is a strong mistrust between countries. Ethnicity, regionalism and nationality are all barriers to regionalism.”

Robert White, Tilitonse Foundation / 2022-2023 #ShiftThePower Fellow, Malawi

The third concept focused on the region – the next layer out from individual countries – as having the potential to expand and enhance the scale of change and cooperation. Regional partnerships could drive up the scale of change within individual countries as well as leverage multi-country collaborations. Respondents were divided on the topic of regionalism and regional partnerships – with most expressing skepticism.

Positive potential of regionalism

Some recognized that regional cooperation is an effective mechanism for holding individual countries to account, with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union cited as examples. Regional approaches have potential benefits in terms of cost-

effectiveness (when compared with global cooperation).

The case against regionalism

However, the arguments against regionalism were many. Referring to the Middle East, Yegana Guliyeva, an independent humanitarian aid professional from Azerbaijan, noted the apparent absence of regional solidarity in driving regional solutions, with relatively wealthy countries such as Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, etc. failing to step up to address economic and political issues within the region.⁶ Similarly, other respondents observed that regional blocs – such as ECOWAS – were perhaps more beneficial for governments than they were in fostering civil society regional cooperation.

Regions can be both positive and negative

For some, the view on regionalism was mixed – with the potential to support national development or even limit it. Loreine B. Dela Cruz of the Center for Disaster Preparedness, Philippines, used the example of the Asia-Pacific region, where sub-regional levels within the larger region, such as Southeast Asia, have effective regional networks and have developed positive strategies and dialogues. However, some countries within the region, such as the Pacific States, have often been overlooked and excluded from regional and sub regional support structures.

Diversification of funding sources and non-conventional forms of funding

“What can be the incentive for the development / humanitarian workers in the Global South to push for the change in the system when there is comfort with the money coming in?”

Soni Khanal, Accountability Lab Nepal / 2023-2024 #ShiftThePower Fellow, Nepal

The final concept was a complete shift in financial / funding sources, specifically with a view to moving beyond traditional donor funding into more diverse and domestic forms of financing. Respondents cited a number of financial sources that are not usually considered part of development funding: including diaspora contributions, community and local assets, and local philanthropy.

⁶ The apparent indifference of wealthy Middle Eastern and Muslim countries to the current war in Palestine since the events of October 7, 2023 have, for instance, garnered a great deal of criticism about lack of solidarity within the Middle East.

Diaspora remittances

Several respondents noted that diaspora remittances have enormous potential and yet are not being explored sufficiently. ***“Evidence about African diaspora remittances [shows] that we can fund our own humanitarian responses (but) we have become too complacent because of the easy money coming from the Global North,”*** said Okorie Emmanuel Chinonso of Médecins Sans Frontières, Rwanda.

Community and local resources

Meanwhile others observed that while communities invariably respond to crises in both cash and in-kind, this is simply not considered as a resource by the larger global development community. One respondent argued for the importance of developing accounting systems that can recognize all kinds of resources, including and especially local ones. Others agreed, noting that the current system is governed by a unilateral flow of money which does not consider ***“small monies.”***

The need to foster entrepreneurship and create an asset base amongst organizations was also seen as important by respondents to the identity and survival of their organizations. Local fundraising, the creation of local assets, social enterprises, endowments, etc. were all given as examples by respondents of how organizations could generate their own income to exit the cycle of donor dependence. Charitable and philanthropic giving was also a possible way, but this was dependent on a number of cultural factors. For instance, one respondent gave the example of Ghanaians who give mostly for / to religious causes and reasons.

“If we fundraise for an advocacy issue it is seen as a contradiction to societal norms. People give towards disaster not advocacy” said Lamantu Adam of Songtaba, Ghana.

Broadening the definition of resources

Finally, several respondents observed that money is just one type of resource, and that part of the problem is that the current system fails to recognize the multiple kinds of resources that exist. Changing the definition of what constitutes a ***“resource”*** is an important first step, not least to avoid the replication of the existing system. They felt strongly about the concept of ***“resources”*** for development needing to be expanded to include such ***“small monies”***, as well as local entrepreneurship and community agency. What we cannot quantify is what communities want. What are the other strands required for development other than money? ***“Pre-independence movements were about agency, not money. Can we go back to that past?”*** asked Jackie Asiimwe of CivSource Africa, Uganda.

Common threads

There were a number of common threads that emerged from the discussions that could assist in better framing the ideas in the concept paper. These are as follows:

a) Contextualization

Context was seen to be the biggest defining factor in how things might work in the new ecosystem. This was particularly so in the discussion around the need for aid versus the end of aid, the latter being a preferred outcome outlined in the concept paper. Some felt that there were countries that still needed aid because they were unable to manage on their own. Others shared examples of their struggles for liberation in countries like Indonesia and East Timor, which would not have been possible without external support. ***“For us the struggle for the national was only possible because of the support of the international,”*** said Kamala Chandrakirana of Indonesia for Humanity, Indonesia. There is also the need for a clear distinction to be made between development aid and humanitarian programming. Development aid must be contextualized within the smaller and more tightly defined space of donor and INGO / NGO programming, while humanitarian aid exists within the larger context of national governance and overall democracy such as the struggle for national liberation and democratic transition in many countries.

b) Geopolitics

This was an issue that many raised and which also closely ties into the idea of contextualization. Respondents were divided as to whether geopolitics should (or could) be kept out of the conversation: some thought that the geopolitical aspects of aid were notably missing in many global aid frameworks and initiatives, while others were concerned that geopolitics should not be mixed with, for example, humanitarian aid. Those in the humanitarian sector however, felt that humanitarians are not politicians. ***“We should not mix geopolitics with aid,”*** said Marie-Rose Romain Murphy of the Haiti Community Foundation, Haiti.

c) Shrinking civic space

This was another key issue that kept resurfacing during the discussions and was probably the most common of all the threads. Shrinking civic space was observed in Malawi as well as in Bangladesh, where certain government bureaucracies have begun to question the need for civil society,⁷ according to Ehsanur Rahman of the National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors Bangladesh, Bangladesh. So the question then arises, how can a movement empower and support civil society to grow if states are controlling organizations and the civic space more broadly? This question relates to concept two – countries as the core of change. Others noted competition and unequal power dynamics within civil society, with larger non-local organizations squeezing out local in-country organizations. MacBain Mkandawire of Youth Net and Counselling, Malawi, cited the example of a loophole in the law in Malawi which allows INGOs, such as Population Services International, to register as a local organization. In these cases, organizations have access to international resources and can also compete with local organizations for in-country resources. This practice not only takes away space from organizations in Malawi, but also negates the concept of **“localization”** as the **“international”** once again takes the place of the **“local.”**

d) Role of INGOs

The contested role of INGOs came up time and again: their identity, objectives and purpose. Some questioned the idea in the concept paper of removing the **“I”** from INGOs. For instance, one respondent claimed that there were some organizations in Kenya which worked outside the country as well, which would award them **“international”** status. So you cannot just remove the **“I.”** Others said that this idea was predicated on the assumption that both INGOs and in-country organizations want the same thing and that there is no difference between those types of entities. However, there are many important distinctions, one of which is that civil society organizations are there to hold their governments to account. By merging the two types of entities, it becomes impossible to do this, and so it is vital that civil society organizations retain their independence from government interference and Global North INGO control. Others raised questions regarding how important INGOs actually were from the perspective of developing countries. For instance, in Latin America, Global North INGOs played a secondary role regarding the women’s rights agenda and the feminist movement in the region. Instead, **“There is a**

deep citizen’s commitment and mobilization vis-à-vis social issues. Most of the people are ready to go to the streets to demonstrate,” said Florencia Roitstein of ELLAS Mujeres y Filantropía, and a 2023-2024 #ShiftThePower Fellow, Argentina. Others claimed that the challenge with Global North INGOs was not so much their international nature but rather their relative power, where they are positioned at the top of the pile and local civil society organizations at the bottom. **“INGOs were part of this movement before they became the establishment,”** said Marie-Rose Romain Murphy of the Haiti Community Foundation, Haiti.

e) Humanitarianism and development

This is an extremely important point that the concept paper also addresses. Humanitarianism and development are not two different things. They are inextricably related and should not be separated. Any humanitarian intervention must also be seen as a development intervention and help prepare a country against a crisis. Likewise, development should prepare a country for – and help during – a humanitarian crisis. At the moment, both seem to be operating in silos separate from each other.

f) Movement building

The sustainability of movements was another important issue raised in the consultation. Movements can create the vision for change but, as one respondent commented, they cannot necessarily exist indefinitely. Furthermore, the institutionalization of movements comes with its own challenges, such as the extent to which an organization can remain true to its roots and its founding ethos. Some respondents were of the view that movements cannot be successful, if the financial support to them comes from the Global North, since that would dictate their approach and objectives. That is why it is imperative that movement building be created and sustained by those who the movement represents, i.e. affected communities.

Several issues of note which would benefit from further explanation also emerged from the discussions. These are as follows:

- The importance of clarifying key terms like **“grantmaker”**, **“donor”** and **“philanthropy”**, which often get bundled together as synonyms. What is the source of funding, for example, (donors

⁷ The recent conviction of Grameen Bank’s Founder and Nobel Laureate, Mohammad Yunus, by the Bangladesh government on grounds of violating labour laws, is an example of this. In a unique twist of fate, Yunus is now the Interim Leader of Bangladesh after the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who had imprisoned Yunus in the first place. It was Bangladeshi citizens and citizen groups that led to the ousting of the government.

and philanthropy can be local and external) and what kind of power comes with it? In the same way, grantmakers can be entirely dependent on, and directed by, a single source of money or they can operate in a participatory manner, both in the sources of their funding (external and local) and how decisions are made. This is important because there is a growing network of Southern grant makers that reject the notion of intermediary or foreign source and rely mostly on local resources to fund communities in the Global South.

- The importance of applying an expanded notion of **“resources”** that is about more than just money. Multiple kinds of tangible and intangible assets including knowledge, relationships, skills, human capital and others exist, but these are often overlooked in favour of money.
- The importance of country leadership and lack of trust in governments around the world. This inhibits governments’ legitimacy as credible and the central drivers of social and economic development, including in the eyes of their own citizens. This lack of trust and perceptions of corruption also negatively impact domestic organizations, making it harder for them raise money from local donors. Despite the challenges associated with domestic resource generation, respondents shared powerful examples of how and where it is happening.
- The importance of the concept of local grassroots resistance movements towards creating equality and accountability of government to their own citizens. Governments are largely averse to such movements and do anything in their power to subjugate them.⁸ However, it is exactly these sorts of movements that can be the key driver of change by holding the government accountable. The farmers’ movement in India in 2020,⁹ for instance, made the Indian government drop its proposed national land policy when resistance developed in communities across the country. The impact of these kinds of resistance movements is largely understated and underutilized. **“Revolution happens in localities. It is the collective leadership of the most marginalized community,”** said Severus Hama-Owamparo of Uganda’s Taala Foundation, a 2023-2024 #ShiftThePower Fellow.

⁸ See [Communities of resistance. Why we need more of them](#), in CDA Collaborative Blog, February 2024

⁹ <https://hir.harvard.edu/farmer-protests/>

Issues for further exploration

1. Clarity on key terms related to funding and funders.
2. Expanding the idea of **“resources”** beyond the monetary.
3. A lack of country leadership (across both Global North and South) and a lack of trust in governments by civil society.
4. The importance of local grassroots resistance movements and of resistance itself.

Consolidated outcomes

The majority of respondents in this consultation were activists, advocates and grassroots community workers representing community-based organizations in the Global South. As such, these were not the usual major donors, policy-makers and government representatives who are responsible for much of the decision-making when it comes to global development.

Given their particular and respective vantage points, it is interesting to note that the concept that most resonated among them was the fourth one around diversification of funding sources. Many respondents cited funding as an ongoing barrier to their work, but they also provided examples of alternative and non-conventional sources of funding, such as diaspora contributions, local, women's and feminist philanthropy and even entrepreneurship activities to raise their own revenues in their local context.

Concepts	Order of Importance	
Diversification of funding sources	1	Favourable towards
Organizations as holistic entities	2	
Countries as core of change	3	Resistance towards
Regions as drivers of change	4	

Concept one, organizations as holistic entities, was seen as the next most important by respondents. Although it was collectively deemed to be important to increase the pool of development actors, it was also pointed out that the relationship between these various entities – whether governmental, civil society, private sector, movements, etc. – will be specific to each country. In most cases, these relationships are at odds with each other. This shows that it is not only important who we include as an entity, but how they are included, given the various tensions between entities in different countries.

The concepts that received the most resistance were concepts two and three: countries and geographic regions as core drivers of change. Weak governance, lack of trust and rooted colonial biases in countries were seen as being problematic. Past efforts at regionalism in Africa and Latin America were seen by many as failures. This is understandable in some ways, as it requires much larger political leverage to create regional structures, given the differences in regions, sub-regions and the politics and relationships between different countries.

Overall, those consulted overwhelmingly thought that the development sector was broken and needs to be fixed, and that the current dependency on the Global North must be reduced, both financially and politically. At the same, several respondents continued to insist that external support had a specific role to play in global development and humanitarianism. So there was a status quo of sorts on both sides of the issue.

In conclusion, the set of consultations on the original concept paper offered a number of specific pathways for potential experimentation that might contribute to a vision of a new ecosystem. These include three distinct actions:

1. Explore social movement building within countries as an essential driver of change.

Each country has its own unique example of an issue where resistance and a collective voice has emerged fighting for that issue. This would be a good place for civil society entities to place their energies. A collective voice of several entities within a country could give rise to a social movement on its own. And one that is domestically created and organized. It is also an area any one of the organizations represented here could explore further within their respective countries.

2. Focus on domestic partnerships as a strategy for building collective action.

By working with each other, various civil society actors within a country could confront critical issues en masse. While this would require political will and moving beyond individual institutional frameworks towards more movement-like behaviours, the benefits of such an approach might include building a collective strength in the fight-

back against shrinking civic space and in countering power dynamics with Global North INGOs and donors.

3. Diversify funding resources. Diversifying funding is important for any organization committed to both surviving financially, as well as being true to their independent identity. Exploring different opportunities for funding, beyond international and domestic resources, and looking for resources in other non-Western countries is something that few organizations have explored. Developing a domestic fundraising strategy could be a practical way to reduce dependence and create a more sustainable financial pool.

Not every organization needs to experiment with all of these three actions, or necessarily at the same time. Each can take on just one action point according to their comfort level and their country context, and can delve into it more deeply.

Conclusion

Some respondents called this concept paper *“aspirational”* – and others said it was *“radical”* and not easy to implement. However, many felt that they could possibly implement at least parts of this vision, if not the whole. Amjad Mohammad Saleem of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, Switzerland, quite aptly articulated how this could be achieved: the **who** – the holistic entities, once distinctions are removed; the **what** – strengthen the country with the help of these holistic entities; and the **how** – by exploring alternative modes of financing.

One comment by Soni Khanal of Accountability Lab Nepal, and a 2023-2024 #ShiftThePower Fellow stood out: ***“To build an ecosystem start with who and how we collaborate.”***

This lies at the heart of the vision of the concept paper. Collaborators can no longer be limited to conventional donors and philanthropies, or only those working with INGOs and global institutions. The notion of who decides on any alternative vision or ecosystem must be expanded to include collaborators in country, including unconventional actors that are not usually part of such conversations, such as the diaspora or the private sector. It is only through this kind of diverse, multi-actor collaboration that the foundation for any future approach or action will be built.

These findings are still provisional and by no means exhaustive or conclusive. They are, in fact, the beginning of a much broader and larger participatory process aimed at defining a more inclusive model for global development and humanitarianism – from both the demand and supply sides. In that sense, this piece of work was as much about the process as about the outcome: it was essential to involve those experiencing the failures of the current system and to invite them to start to reflect on what an alternative might look like.

The concept paper is a provocation: how can we be more concrete about what we want global development and humanitarianism to be at different levels, in different countries. Each country will be different. As the concept paper itself states clearly, these concepts are not perfect, nor are they complete. But while many may not agree with some of the ideas presented, it is not until we are able to test some of them in practice that we will be able to know what could work and what will not.

These consultations have given a valuable start to this process, by those who matter, those working at ground-level with communities. However, we must acknowledge that there are many other players in this sector, and the key decisions are

currently made by those who do not belong to these groups, such as global organizations and by governments themselves.

Therefore, it is hoped that the next stage of consultations can be with these other categories of development actor – INGOs, donors and governments – to be able to form a complete set of feedback as to which ideas can be useful in envisioning an alternative ecosystem for global development and humanitarianism, and how they can be applied.

Annex 1: Respondents

Name	Organization	Country
GFCF Partners		
Loreine B. Dela Cruz	Center for Disaster Preparedness	Philippines
Jackie Asiimwe	CivSource Africa	Uganda
Marie-Rose Romain Murphy	Haiti Community Foundation	Haiti
Kamala Chandrakirana	Indonesia for Humanity	Indonesia
Ehsanur Rehman	National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors Bangladesh	Bangladesh
Ambika Satkunanathan	Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust	Sri Lanka
Gunjan Veda	Movement for Community-led Development	United States
Urmila Shrestha	Tewa, the Nepal Women's Fund	Nepal
Moses Isooba	Uganda National NGO Forum	Uganda
MacBain Makandwire	Youth Net and Counselling	Malawi
#ShiftThePower Fellows		
Soni Khanal	Accountability Lab Nepal	Nepal
Fredrick Ouko	Action on Disability and Development International	Kenya
Michael Vincent Mercado	Center for Disaster Preparedness	Philippines
Madonna Vicky Ainembabazi	CivSource Africa	Uganda
Florencia Roitstein	ELLAS Mujeres y Filantropía	Argentina
Magdalena Pocheć	FemFund	Poland
Laura Vanessa Flórez Torres	Fondo Emerger Socioambiental	Colombia
Nishchhal Kharal	Freedom Studio	Nepal
Angela Maria Baez-Silva	Independent	Colombia
Kaushalya Ariyathilaka	Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust	Sri Lanka
Elizaphan Ogechi	Nguzo Africa Community Foundation	Kenya
Yande Kalengo	Restless Development	Zambia
Shelly Satuku	SIVIO Institute	Zimbabwe
Severus Hama-Owamparao	Taala Foundation	Uganda
Robert White	Tilitonse Foundation	Malawi
Gloria Mugabekazi	UHAI EASHRI	Uganda
Additional Respondents		
Cecilia Melisi	Global Change Center	Argentina
Yegana Guliyeva	Independent humanitarian aid professional	Azerbaijan
Amjad Mohammad Saleem	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent	Switzerland
Okore Emmanuel Chinonso	Médecins Sans Frontières	Rwanda
Dylan Mathews (via email)	Peace Direct	United Kingdom
Pradeep Narayan and Tarini Shiprukar	Praxis Institute	India
Lamantu Adam	Songtaba	Ghana



The GFCF works to strengthen, harness and demonstrate the value of community philanthropy as an essential element of community-led development and as a strategy for shifting power. Through small grants, technical support, peer exchange and evidence-based learning, the GFCF helps to strengthen community philanthropy institutions around the world, so that they can fulfill their potential as vehicles for locally-led development, and as part of the larger global infrastructure for progressive social change.

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About the author

Themrise Khan is an independent development professional and researcher with almost 30 years of practitioner and policy-based experience in international development, aid effectiveness, gender, and global migration. She has worked with a vast spectrum of multilateral and bilateral organizations, INGOs and civil society organizations primarily in Pakistan, but also Canada and South Asia. She has a number of [publications and articles](#) on aid, humanitarianism and development to her credit. She is co-editor of the book; [White Saviorism in International Development. Theories, Practices and Lived Experiences](#) (Daraja Press, Canada, 2023). She [blogs](#), speaks and writes actively on notions of national autonomy, North-South power imbalances in development, race relations and immigrant citizenship and integration and migrant and refugee rights.

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