The birth of global public investment

Mutual interest and mutuality in 21st century international public finance

Jonathan Glennie

GLOBAL COOPERATION INSTITUTE

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April 2025

Abstract

This report presents global public investment (GPI) as a new paradigm for international public finance – one that reimagines how the world invests in shared progress. Rooted in the principles of collective responsibility and inclusive governance, GPI offers a future-oriented approach to funding global public goods and sustainable development. The report articulates the context in which we find ourselves, explains the conceptual foundations and practical implications of a GPI approach, and outlines a phased strategy for its advancement. This involves shifting global narratives towards mutual interest and seizing strategic opportunities to embed the values of mutuality into the architecture of international cooperation.

[1] Thanks are due to Simon Reid-Henry, Patricia Alemañy, Alan Diaz, Andres Ceballos, Yao Shuai, Harpinder Collacott, Ben Phillips, Hassan Damluji, Anna Hope and Nikolai Hegertun for their comments on this report, and also much more widely to all the members of the GPI Network and participants in many consultations who have helped develop the concept of global public investment. Thanks to Daniel Sanchez, Laura Granados and Alejandro Torres for editing the document, and to Fernanda Rigali for designing it. Thanks also to the participants in an expert meeting hosted by Norad in January 2025 at which an earlier draft of this paper was discussed. Thanks to Norad for funding this report. Any mistakes are the fault of the author.

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ISBN number: 978-82-8369-219-8

Foreword: Momentous months

As this report goes to press, we are living through perhaps the most momentous few months in international development and cooperation since the establishment of the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions in the 1940s. But the wrong way round. Rather than the historic establishment of the multilateral order we (still just about) know today, what we are now witnessing is, apparently, its dismantling.

The USA has withdrawn from the World Health Organization and the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change and is reviewing its support for other multilateral organisations. It has deleted USAID.[2] While the Trump administration acted with a similar disdain for internationalism in its previous stint in charge, it is substantially more aggressive and organised this time around.

This makes the issues discussed in this paper even more important than they were only a few short months ago. Never has it been more obvious that we need to radically review the pillars upon which internationalism is built. But the arrival of this new radical administration is only a symbol of broader, longer-term causes. The arguments made in this paper respond to geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts that have been underway for some time and will continue to evolve, as much as they do to the sudden crisis in which we find ourselves. One has only to look across the Atlantic to budget decisions being taken in Europe to realise that.

The idea of global public investment (GPI) has been co-created over the past decade as a response to the clear need for a well-resourced and effective system of international public finance, more appropriate for the 21st century. This present turmoil, full of uncertainty and worry, might seem like an odd moment to talk about the birth of something new. But crises present opportunities. It is time for those of us deeply concerned about international cooperation to take far more seriously the changes in circumstance and sentiment across our world, to boldly resist defeatism and, like past generations, to create anew.

Each section of this paper merits a lengthy report of its own, but I have tried to keep it short in the hope that busy people will read it. The ideas in this paper are not the final answer to our incredibly complex challenges - far from it - but are submitted in the hope that they can push the debate forward and lead us to some concrete steps in the right direction in this most critical of moments for our world.

Jonathan Glennie, Bogotá, April 2025

[2] Donald J. Trump, "President Trump Gives Virtual Remarks to World Economic Forum 2025," posted by the White House, January 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-DSB13ZWtg

Executive Summary

Time for something new

The world is at a turning point. Our most pressing challenges – climate change, pandemics, financial instability, conflict, and deepening inequality – are borderless. But the systems we rely on to fund collective action remain fragmented, outdated, and unequal.

Global public investment (GPI) offers something new: a fresh model for financing collective progress in the 21st century. It envisions a world where all contribute, all benefit, and all decide. This is not charity. It is shared investment in our shared future.

By reframing and reorganising how international public finance is conceived, governed, and deployed, GPI provides a path toward more legitimate, effective, and inclusive cooperation. It helps us move beyond zero-sum thinking and toward a global public finance system rooted in co-creation, mutual gain, and enduring trust.

A narrative renaissance: towards *mutual interest*

For GPI to become reality, we need to rediscover an old story about international cooperation and retell it for a new time. Current narratives - rooted in donor generosity and recipient need - are no longer resonant. They fail to inspire public support, and they entrench unequal relationships. We need to shift from charity to mutual interest, from transactional to transformational.

This new narrative should start from a simple premise: in an interconnected world, our fates are interdependent. Investments in health systems, clean energy, stable economies, and peace anywhere are investments in stability and wellbeing everywhere. Global public finance must reflect that logic - not just in how it is spent, but in how it is explained, debated, and legitimized.

That means making GPI compelling to publics and politicians alike. It means building a communications ecosystem that can articulate why global cooperation matters, who it serves, and how it improves lives. And it means fostering leadership from new places – especially from countries and communities that have long been seen as passive recipients rather than active co-creators.

Without a new story, the politics of global public finance will remain stuck. With one, we can unlock new possibilities.

An institutional evolution: towards *mutuality*

The second focus is institutional. While global public investment envisions new structures and mechanisms, it does not require waiting for a single global breakthrough. Change can begin now by embedding GPI principles into existing institutions, initiatives, and processes.

The key idea is mutuality: designing systems where responsibilities are shared, governance is inclusive, and benefits are collectively owned. This can take many forms:

- **in contributions**: moving beyond donor–recipient binaries by encouraging all countries to contribute according to their ability.
- **in governance**: ensuring that decision-making reflects a diversity of voices and interests, not just those of funders.
- **in outcomes**: aligning investments with global goals and common goods, not narrow national interests.

Opportunities for embedding GPI principles are already emerging. Climate funds, pandemic response mechanisms, global tax forums, and regional development banks are all sites where co-governance and co-investment can be strengthened. GPI also provides a valuable framing for ongoing reforms of the international financial architecture – helping to ensure they go beyond technocratic fixes to address the deeper legitimacy crisis at their core.

What is needed now is experimentation and leadership. Countries, institutions, and coalitions willing to pilot GPI approaches can demonstrate their value and build momentum. These pioneers – whether high, middle or low-income countries – can help shape the institutional DNA of a new era in global cooperation.

What now? Getting to work

GPI is ambitious but not abstract. It offers a concrete, phased strategy for reshaping how the world finances shared progress. The path forward involves two mutually reinforcing tracks:

1. **Investing in the narrative**: Support research, communications, and advocacy that build the intellectual and political case for GPI. Frame it as a response to current global challenges and an evolution of our understanding of the public good.

2. **Embedding mutuality in institutions**: Use strategic windows – such as pandemic preparedness, climate finance, or international tax negotiations – to apply GPI principles in real-world settings. Advance reforms that reflect shared governance and responsibility.

These actions are already underway – but they need scale, coordination, and visibility. Governments, civil society, multilateral institutions, and thought leaders all have a role to play. Philanthropic actors can support the development of the GPI ecosystem. Researchers can continue to test and refine the model. Policy entrepreneurs can connect GPI to reform processes already in motion.

The GPI movement does not require consensus from all corners before it can begin. It needs coalitions of the willing: countries, institutions, and communities ready to lead by example. And it needs a clear sense of direction: a vision of international public finance that is inclusive, effective, and legitimate for the world we live in now.

This is not an end. It is a beginning. The birth of global public investment.

1. Introduction: Time for something new

A changed (and worried) world

Has it ever been more obvious that we need to rethink the way we talk about and implement international cooperation for sustainable development? While we have known this moment of reckoning was coming, it has landed with more suddenness than anyone expected, thanks mostly to the election of a radical new administration in the United States but also expedited by conflict in Europe and the Covid-19 pandemic with its serious economic aftermath.

Political and economic upheavals in the wealthy countries of the Global North are one half of the new reality within which we are seeking to overcome our huge common global challenges. The other half, intimately related, is surging engagement and power across the Global South. Reports are being published on a daily basis laying out all the various reasons behind the profound changes underway in the power structure and economic balance of our world and the way in which they influence international public finance (IPF)[3] - from the increase in crises related to climate change,[4] geopolitical tensions[5] and market uncertainty to demographic shifts likely to mean higher social security spending requirements in the Global North and significant migratory consequences[6].

The 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer[7], recently released, identifies a global rise in grievance fuelled by economic fears, distrust in institutions and elites, and a sense of systemic unfairness. Only one-third of respondents believe in a better future for the next generation. In colloquial terms people are increasingly thinking "what's in it for me?", whether they live in Durban or Delaware. In formal language, they are looking for tangible outcomes of government policies and spending for themselves and their families. While people who work in international development sector may find this uncomfortable – being generally idealists – political strategy today needs to accommodate this reality in the short to medium term, while continuing to work to change attitudes and the context within which they are formed.

Given economic belt-tightening and the geopolitical tensions putting multilateralism under immense pressure, money for common global challenges is harder to come by in 2025 than

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[3] I use the term international public finance, or the acronym IPF, to describe money that crosses national borders with the objective of responding to global challenges related to sustainable development or is spent domestically with that same objective.

[4] See, among many examples, *10 New Insights in Climate Science: 2024 Report.* November 2024. https://10insightsclimate.science/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/10-New-Insights-in-Climate-Science-2024-Report-Final.pdf

[5] *The Global Risks Report 2025*. World Economic Forum, 2025. https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2025.pdf.

[6] *World Migration Report 2024: Chapter 3 - Africa*. International Organization for Migration, 2024. https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-3/africa.

[7] *Edelman Trust Barometer 2025*. Edelman, 2025. https://www.edelman.com/trust/2025/trust-barometer.

it has been for decades, just when the need for it has never been more obvious. This has led to a growing discourse about "the end of aid" and the implication that poor countries need to now rely on their own domestic resources plus private finance from abroad, with a very limited supplement of public funding from the multilateral, increasingly non-concessional and with grants limited to a handful of countries. Spending on global public goods appears now to be off the agenda as international spending takes a pounding.

At the same time, there is a recognition in many quarters that while urgent firefighting is needed to respond to urgent priorities, there is opportunity in this crisis to build a better financial architecture that could respond sustainably and effectively to global challenges.

This paper proposes a way forward which may be our best bet for increasing and improving IPF for sustainable global development. It aligns with an approach now commonly known as global public investment (as set out in e.g. *Time for global public investment* by a group of experts under the aegis of the GPI Network (2023)[8] and *The future of aid: global public investment* (Glennie, 2021)).

The proposal is in two parts:

- First, that we lean into **mutual interest** as the central narrative behind mobilisation of international public finance for sustainable development.

- Second, that we lean into **mutuality** as the basis for our evolving institutions overseeing financial cooperation.

The rest of this introduction sets out two premises upon which the paper is based, namely that we do still need more and better IPF despite increasingly common attempts to argue to the contrary. If those premises are accepted, then the two proposals above, we argue, follow as a logical outcome. The following two sections explain them further. The paper ends with suggestions for concrete next steps in 2025 and beyond.

Two foundational premises

The analysis and proposals in this paper are to a large extent the logical result of two foundational premises that are now increasingly consensual.

1. In order to achieve our common global objectives, international public finance is required for the long term, a significant proportion of which needs to be concessional. *This is the quantity premise.*

2. As our world continues to evolve politically, this international public finance increasingly needs to be accountable to a far wider group of countries than has so far been the case,

[8] *Time for GPI*. GPI Network, 2023. https://globalpublicinvestment.net/report-time-for-gpi/

which will lead to more effective spending. *This is the quality premise.*

The idea that we need a new way to pay for Global Public Goods goes back at least to the work of Inge Kaul and her team at the turn of the century.[9] Meanwhile the idea that international public finance is ineffectively and inefficiently spent was one of the main focuses in international public finance in the first decade of this century, leading to the Paris/Busan process on Aid Effectiveness.[10] The research that provided the evidential basis for this work emphasised the importance of recipient participation/ownership/leadership not just because it was right in principle - for the sake of dignity - but because it led to better impact for each dollar spent.

We now look briefly at these two foundational premises. Assuming they are correct, we need to find a way of responding to them. This paper argues that doing so will entail a transition from what might be described as a 20th century approach which has in recent decades emphasized generosity (and to some extent duty) and relied on generally top-down institutional approaches, to one that emphasizes mutual interest and mutuality, summarized simply by the GPI Network as All Benefit, Contribute and Decide (ABCD).

Premise 1: There is not enough money...

In order to achieve our common global objectives, a large amount of international public finance is required for the long term, a significant proportion of which needs to be concessional.

As we enter the second quarter of the 21st century, the world is facing a long list of challenges - longer even than the 17 SDGs with their 169 targets and 247 indicators. We are not yet even close to finding a way to mobilize the resources to respond to them all effectively.

One aspect of the resource shortage is international public finance. A plethora of papers exist analysing this shortfall so let us take the most recently updated work of Nicholas Stern, Vera Songwe and Amar Bhattacharya which stands out for its thoroughness and clarity, and the esteem of its authors, referred to collectively as the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance (IHLEG).[11] Their work focuses on the climate/nature challenge and there summation is as follows (emphasis added):

"The transition to clean, low-carbon energy, building resilience to the impacts of climate change, coping with loss and damage, protecting nature and biodiversity, and ensuring a just transition, require a rapid step-up in investment in all countries."[12]

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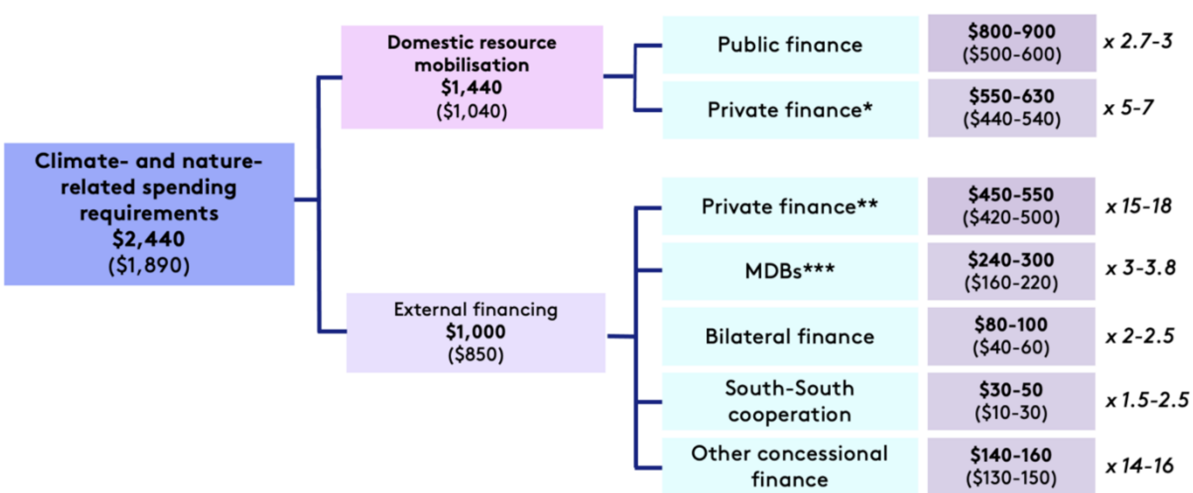
[9] Inge Kaul (ed.), Isabelle Grunberg (ed.), Marc Stern (ed.) Global Public Goods: International Cooperation in the 21st Century (1999), Oxford University Press

[10] The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. 2005. http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/45837904.pdf

[11] Raising ambition and accelerating delivery of climate finance, *Vera Songwe, Nicholas Stern, Amar Bhattacharya, November 2024* https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/publication/raising-ambition-and-accelerating-delivery-of-climate-finance/

By 2030, they argue, using a deductive approach, overall investment for global climate objectives in low- and middle-income countries (excluding China) will need to rise to USD 2.44 trillion per year. It currently stands at nearer USD 550 billion. Of this USD 2.44 trillion, USD 1.44 trillion could be domestic resources, leaving an additional USD 1 trillion required externally. Of this USD 1 trillion roughly half could come from private sources, leaving the other half from public sources i.e. international public finance. Of this USD 500 billion in annual international public finance (within which they also include private philanthropy), they estimate that traditional bilateral assistance from wealthy countries will need to be double its current amount, south-south cooperation will also need to double, and MDB contributions will need to triple or quadruple. Additionally, what they describe as "non-conventional sources of concessional finance" such as voluntary carbon markets, use of special drawing rights (SDRs), international taxes and private philanthropy will need to grow rapidly to about USD150 billion per year from around USD10 billion today. We reprint their table here for ease of analysis.

Mobilising the necessary financing for EMDCs other than China
($ billion per year by 2030, increment from current in parentheses)



Notes: *Includes household savings. **A significant proportion of this private finance would be directly and indirectly catalysed by MDBs, other development finance institutions and bilateral finance. ***Includes multilateral climate funds.

These growth targets are very ambitious and imply fairly immediate increases in 2025 and 2026 in order to reach a 2030 target date. The private external finance targets are as ambitious as the public ones and equally important, and there are number of proposals on the table to ramp up private sector engagement, notably from Hubert Danso who calls for a long-term institutional investment strategy.[13] It is of course the case, as noted in the IHLEG

[13] *Shattering MDB Private Capital Mobilization Delusions. Africa Investor Magazine*, vol. 13, May 2024. https://www.africainvestor.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Shattering-MDB-Private-Capital-Mobilization-

report, that a *"significant proportion of this private finance would be directly and indirectly catalysed by MDBs, other development finance institutions and bilateral finance."*

These higher levels of finance then need to be maintained for the foreseeable future. Importantly, they are only for climate- and biodiversity-related objectives, which implies that the level of IPF required to meet all the other objectives the world has to meet (such as humanitarian, health, digital etc.) is substantially higher (notwithstanding the fact that there will be significant overlap i.e. that money spent on climate will have positive spillover effects on e.g. health).

This first premise, that there is not enough concessional IPF, set out so clearly by the IHLEG, is broadly consensual. Other experts have computed other numbers, but there is little disagreement in the literature that vast amounts more money need to be mobilized, and that a substantial proportion of that needs to be concessional IPF as described above. It hardly needs to be stated how far the world is from being in a position to mobilize these additional amounts. In 2023, only five countries met the UN's ODA target of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI).[14]

This international public money is not only necessary to fill gaps where other monies are not available, but because it is a unique and important type of money, helping direct and mobilize private and philanthropic money in the international space. This case has been made substantially for national public spending by Mariana Mazzucato (2011, 2017, 2020) among others, and see Glennie (2021) for an application at the international level, arguing that the special characteristics of public money that mean it cannot simply be replaced by private finance, whether for-profit or philanthropic.[15]

Premise 2: ...and it is poorly managed

As our world continues to evolve politically, international public finance increasingly needs to be accountable to a far wider group of countries than has so far been the case, which in turn will lead to more effective spending.

On top of the quantity problem, we face a quality problem. One of the most critical flaws in the current international public finance system is the inequitable governance structure, where wealthier nations dominate decision-making. Institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and multilateral development banks (MDBs) rely on weighted voting systems based on financial contributions. This gives donor countries disproportionate power, enabling them to prioritize their strategic interests over the needs and voices of recipient nations -

Delusions-Magazine-v13.pdf.

[14] *International Aid Rises in 2023, with Increased Support to Ukraine and Humanitarian Needs*. OECD, April 2024. https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2024/04/international-aid-rises-in-2023-with-increased-support-to-ukraine-and-humanitarian-needs.html#:~:text=Of%20the%20DAC%20members%2C%20five,the%20United%20Kingdom%20and%20France.

[15] Glennie, J. (2021) The future of aid: Global Public Investment, Routledge. For reasons of space we do not further elaborate this case here.

something they have done regularly over the past decades (see Glennie 2008). It has been acknowledged for many years that these power inequalities are a hangover from colonial times and are beyond ripe for evolution – the recent upheaval to the aid system caused by the Trump administration emphatically underscores this critique.

This exclusion of most countries from shaping the policies and projects that directly impact them not only undermines the legitimacy of global finance mechanisms, it results in a lack of ownership, reducing the effectiveness and sustainability of development efforts. One of the resounding research findings from the late 20th century which became the basis of the aid effectiveness efforts associated with Paris and Busan conferences, was that ownership and participation are not just important in their own right but significantly enhance the effectiveness of dollars spent.[16] Poor governance in international finance undermines effectiveness by fostering misaligned priorities, and inefficient resource allocation. Lack of transparency and accountability exacerbates mistrust and corruption, while inadequate monitoring prevents learning and long-term impact.

Despite this strong evidence, and impressive efforts made to improve aid and development finance effectiveness, the problems persist. Fragmentation in particular appears to be worsening as ever-increasing number of contributory agencies enter the fray, whether governments, multilateral organizations, development banks, private sector entities, civil society groups or philanthropies. Each actor operates with its own priorities, strategies, and funding mechanisms, leading to overlapping efforts, inefficiencies, and missed opportunities for collaboration. While there are some benefits from a greater range of financing options on offer, fragmentation creates challenges for recipient countries which have to navigate complex funding landscapes and reporting requirements, which strains capacity.

A startling recent report by the World Bank called *Aid Circumvention: The Elusive Dream of Putting Countries in the Driver's Seat* (2024) notes that an increase in the number of entities – Ethiopia has to manage 250 foreign funders – has been accompanied by a 35% reduction in the average project size. An increasing tendency to circumvent governments – despite commitments and the overwhelming evidence on aid effectiveness – has undermined institutions and developmental impact.

A new beginning

We have briefly established the problem we face in terms of two foundational premises, to do with the quantity and quality of IPF. This paper will argue that a response to these challenges should involve two complementary priorities – not silver bullets to complex challenges, but important steps towards a new, sustainable, effective approach.

[16] The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) https://web-archive.oecd.org/temp/2021-08-02/73869-parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm

First, a **NARRATIVE** focus on **mutual benefit** (with generosity remaining an important parentheses). This narrative focus is intended to ensure sustained and increased contributions to global challenges from the Global North, as well as to respond to the call for more modern, less patronizing language.[17] It would imply a significant shift in the narrative that has predominated in the Global North in recent decades. Some intellectual paradigms have already shifted. The evolution in the common foundation for international development thinking in 2015 from an MDG framework, in which there were separate roles for developed and developing countries, to an SDG agenda, in which all countries share the same goals, has been a critical evolution in this direction (even if the shopping list approach to global challenges has proven frustrating). The common benefit narrative has also begun to emerge in many global themes, perhaps most obviously in climate talks, and has been supercharged by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Second, an **INSTITUTIONAL** focus on **mutuality**, i.e. more representative governance structures. The challenge we face is not just a communications challenge, so this institutional focus is important for a number of reasons. First (not in order of importance), to persuade non-OECD countries to contribute larger sums to global challenges. Second, to ensure more effective oversight, prioritization and spend of international public finance. Third, to respect the sovereignty and dignity of all countries as we seek to build a more representative 21st century world order. Mutuality is already a feature of a number of global institutions. The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria, receives contributions from poor countries as well as wealthy ones and is governed in a relatively representative way. And, of course, far older entities such as the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and IMF) and other development banks were built positing stability as a global good and have governance arrangements where decision making is accorded on the basis of shareholding.

The proposal in this paper is therefore not for a brand-new approach, but rather for shepherding and accelerating a transition that has already started, and in the case of narrative, a rediscovery of a clarity regarding mutual interest that seems to have been lost.

Are rich-country publics ready for the news that they need to spend more on global issues and for the long term? Are their governments ready for power-sharing? And are Global South peoples ready to contribute as well, as they step up their responsibility for global challenges?

There is no doubt about the scale of the challenge, nor of its importance. In the best of cases we will succeed in building a 21st century approach built around mutual interest (or what one might call in plainer English, common benefit) and mutuality (i.e. countries working together as equals to resolve common problems). In the worst of cases, we could be on our way to

[17] While this latter consideration may be of limited importance to number crunchers quite understandably focused on the money side, it is of huge, regularly-expressed importance to many leaders and communities in the Global South and is thus an important objective in its own right.

something nearer the law of the jungle. It is the job of those of us engaged in steering international public finance to help reach an outcome nearer the former than the latter.

What is global public investment?

The “global public investment” concept is the basis of the approach suggested in this paper. It has emerged from over a decade of research and analysis involving experts and practitioners from across the globe, including a global consultation involving hundreds of participants. The GPI model proposes a system rooted in mutual benefit, shared responsibility, and collaborative governance. It emphasizes that all countries, regardless of income levels, should contribute to and benefit from funding that addresses global challenges such as climate change, health crises, and inequality. This approach moves away from the narrative of charity, framing international financing as a collective investment in global stability and prosperity.

A global public investment approach redefines the ambitions of global development cooperation by focusing not only on eradicating poverty but also on promoting sustainability, reducing inequality, and achieving global convergence in living standards. It seeks to foster inclusivity through a fair-share contribution model that considers economic capacity, historical responsibility, and ongoing impacts on global challenges to determine contributions. Wealthier nations would contribute more, but all countries would have a stake, leading to more ownership, legitimacy and effectiveness.

This approach foregrounds the unique qualities of public financing - its motivation for public good, accountability, flexibility, concessionality, and expertise - which cannot be replicated by private or philanthropic funds. By leveraging these attributes, GPI addresses funding gaps and supports long-term solutions. Ultimately, the aim is to create a permanent system for financing global challenges, moving beyond temporary, ad hoc, approaches to a structured framework that unites all countries in a common effort. It offers a transformative vision for a fairer, more inclusive, and resilient global financing system.

Box 1: Mutual interest and mutuality – related but different concepts

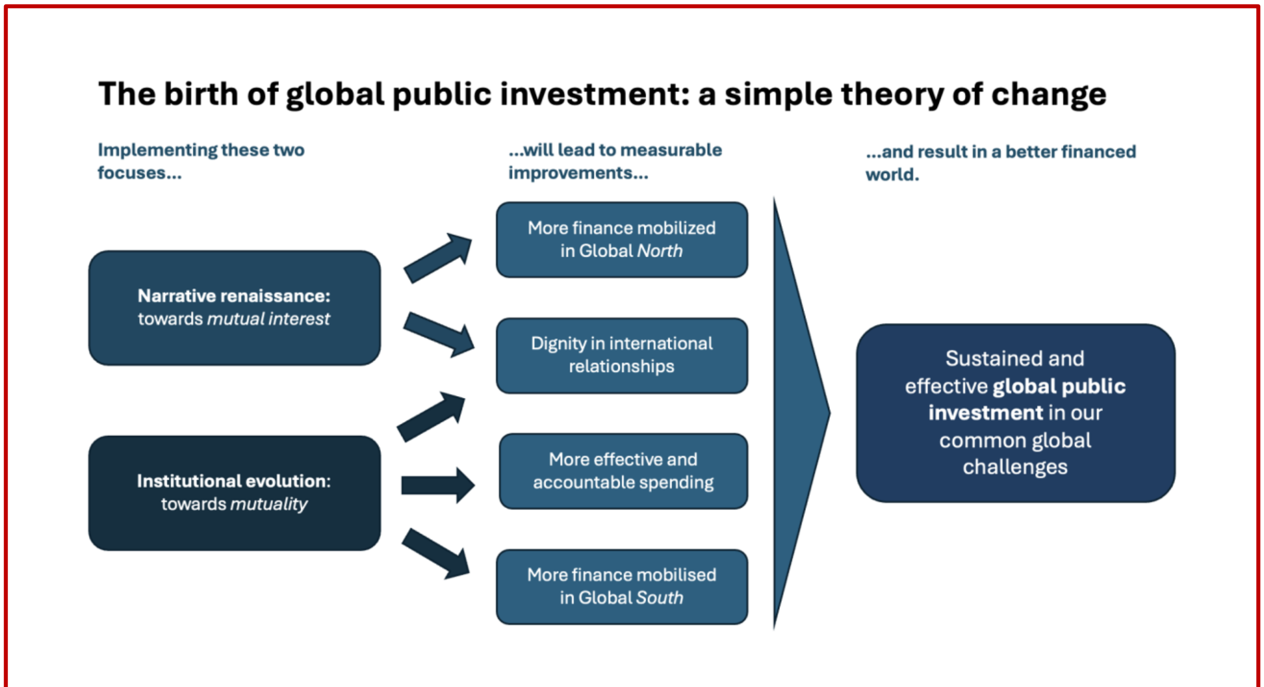
This paper argues that centring **mutual interest** and **mutuality** in international public finance is our best bet for mobilizing more money and spending it better. These two terms are closely related but differ in scope, focus, and the dynamics they describe. They could, in fact, be applied separately i.e. there could be a shift towards a mutual benefit narrative without a concomitant shift towards mutuality in institutions - we do not argue for this, but it is perfectly possible).

Mutual interest underpins relationships where cooperation is motivated by pragmatic considerations, which benefit all nations and communities. The concept most obviously applies to a category called Global Public Goods (GPGs) but can be broadened to cover a wide range of issues. Cooperation based on mutual interest is pragmatic, driven by overlapping benefits or goals, which enables close cooperation even between ideological rivals. The emphasis is on the results of collaboration (such as solving shared problems or achieving collective gains) rather than the process through which joint objectives are achieved.

Mutuality, on the other hand, refers precisely to process i.e. a relationship where parties are broadly equal participants, sharing responsibilities and commitments, as well as benefits. It emphasizes shared ownership, reciprocity, and collaboration in decision-making and actions. The word is often used to describe governance structures or frameworks where all stakeholders have a voice. In the context of IPF, mutuality would mean all countries—regardless of their wealth—having a fair say in how funds are allocated and spent.

In short, **mutual interest** provides the practical motivation for cooperation, while **mutuality** ensures that the process of cooperation is built on a foundation of equality and shared dignity, fostering trust and effectiveness. In the simple ABCD mnemonic used by the GPI Network, mutual interest is akin to All Benefit, while mutuality is All Decide. Both mutual interest (in narrative) and mutuality (in institutions) are key to mobilising more money under the banner of All contribute, as we shall see.

Simple theory of change



2. A narrative renaissance: towards *mutual interest*

Three rationales for international public finance

International public spending is motivated by three primary rationales: charity (generosity), duty (obligation or reparation), and national interest. Within the interest-driven rationale, we can further distinguish between different types of national interest, and it is here that we will find a particular kind of self-interest, namely mutual interest. Together, these rationales help explain why nations invest in addressing global challenges and supporting development beyond their borders, and different countries and entities are generally motivated by a complex mix of all three.

Charity: generosity and altruism

The charity perspective frames financial contributions as acts of goodwill, aimed at improving the lives of others without expecting direct returns. It could also be described as generosity or altruism. Nations contributing under this rationale often highlight their moral responsibility to support those in need, emphasizing solidarity with poorer or more vulnerable countries and communities. Obvious examples include humanitarian aid following natural disasters, contributions to alleviate famine, or funding education programs in poorer countries. Such spending is often seen as a reflection of national values, fostering a sense of ethical leadership on the global stage. However, the charity rationale has been criticized for perpetuating unequal power dynamics and failing to foreground the systemic causes of poverty and inequality.

Duty: obligation and reparation

The second rationale is based on duty, rooted in either a sense of responsibility (often historical) or legal commitments. It acknowledges the role of wealthier nations in creating or exacerbating the challenges faced by poorer countries, such as colonial exploitation or environmental degradation caused by industrialization. Most obviously, the call for reparations from some countries in the Global South appeals to duty. The concept of Loss and Damage in climate finance also reflects this rationale, as wealthier countries are expected to compensate for the harm their historical emissions have caused to vulnerable nations. Unlike charity, which is discretionary, duty-based spending is framed as a moral or legal necessity. Duty as part of a club or treaty can be considered close to the mutual interest rationale as all parties seek benefits by formalising and obliging payments.

National interest: from narrow to mutual interest

The third rationale for international public spending is national interest, which can be divided into subcategories each reflecting distinct ways countries perceive the benefits of global cooperation. On one end of the spectrum there are national interest motivations that focus on short-term benefits for donor countries, prioritizing immediate economic, security, or geopolitical gains. This might be termed narrow self-interest. For instance, funding infrastructure projects like roads in poorer countries with little regard to development benefits but rather with the intention of securing access to minerals would fall into this category. Narrow self-interest motivations also often emphasise the competitive advantage to be gained from certain investments e.g. if we do this it will help our trade competition with x other country. Similarly, aid tied to geopolitical goals, such as securing votes in international organizations, exemplifies this approach. This narrow, short-term focus can undermine the effectiveness of spending from a sustainable development perspective, as it prioritizes contributor needs over the long-term wellbeing of recipient nations or the world as a whole.

In contrast, national interest conceived as mutual interest takes a longer-term view, emphasizing shared challenges that require collective action, either between a particular group of countries, or across the globe. This approach acknowledges that investing in issues like climate resilience, pandemic preparedness, or poverty reduction ultimately benefits all nations. Most obviously, GPG spending would be motivated by mutual interest, because all parts of the world would be protected from economic and environmental fallout. Similarly, investing in education and peacebuilding would foster global stability, reducing forced migration pressures and creating a more secure economic environment for all. Unlike narrow self-interest, mutual interest views global cooperation as a strategic necessity, framing solutions as partnerships rather than transactions.

This balance is between narrow and mutual national interest is well-described by Gulrajani and others in their work on Principled Aid, which distinguishes between what they call principled or parochial national interest.[18] It was also well understood by the architects of the Bretton Woods institutions, among them the US Treasury Secretary of the time, Henry Morgenthau:

> *"Yet none of us has found any incompatibility between devotion to our own countries and joint action. Indeed, we have found on the contrary that the only genuine safeguard for our national interests lies in international cooperation. We have come to recognize that the wisest and most effective way to protect our national interests is through international cooperation — that is to say, through united effort for the attainment of common goals. This has been the great lesson taught by the war and is, I think, the great lesson of contemporary life — that the peoples of the earth are inseparably linked to one another by a deep, underlying community of purpose. This community of purpose is no less real and vital in peace than in war, and cooperation is no less essential to its fulfilment."*
>
> Henry Morgenthau, US Treasury Secretary, Bretton Woods, 1944[19]

Compare Morgenthau's understanding to the statement made by UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy to explain cuts in UK ODA contributions in February 2025:

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[18] *Principled Aid Index.* Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2024. https://odi.org/en/topics/principled-aid-index/.
[19] Closing address by Henry Morgenthau, 22 July 1944 https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2003/12/12/b88b1fe7-8fec-4da6-ae22-fa33edd08ab6/publishable_en.pdf

"But we are a government of pragmatists not ideologues – and we have had to balance the compassion of our internationalism with the necessity of our national security."
David Lammy, UK Foreign Secretary, London, 2025[20]

The idea that national security is in tension with internationalism was precisely what Morgenthau and others wanted to disavow, and is a modern framing dependent, as Lammy quote makes clear, on the idea that international financial cooperation is based on "compassion" rather than national interest. One could equally well quote John F. Kennedy as he launched USAID (1961), or the Pearson Report which set the 0.7% ODA target (1969) to read clear explanations of the mutual interest inherent in development spending, a clarity that appears now to have been lost, enabling politicians to present it as "charity" that (quite sensibly) needs to be cut when other more pressing budgetary requirements emerge.

An additional, semantic, note on the word "solidarity". Solidarity is a concept strongly related to the mutual interest motivation, but which is regularly confused with the charity motivation. It can be defined as "unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards." It does not imply an "us" helping a "them" but rather an "us" working together for our common goals.

Shared benefits and responsibility for the Global North

The attitudinal changes that have occurred in recent years especially in the Global North have made life a lot harder for international development and cooperation. Some had hoped that the Covid-19 pandemic would lead to a significant surge in understanding of mutual interdependence and how global finances need to reflect that. And, indeed, there is some evidence from polling in G7 countries that there is a good understanding of mutual interest.

However, as we survey the turns in rich world politics, particularly in the last few months, it is time to admit that electorates and their representatives are far from persuaded of the benefits *to themselves* of global spending. How will we build a viable overall narrative for development cooperation and global solidarity in a world of increased nationalism, regionalism, protectionism and geopolitical tension?

In order to raise significant additional IPF we need a renewed, persuasive narrative that appeals directly to the Global North by reframing international cooperation as an investment in mutual interest rather than charity or duty. We need to emphasize again, as was the norm some decades ago, that contributing to key global objectives like climate resilience, global health, and biodiversity is not an act of generosity or obligation but a strategic investment in shared prosperity and security, with an emphasis on national interest.

This narrative aligns with the priorities of Global North publics and policymakers. By presenting international public finance as a win-win proposition, a compelling rationale is

[20] Speech on 26 February 2025, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/david-lammy-balancing-compassion-our-uo7me/

offered for increased contributions from the North, and the argument that "charity begins at home" is harder to make, even in tough economic circumstances.

The arguments themselves are well known. Funding pandemic preparedness protects populations worldwide, including those in high-income countries, by reducing the risk of future outbreaks. Similarly, investments in climate action reduce the likelihood of climate related emergencies in Global North countries (like everywhere else). Both health and climate investments (to take continue with these two totemic issues) also contribute to indirect benefits for Global North countries, including global economic stability which is good for trade and growth, and reduced migration pressures.

But while this approach has been attempted at various times in recent years, it has generally been as an add-on to more concerted appeals to charity and duty, and never with authority and conviction, backed up by strong research evidence and persuasive communications. We need to turn the tables on the narrative we have become used to emphasising, namely the charity narrative. Yes, compassion is also a powerful motivator and will continue to be part of the argument – but mutual interest now needs to be centred in communications about IPF.

Dignity and voice for the Global South

While the national interest argument for international public finance has been used in the Global North for decades, it is always with a certain apologetic tone, preventing it from becoming the central logic and argument of cooperation. A 2019 newspaper article by Nikolai Hegertun demonstrates this reluctance with its headline: *"Is it really so wrong to consider national interests in development policy?"* In the article Hegertun argues that incorporating national interests into development policy can enhance its sustainability as countries are more likely to invest consistently when their own interests are at stake, and broader political and public support is more likely to be garnered.

It is worth noting that there tends to be no such reluctance in the Global South. The charity narrative perpetuates a hierarchical donor-recipient dynamic that portrays the Global South as passive beneficiaries and the Global North as benevolent providers. This framing fails to recognize the agency and contributions of recipient countries, creating an unequal and condescending relationship, and reinforcing dependency. The evolution towards a language of international cooperation more respectful of the dignity of less wealthy communities and countries, continues the gradual "decolonisation" of our vocabulary and approach that has long been underway, building on decades of decolonial literature.[21] So the narrative shift proposed in this paper is not only likely to prove more effective at coalescing support for long-term collective action on shared challenges, but is also more respectful and modern.

[21] One of the latest reports on this would be Takers, Not Makers: The Unjust Poverty and Unearned Wealth of Colonialism. Oxfam, 2024. https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/takers-not-makers-unjust-poverty-and-unearned-wealth-colonialism.

Few Global South politicians, academics or civil society leaders seldom if ever use the language of charity to describe the system of international public finance (and cooperation in general) that they want to see. In his recent speech to the World Economic Forum at Davos (21 January 2025), South African president Cyril Ramaphosa said (emphasis added): *"As we confront the challenges of the 21st century – from climate change to pandemics, from poverty to terrorism, from migration to artificial intelligence – we are again called upon to harness that most powerful, and that most enduring, of human attributes:* ***mutually beneficial cooperation and collaboration****."* [22]

Nor was he the first South African president to speak in these terms. Ramaphosa went on to quote Nelson Mandela's speech at Davos in 1992 in which he said (emphasis added): *"Our* ***interdependence****, bringing us together into a* ***common global home****, across the oceans and the continents, demands that* ***we all combine*** *to launch a global offensive for development, prosperity and human survival."*

These arguments are not new, and they are central to the political case made by leaders of the Global South for a renewed and improved global financial system. They imply little more than the normalization of relationships between equal players, which is why leaders in the Global South are much more attracted to them than to a charity narrative.

Here it is important to repeat that distinction between narrow and mutual interest. Arguments for international public finance based on narrow self-interest, implying that contributors will benefit but without a concomitant concern that other parties do as well, are indeed ethically dubious, particularly from countries that have significant wealth and are already in positions of power.

The appeal to narrow interest is central to much of the political rhetoric currently on display in the Global North and around the world - making countries "great again" is more an appeal to dominance than solidarity (and the USA is not the only country where this rhetoric is used). In such a context, an appeal to *mutual* interest is a strategically sensible middle-ground, recognizing that the national interest of contributor countries must certainly be central to political and budgetary considerations, but stopping short of a narrow self-interest argument that would elevate nationalism rather than internationalism.

It is worth noting also, of course, that the argument of mutual interest/common benefit is the basis of the increasingly important finance associated with South-South Cooperation, within which China still notionally sits, along with other major players such as India and Brazil. In a context in which major competitors are boldly asserting the national interest argument of international spending, it seems unlikely, in simple political terms, that a charity or duty narrative will be persuasive to the voters in Western nations.

[22] WEF: Ramaphosa on Significance of G20 Presidency. G20, 2024. https://g20.org/news/wef-ramaphosa-on-significance-of-g20-presidency/.

Does the "mutual interest" narrative help mobilise funds?

While the charity narrative dates back at least to Band Aid's 1984 exhortation to "feed the world" little has changed since. Strategies that rely less on the charity narrative and more on a horizontal story of common interests have been suggested and even trialled over the years only to be quashed by marketing departments convinced that the public in the Global North respond best to the simple language of "let's help the poor". The most recent joint NGO campaign in the UK (in 2022) is a case in point. Disregarding calls to modernize their approach, UK charities collected their efforts under the banner of "we the helpers', positioning UK citizens not as co-engagers in common global problems, but as purveyors of charity to the less well-off.[23]

To take a different angle, an article published in November 2024 in Canada's National Post attacking the Prime Minister's support for international aid was headlined *"Trudeau to Canada – starve your kids for climate change"*.[24] While this might be an extreme example, it demonstrates the counter-narrative that those who want to reduce international public finance are gifted by the charity narrative.

The charity-based narrative has historically played a significant role in garnering support for aid - leading in the UK to a Conservative government reaching the 0.7% aid target, for instance - but its effectiveness diminishes in times of economic uncertainty or geopolitical tension. In such contexts, the public in the Global North tends to prioritize domestic concerns, making it difficult to sustain spending characterized as international generosity - just see how quickly UK aid was cut when hard times set in. While it may resurface in more prosperous times, relying on this framework alone risks leaving global needs unmet during critical periods.

Countering the increasingly effective assault on international spending will require persuading decision makers and their constituents that *we all benefit* from it. A well-articulated mutual interest narrative would show that global stability, sustainable global ecosystems, climate resilience and strong health outcomes across the world are not abstract goals but essential elements of national security, economic stability, and public well-being.

And while there is evidence that a narrow self-interest argument (i.e. spend this money, *we* will benefit) tends <u>not</u> to fly with the public, arguments from *mutual* interest do much better (i.e. spend this money, we will *all* benefit). Detailed public opinion research carried out in G7 countries by Black sands in 2022/23 provides substantial evidence that framing international development and climate spending as a matter of mutual interest would be highly effective.[25] First, the research confirms what we now take for granted, namely that

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[23] See e.g. *Aid Alliance Launch: 'We the Helpers' Campaign*. International Development Alliance, 2022. https://intdevalliance.scot/news-view/aid-alliance-launch-we-the-helpers-campaign/.

[24] Terry Newman, "Trudeau to Canada: Starve Your Kids for Climate Change," National Post, January 24, 2025. https://nationalpost.com/opinion/terry-newman-trudeau-to-canada-starve-your-kids-for-climate-change.

[25] https://moneytalksresearch.org/

"People are pessimistic about the future and the cost of living dominates concern on global impacts, with the state of the economy front of mind when considering voting." The Black sands team then spell out what this means for campaigners: *"People put their own country first when it comes to financial spending. We need conversations which clearly demonstrate that local problems are directly linked to global events."*

Focusing on key demographics, they argue that 'Soft Right' and 'Middle Class Moderates' need to be approached as follows (quotes in full, emphasis in original):

> ***"Making the global feel local:*** *Amidst times of economic uncertainty, plans of global financial reform can sound abstract, not to say arrogant, to key audiences. Crucially, reform messaging needs to speak to the* ***real and concrete concerns*** *that people have about the future* ***in both economic and environmental terms.***
>
> ***Emphasise shared responsibility****: Despite their scepticism, the two core audiences are not "climate nationalists" or anti-internationalists. They acknowledge the* ***need to tackle global problems together*** *with other countries as well as* ***the responsibility of G7 countries*** *to contribute more to global problem-solving than poorer countries. Therefore, campaign messaging does not need to shy away from emphasising notions* ***of shared responsibility in international collective action."***[26]

The polling data backs up, then, what common sense already intuits: a successful push for more international public finance would be framed as shared responsibility and linked persuasively to domestic concerns, with food and energy prices topping the list of relevant concerns in the Black sands work, followed by issues such as increased risk of conflict and infectious disease.

A persuasive evidence base

What are the concrete domestic benefits of international sustainable development spending? The scope of this paper does not allow for the deep research required to gather together compelling evidence that global spending is indeed in the national interest of contributor countries along with all other countries (mutual interest) - that is the urgent task we now need to embark on. The general case is made here, but the detailed and evidenced case is a different thing entirely.

The following list of possible benefits is in no particular order and can most certainly be added to. It is meant simply to give an initial idea of what we are talking about. (Benefits could perhaps usefully be split into direct and indirect benefits, although the distinction can often be unclear.)

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[26] The other two key strategies recommended by Black sands for these demographics were regarding messaging/messengers, which we will not touch on here, and the importance of cost-effectiveness, which we discuss later in this report. See also https://medium.com/@blacksandscommunications/change-the-language-change-the-conversation-92af555e7499

- Possible benefits to contributor from international sustainable development spending/investment:
- Reduced incidence of climate-related crises (in contributor country)
- Reduced risk of food and energy shortages
- Lower food and energy prices
- Benefits from investing in knowledge cooperation
- Lower risk of global recession (which would affect people in contributor country)
- Reduced immigration
- Lower risk of high inflation
- Lower risk of infectious disease affecting people in contributor country
- Lower risk of conflict affecting contributor country
- Greater global financial stability
- Better trading opportunities
- Better opportunities for travel and tourism
- Better intercultural relations with countries around the world
- The aesthetic benefit of maintaining biodiversity in the world (e.g. tigers, whales)

It may be apparent to some readers just by looking through this back-of-an-envelope list how far away we are from making the powerful mutual interest case to publics and politicians in the Global North. Viewed positively, were that research to be done and messaging to be carried out effectively, there is a decent chance of success, at least to a receptive but currently unconvinced or unmotivated section of the population, in part precisely because it has been done so half-heartedly to date.[27]

The concept of "payment for services" is well-established in national and local government; everyone who pays their local council taxes knows what services they should be acquiring with such payments, from rubbish collection to filling in potholes in roads. What is less well-known is that the same concept has existed at the international level for some years as well, inspired by the work of Inge Kaul and others. No serious effort has been made to make this case to the public, as the preference has been for "we the helpers" style narratives. This needs to change, and evidence-collection will be a first step.

A successful communication strategy

A powerful communications strategy is essential to reach and persuade voters in the Global North about the importance of global public financing and international solidarity; public support is critical to ensure sustained political will and financial commitment. By framing

[27] There are clearly some ethical considerations here, most notably the positioning of reduced immigration as a benefit. There are always blurred lines in analyses of this kind, and it may be that we will need different vocabularies and categories as we advance this work. For now, the point is that we are making the case for global spending by appealing to what matters to voters in the Global North, but that appeal needs to avoid kowtowing to or enhancing prejudice or values at odds with the aims of internationalism.

international solidarity as a strategic necessity rather than a charitable gesture, voters can better appreciate how their contributions safeguard their own futures. Messages like "Every dollar spent today prevents costly crises tomorrow" and "Investing in global public goods protects all nations from common threats" resonate by connecting global issues to voters' tangible interests.

Mutual interest has been part of past communication strategies for global cooperation, but it often played a secondary role to narratives of charity or duty. In today's fragmented world, with rising nationalism and economic constraints, mutual interest must become the central plank of communications. It must also be recognized that charity narratives have dominated in many countries for decades, and thus it will take significant investment and time to re-balance that thinking.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, COVAX struggled due to insufficient funding despite claims of "spend billions to save trillions." While global benefits were touted, contributors lacked or disbelieved clear, credible evidence of returns. A Eurasia Group study helped quantify the benefits, showing rich countries could gain 12 times their investment. Yet, systemic delivery challenges and limited fiscal space among governments stalled funding.[28]

Four factors influence national investment thresholds: fiscal space, credible return on investment, institutional delivery capacity, and worldview. Advocates should therefore target growing economies, strengthen evidence for returns, improve delivery systems, and foster a global perspective emphasizing interdependence over rivalry.[29]

A powerful communications strategy is not just desirable – it is indispensable. It must reframe global public financing as an investment in mutual prosperity, emphasize accountability and results, and connect with both the practical and moral priorities of voters in the Global North. This is the key to securing the political will needed to address pressing global challenges and build a more sustainable and equitable future.

Where would the money come from?

When countries really care about something - the Ukraine war, for instance, or COVID medicines - they start with a conviction to act and then they find money. They don't refuse to act until they crack the finance problem. The availability of money, in other words, is political before it is technical. It is also true that upfront spend often leads to reduced costs further down the line (medical research is a good example of this).

Having said that, clearly better use of limited resources will be a major aspect of the next few years, including cleverer loan conditions from the major multilateral banks. Indeed,

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[28] Global Access to COVID-19 Vaccines Estimated to Generate Economic Benefits of at Least $153 Billion in 2020-21. World Health Organization (WHO), December 3, 2020. https://www.who.int/news/item/03-12-2020-global-access-to-covid-19-vaccines-estimated-to-generate-economic-benefits-of-at-least-153-billion-in-2020-21
[29] These insights come from Hassan Damluji at Global Nation https://globalnation.substack.com/p/beyond-global-public-goods-f3c

countries already spend money on seeking solutions to global challenges but do so less efficiently than if they all pooled their money.

The global public investment framework envisions a system that sources funding for global challenges through innovative, equitable, and sustainable mechanisms, as well as classic sources such as national taxation. New money will certainly be needed, as the IHLEG numbers make clear. Much work has been done assessing possible sources of major IPF. In this section we refer to the work done in 2024 by Global Citizen outlining these possibilities.[30] Clearly, implementing any of these options will require strong political will – which is why the new narrative is so crucial.

- A **global minimum tax on high-net-worth individuals**, specifically targeting billionaires, proposes a 2% tax rate. With fewer than 3,000 billionaires worldwide, this could generate $250 billion annually. The rationale is rooted in equity, as billionaires collectively pay less than 1% in taxes while benefiting significantly from global systems.

- A **financial transaction tax (FTT)**, set at 0.5% on stock trades in G20 countries, could raise $169 billion to $281 billion annually. This mechanism targets financial markets, which are currently undertaxed, ensuring minimal impact on ordinary consumers.

- **Fossil fuel taxes**, whether imposed per ton of CO_2 or as a corporate income tax on fossil fuel companies, could generate at least $210 billion annually. This proposal addresses the dual objectives of holding fossil fuel companies accountable for their environmental impact while redirecting profits toward climate resilience and development.

- **Air transport taxes**, such as a kerosene tax or global air ticket levy, could yield $29 billion to $46 billion annually. Given aviation's significant contribution to CO_2 emissions and the lack of jet fuel taxation in many jurisdictions, these measures promote environmental accountability while funding global priorities.

- Phasing out the $1.5 trillion annually spent on **fossil fuel subsidies** presents another opportunity. Redirecting these subsidies to renewable energy and sustainable development could align public spending with climate goals.

- Finally, **rechanneling Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)** offers a significant untapped resource. By reallocating unused SDRs from wealthy nations to low-income countries through mechanisms like multilateral development banks, up to $300 billion annually could be mobilized, leveraging the $500 billion currently sitting idle.

[30] Finances for Development and Climate Report. Global Citizen, 2025. https://media.globalcitizen.org/Finances-for-Development-and-Climate-Report.pdf (accessed January 25, 2025)

What about duty, responsibility and reparation?

The charity-based narrative, as we have seen, creates a patronising relationship where the Global South is seen as passive and lacking agency, and is increasingly unpersuasive in our changing geopolitics. But what about a duty-based narrative, where wealthy countries contribute to help others out of obligation, whether that be reparation for past wrongdoings, or simply following the "polluter pays" principle in climate finance?

Appealing to a sense of moral obligation or duty can align with deeply held values of fairness and justice, and it is an analysis with which many in this sector agree. But this framing, like the charity framing, will struggle to convince against rising populism and nationalistic sentiments, and is unlikely to persuade voters in the Global North, who are the ultimate arbiters of their governments' spending decisions. It may even risk generating resentment and undermine efforts to increase IPF. This does not mean the reparations and polluter pays arguments need to be shelved, and they will certainly remain crucial in international negotiations, rather that they may only work narratively in a small number of very committed constituencies for the time being and should probably be made with regard to specific circumstances rather than in a generalised way.

Notwithstanding, any new narrative and system needs to emphasize that the Global North, which has historically contributed the most to global problems, must contribute its fair share to solutions. In the Black sands polling, 65% of G7 respondents agreed that richer countries must bear a larger share of the costs of climate action because they are historically responsible for more environmental damage, implying that this principle is well established in key countries. Reparational approaches like Loss and Damage could be carried forward in the GPI approach via a proposed fair-share formula, which could recognize the historical responsibility of wealthy nations as well as economic size, building on the established concept of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR).

The importance of "effectiveness" in any new narrative

One final note on the importance of demonstrating the impact of investments. In contrast to the mutual interest narrative, the importance of the effectiveness narrative is already well recognized. A major obstacle to gaining support for global financing initiatives is skepticism about the effective use of funds i.e. publics and policymakers often question whether contributions yield meaningful results. Demonstrating clear, measurable outcomes is therefore essential, as evidenced by the Black sands research which exhorts advocates to emphasize the cost-effectiveness of overseas initiatives as well as their alignment with national priorities.

Success stories such as improved climate resilience, reduced disease outbreaks, and expanded access to education highlight the real-world impact of inclusive global financing. For instance, the Global Fund has saved over 50 million lives since its inception, establishing its credibility and proving that well-managed, inclusive financing can drive significant progress. An effectiveness narrative is not just a communications tool – it is a vital foundation for building long-term political and public support for IPF and needs to be based on shifts in institutional structure, which will be discussed in the next section.

To further build trust and counter scepticism about global financing, campaigners need to emphasize the importance of transparency and accountability. Ensuring that the allocation and use of funds are clear and measurable fosters confidence among nations and citizens.

3. An institutional evolution: towards *mutuality*

If the dual purposes of the narrative renaissance are mobilizing/maintaining resources from the Global North and ending the undignified way countries of the Global South have been referred to for too long, the triple purpose of the institutional evolution is (not in order of importance) to enhance the effectiveness of international public finance, to mobilize more resources from Global South countries (particularly the wealthier ones), and (again) to demonstrate the level of respect expected nowadays for all countries not just the most powerful ones (a softer objective but important nonetheless).

While there is plenty of literature discussing the mutual interest case for international public finance, there is much less on what mutuality in the institutions governing such finance would look like.

Mutuality to improve effectiveness

The Development Effectiveness and aid effectiveness agenda, epitomized by initiatives such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), aimed to enhance the coordination, accountability, and impact of international public finance. Despite early successes, this agenda has largely stalled. The stagnation of the development effectiveness agenda can be attributed to several issues. Fragmentation remains a significant barrier, with numerous bilateral, multilateral, and private actors pursuing overlapping or competing objectives. Donor-driven priorities have led to inefficiencies, often misaligning aid with recipient country needs. Accountability mechanisms have proven weak, leaving limited oversight over how funds are used, while transparency gaps still obscure the outcomes of aid investments.

Geopolitical rivalries and power imbalances also impede progress. Major powers use multilateral institutions to advance their strategic interests, compromising neutrality and effectiveness. Inconsistent funding also undermines effective spending. For example, the UK's recent cuts to multilateral humanitarian funding have significantly weakened aid responses to global crises, highlighting the challenges in maintaining steady and equitable support for humanitarian efforts.[31] Failures to align OECD donor priorities with recipient needs lead to ineffective aid allocation and management.[32] Research on UN disaster aid shows that, while the UN strives to allocate aid based on need, donor countries' strategic considerations still heavily influence outcomes.[33]

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[31] Lebedeva, O. V and A. S Shatalov. "Multilateral Humanitarian Aid As a Foreign Socio-Humanitarian Policy Tool in Britain." *Sovremennaâ Evropa* (2024)

[32] Nomura, S., Sakamoto, H., Ishizuka, A., Shimizu, K., & Shibuya, K. (2021). Tracking sectoral allocation of official development assistance: a comparative study of the 29 Development Assistance Committee countries, 2011–2018. Global Health Action, 14(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2021.1903222

[33] L.M. Dellmuth, F.A. Bender, A.R. Jönsson, E.L. Rosvold, N. von Uexkull, Humanitarian need drives multilateral disaster aid, (2021) https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2018293118

Together, these issues reveal systemic flaws in multilateral governance and underscore the need for reform to create more effective and accountable global institutions. Unequal representation in decision-making currently worsens governance outcomes. Developing countries are often underrepresented in critical processes, resulting in priorities that disproportionately benefit wealthy nations. The OECD's anti-tax evasion and global tax coordination initiatives, for instance, have been rightly criticized for marginalizing non-OECD countries, perpetuating systemic inequalities.

Embedding mutuality will not solve all these problems – international cooperation and finance is intrinsically a complex activity. But despite difficult headwinds, there is now an opportunity to revive the effectiveness agenda. By embedding principles of shared contributions, inclusive governance, and mutuality, the GPI approach creates a framework to tackle (but not fully resolve, given their intractability) longstanding problems related to harmonization, accountability, and transparency in international financing.

In recent years, there has been a renewed push to shift traditional development cooperation towards more collaborative and partnership-based models, emphasizing local ownership, capacity building, and multilateral solutions. The goal is to move away from a paternalistic model and toward frameworks that respect the sovereignty and priorities of recipient countries. Major players are recognizing the importance of heading in this direction, including the Gates Foundation, which talked in a recent paper of *"the need to develop a more joined-up framing of development problems and their solutions, and the need for a framework for decision making that allows all countries to see themselves as part of the global system. It is a framework where all countries contribute to their best ability and comparative advantage, depending on where they are on their development journeys."*[34]

One of GPI's most significant promises is greater effectiveness in achieving development goals, building on the principle of "all decide". Evidence consistently shows that when recipient countries have greater control and ownership of projects, the outcomes are more sustainable and effective. This shared decision-making process reduces inefficiencies, promotes accountability, and enhances the legitimacy of global investments.

Traditional systems of international financing, including private initiatives, often operate on short-term priorities or in reaction to emergencies, resulting in fragmented, inconsistent, and inefficient funding. This reactive approach leaves critical global issues underfunded and undercoordinated. Global public investment (GPI) represents a shift from ad hoc crisis-driven responses to a structured and sustainable approach to addressing global challenges.

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[34] Kalpana Kolchar and Susanna Gable essay in a recent CGD compendium on the future of ODA: https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/future-official-development-assistance-incremental-improvements-or-radical-reform.pdf

While this GPI approach is ambitious, its principles can be proven and refined through existing institutions, such as the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria or the Green Climate Fund which already embody elements of GPI's approach, including inclusive governance and shared contributions. By scaling these models and integrating GPI principles more broadly, the international community can demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of this transformative framework.

It is also worth mentioning the groundbreaking work of the Finance in Common grouping that is seeking to coordinate the activities of public banks (national, regional and global) for the first time. A recent report from McMaster University and Eurodad highlights the failure of the current financial architecture to mobilize the long-term, low-cost financing needed to achieve the SDGs and the Paris Agreement stemming from over-reliance on underperforming private finance and underutilization of public development banks. Public national and multilateral development banks (NDBs and MDBs) hold over $23 trillion in assets and can form the foundation of a global public financial ecosystem to deliver equitable, green transitions. It calls for the fostering of what it calls a "Global Public Financial Ecosystem" guided by transparent and democratic governance, to address funding gaps and bypass the limitations of market-driven approaches.[35]

Mutuality to incentivise contributions from the Global South

An inclusive governance structure provides the incentives for Global South countries to contribute more actively to global financing. The best way for Global South countries to gain more decision-making power is to make the move (sometimes little more than nominative as resource flows should still be lopsided) from recipient to co-contributor i.e. all countries put in (richer countries more than poorer) and all countries take out (poorer countries more than richer). Call it pay-to-play, or pay-for-say.

Put the other way around, Global South countries are more likely to contribute to global spending when an inclusive governance structure grants them greater power and voice because such frameworks address long-standing inequalities and empower all nations as equal partners in decision-making. By framing global cooperation as a mutual endeavour where all countries contribute according to their ability and benefit proportionately, GPI ensures that the priorities of the Global South are not only heard but actively integrated into decision-making processes.

Such inclusive structures also recognize and value the diverse contributions of Global South nations, whether financial, technical, or experiential. When their input is seen as essential rather than supplementary, these nations will be more inclined to commit resources to global initiatives. Moreover, shared governance ensures that global priorities are better aligned with local needs, leading to more impactful outcomes and demonstrating the direct benefits of participation. This principle has been demonstrated in institutions like the Green

[35] Fostering a Global Public Financial Ecosystem for Development and Climate Action, T20 Brasil, 2023. https://www.t20brasil.org/media/documentos/arquivos/TF03_ST_02_Fostering_a_Global66e198a8dae39.pdf

Climate Fund and the Global Fund, where equitable governance models have allowed developing countries to play significant roles in shaping global responses to critical challenges.

The McMaster/Eurodad study finds that middle-income countries are more likely to contribute when they perceive decision-making processes as equitable and representative, as demonstrated in multilateral governance systems like the BRICS initiatives.[36]

What might a "fair share" formula look like?

How do we decide how much each country should contribute to global challenges? The global public investment framework proposes a fair-share contribution model, where countries contribute based on their capacity to pay, historical responsibility, and current contribution to global challenges. This ensures that wealthier nations and high emitters contribute more, while middle- and low-income countries participate equitably without being overburdened. This would be overseen in much the same way that the OECD DAC oversees ODA spend i.e. monitoring and light review. Contributions are scaled to ensure that all countries participate, but in ways that reflect their circumstances and capacities.

Benefits of a Universal Contribution Model include **inclusivity** (even symbolic contributions from low-income nations foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, and enable them to claim a seat at the decision-making table), **legitimacy** (a model where all countries contribute is more likely to be perceived as fair and credible) and **sustainability** (by scaling contributions based on capacity and responsibility, we ensure a more predictable funding model.

Below is an outline of how contributions could be calculated.

1. Economic capacity (size of GDP)

Contributions are scaled according to a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with larger nations contributing a larger percentage of their GDP. This approach mirrors principles used in the UN Scale of Assessments, where financial contributions are based on a country's gross national income.

2. Income levels (GDP per capita)

Adjust contributions based on GDP per capita, with wealthier countries paying proportionally more and low-income countries contributing much less.

3. Responsibility for global problems

Some countries contribute – or have contributed – disproportionately to global challenges like climate change and environmental degradation. Such countries could pay more

[36] Fostering a Global Public Financial Ecosystem for Development and Climate Action, T20 Brasil, 2023. https://www.t20brasil.org/media/documentos/arquivos/TF03_ST_02_Fostering_a_Global66e198a8dae39.pdf

towards GPI. This criterion aligns with the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) under the Paris Agreement.[37]

4. **Special circumstances**
Countries experiencing economic or humanitarian crises may not have their usual capacity to contribute in certain years. Their contributions could be temporarily reduce or waived based on metrics such as debt burden, recent natural disasters, or conflict.

How would decisions be made?

The governance structures of international institutions, such as multilateral development banks (MDBs), global funds, and bilateral agencies, are often shaped by historical power dynamics, giving wealthier nations outsized influence. To align these institutions with the principles of global public investment – where **all contribute, all decide, and all benefit** – significant changes in decision-making processes, governance, and representation are needed.

A GPI approach based on mutuality would imply governance structures where all relevant stakeholders have a fair say in setting priorities and allocating resources. It could replace weighted voting systems with consensus-based decision-making or voting structures that balance financial contributions with equitable representation. And it could require institutions to publish decision-making processes, funding allocations, and impact assessments in real-time, allowing stakeholders to hold decision-makers accountable.

Wealthier nations would need to cede their disproportionate decision-making power while emerging economies would play a larger role in governance, reflecting their economic capacity and global impact. Smaller and poorer countries would also have an enhanced power and voice. Civil society could be integrated into decision-making processes to ensure funding addresses local needs and achieves maximum impact e.g. dedicated seats would be created on governance boards.

Clearly not all challenges are equally urgent and important, so priorities would need to be set mutually, informed by criteria such as:

1. **Global urgency**: Issues like climate change, pandemic response, and economic crises are pressing and require immediate action, potentially taking precedence in the allocation of funding.

2. **Impact potential**: Funding may be directed toward initiatives with the highest potential to yield global benefits, such as investments in sustainable energy or global health systems, which can have transformative effects across nations.

[37] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), "The Explainer: The Paris Agreement," UNFCCC, https://unfccc.int/news/the-explainer-the-paris-agreement

3. **Vulnerability and equity**: Some regions or countries, particularly those in the Global South, are more vulnerable to global challenges. GPI may prioritize funding that addresses inequities, ensuring that the most vulnerable populations receive support.

4. **Feasibility and readiness**: Certain challenges may require collaboration between multiple sectors, such as public, private, and civil society organizations, and could be prioritized based on the readiness of existing solutions and partnerships.

Some institutions, most notably the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), use a weighted voting system based on financial contributions. Wealthier countries, as major contributors, hold the majority of voting power meaning that low- and middle-income countries have limited influence despite being the primary recipients of funding. Shifting from a shareholder to a stakeholder approach would mitigate this problem somewhat. Global Funds (e.g., Green Climate Fund, Global Fund) tend to have more equal representation between donor and recipient countries on their boards.

BOX 2: The Global Fund scores quite high on GPI principles

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM) serves as a powerful example of how global public investment principles can be implemented to address global challenges.[38]

The Global Fund invites countries across all income levels contribute to addressing major health crises. High-income countries provide the bulk of funding, while middle- and low-income countries contribute symbolically or in kind, fostering a sense of shared responsibility. Between 2020 and 2022, the Global Fund raised $18 billion, with contributions coming from donor governments, recipient countries, private sector actors, and foundations.[39]

Equally significant is the Global Fund's governance model which seeks to ensure that all stakeholders – including donor and recipient governments, civil society, private sector actors, and technical agencies - have a fair voice in decision-making. The Fund's Board, which includes representatives from affected communities and technical partners such as the WHO, collaboratively determines funding allocations, program priorities, and strategies.

By demonstrating how shared contributions, mutual benefits, and collaborative governance can achieve significant outcomes, the Global Fund offers a practical roadmap for scaling GPI to a broader range of global challenges. The lessons from the Global Fund can guide the expansion of GPI principles into other sectors, such as climate, biodiversity, social protection and digital inclusion, to name a few.

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[38] Held, David, Ilona Kickbusch, Kyle McNally, Dario Piselli, and Michaela Told. 2025. "Gridlock, Innovation and Resilience in Global Health Governance." Global Policy 16 (1): 44–59. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1758-5899.12654.
[39] Seventh Replenishment Investment Case Report. The Global Fund, 2024. https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/11798/publication_seventh-replenishment-investment-case_report_en.pdf.

Oversight and accountability at the UN

To provide oversight and coherence to the emerging global public investment framework, a new (or renewed) United Nations body could play a role similar to that which the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) plays for ODA, but reimagined for a system grounded in mutuality, inclusiveness, and universal participation. This body would serve as the central platform for setting norms, monitoring effectiveness, and ensuring accountability in a system where all countries contribute, decide, and benefit.

This proposed UN entity would be tasked with developing and maintaining a shared code of practice for GPI. It would set standards and guidance on what constitutes effective and equitable global public investment, including fair contribution formulas, governance principles, and transparency expectations. It would act as a reference point for national and multilateral institutions wishing to align with GPI principles.

A key function of the body would be monitoring and public reporting. Building on already existing data analysis platforms (such as IATI[40], TOSSD[41] and GPEDC[42]) it could track who is contributing, in what form, and to which priorities. It would also assess how resources are governed and whether decision-making processes meet standards of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. This could include real-time data dashboards, peer-reviewed country profiles, and scorecards evaluating institutions and initiatives against GPI benchmarks.

To encourage continuous improvement and shared learning, the body could facilitate a peer review mechanism open to all participating countries – low-, middle-, and high-income alike. Rather than being top-down or donor-led, these reviews would be grounded in mutual assessment and learning, providing a space for countries to share experiences and demonstrate leadership regardless of income level or financial contribution.

The oversight body would also serve as a convener, helping align the fragmented global public finance ecosystem by bringing together states, multilateral institutions, public development banks, civil society, and the private sector. It would foster coherence across various initiatives – such as the Global Fund, the Green Climate Fund, and the Finance in Common network of public banks – by encouraging alignment with GPI principles and facilitating dialogue between actors with historically siloed mandates. In this way, the new body would act less as a regulator and more as a platform for coherence, learning, and principled standard-setting.

The governance of the oversight body itself would be designed to reflect equality and shared ownership. Membership would be universal and inclusive, with each country granted equal

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[40] https://iatistandard.org/en/
[41] https://tossd.org/
[42] https://www.effectivecooperation.org/

participation rights in core decision-making processes. Advisory or observer roles could be extended to public development banks, international NGOs, civil society groups, and technical experts. To avoid regional domination or geopolitical capture, leadership could be organized through a rotating co-chair system across global regions. Subcommittees might focus on areas such as refining the fair-share formula, assessing effectiveness, and responding to emerging global challenges in ways that respect both urgency and equity.

To gain traction, the body could begin with a small pilot initiative—a mutuality peer review involving a diverse group of willing countries, or a baseline report mapping the current governance of global public financing institutions against GPI standards. Such a pilot would offer proof of concept, build political momentum, and help shape the architecture of a truly 21st-century global investment system.

By embedding this body within the UN system and grounding it in shared principles of fairness, inclusion, and transparency, the international community could begin to construct the institutional scaffolding for a new era of global cooperation. Like the DAC in its time, this body could help define the language, expectations, and accountability mechanisms for a fundamentally new model of global finance.

4. What now? Getting to work

How can we navigate the current geopolitical moment?

This paper has proposed that, in response to the urgent challenge of mobilizing more money and spending it more effectively for global challenges, advocates for international public finance should lean in hard to the mutual interest narrative and a complementary focus on mutuality in global institutions.

The birth of global public investment, already underway, signals a paradigm shift in how international public finance is structured and delivered, reflecting the growing recognition that the current aid system is no longer sufficient to address the interconnected global challenges of the 21st century. The birth of GPI represents a natural evolution in international public finance, driven by the need to modernize the system to meet contemporary challenges, and indeed to normalize relationships between countries in a post-colonial age, without reducing the appropriate responsibilities associated with history and wealth.

The challenge for the global cooperation community is to manage the emergences of this new system as boldly and effectively as possible, and to do so in an era in which nationalism is very much back on the scene. In this conclusion we set out ideas for urgent implementation to stem the haemorrhaging we are already beginning to see and, in the best of cases, build momentum behind a new era of sufficient and effective international public finance.

Navigating today's politics characterized, particularly in the Global North, by rising nationalism and scepticism toward multilateralism, requires a pragmatic, incremental approach. Rather than aiming for radical immediate overhauls, progress can be achieved by building coalitions of willing actors, including governments, civil society, and businesses, to demonstrate the effectiveness of collaborative solutions to shared challenges, allowing for flexibility and adaptability to the unexpected.

An incremental strategy begins with strengthening and reforming existing institutions to align with inclusive, fair, and sustainable principles. Successes in smaller-scale efforts can build political momentum and counter the narrative that multilateralism is inefficient or irrelevant. Governments committed to multilateralism, alongside engaged civil society organizations and private sector leaders, can come together in coalitions to drive initiatives that deliver tangible benefits.

Navigating this geopolitical moment requires patience, strategic alliances, and evidence of success. Incremental change, combined with visible impacts, as part of an evolving narrative and institutionality, can counter nationalism's pull and lay the groundwork for a more cooperative global future.

Start with Global Public Goods

There is a consensus now building - certainly among experts and practitioners, if not yet politicians and their constituencies - around the need to finance global public goods (however broadly defined) in a new way. This consensus is evidenced by UN negotiations and spurred further by the current turmoil in the sector.

Global public goods benefit all countries. In technical terms, they are non-rivalrous (one country's use does not reduce the availability for others) and non-excludable (no country can be excluded from benefiting). Examples of GPGs include climate stability/mitigation, pandemic preparedness and response, biodiversity, and peace/security. For example, climate change mitigation requires large-scale investments in renewable energy and carbon emissions reduction which benefit not just the countries investing but the global community as a whole. Similarly, pandemic preparedness ensures that we are all better equipped to manage health crises, benefiting everyone by reducing the global spread of disease. Global financial stability of the kind guaranteed (in theory) by the IMF can also be classified as a global public good.

It is strategically sensible at this stage, therefore, to lean into this distinction between GPGs on the one hand and other development/humanitarian spending on the other. Given that GPGs are obviously and directly to everyone's benefit, the case is simple that they should be collectively funded along the lines of global public investment i.e. all contribute according to a fair-share financing mechanism (or mechanisms) based on capacity and responsibility, and all decide via a representative governance model respecting not only size of contribution but also sovereign rights (i.e. more stakeholder than shareholder).

Global public investment could thus establish its governance and financing mechanisms around clear-cut global common challenges, and as GPI scales up, non-GPG issues like girls' education and non-communicable diseases could be incorporated under its framework. This transitional approach to global public investment aligns with the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals by providing a sustainable, equitable financing framework for the full range of global challenges.

It is very hard to draw a line between goods from which we all benefit and "development" goals designed to help only a certain part of the world (as discussed by many authors including Gulrajani and Calleja, 2019).[43] There is a hard-nosed self-interested rationale for every piece of spending on development cooperation, just as there is a charitable or reparative or solidaristic rationale for every investment currently categorized as a GPG – it's just the balance is different in different cases. That is why in previous work we have proposed, instead of a confusing binary categorization about what does and doesn't count as a GPG, a sliding scale which we called the scale of Global Common Benefit.[44] We have

[43] https://odi.org/en/publications/the-principled-aid-index-understanding-donor-motivations/
[44] See a Substack article written by Glennie and Damluji, 2024. https://globalnation.substack.com/p/beyond-global-public-goods

also suggested a Country Cost Curve as a practical tool for governments to decide which expenditures qualify as national priorities by assessing their costs and returns. The approach emphasizes the self-interest case for international spending, calculating tangible benefits for contributing countries alongside global impacts.[45]

Despite strong attempts to convince the world that internationalism is pointless or dead, the coming years could deliver momentum, credibility, and a new moral centre for cooperation. Through smart, timely institutional interventions—anchored in values of fairness, participation, and shared purpose—the GPI approach can begin to reshape how the world governs its collective future. The next two sub sections set out next steps to develop global public investment in practice.

Investing in the mutual interest narrative

The birth to global public investment begins not with money or institutions, but with ideas. At its core, GPI proposes a shift in how the world understands international cooperation—from a story of charity to one of mutual interest and shared responsibility. To make this shift real, the first phase of GPI implementation must focus on building a powerful, evidence-based narrative that resonates both with political leaders and the public.

Laying the foundations

In the immediate term, the priority is to develop a strong and persuasive evidence base that demonstrates how international public finance benefits all countries, not just the recipients. This includes commissioning detailed case studies and economic modelling that show, for example, how investments in climate resilience reduce migration pressures, how global health initiatives strengthen pandemic preparedness everywhere, and how global digital inclusion can increase market access and innovation worldwide.

This evidence must be matched by a sophisticated communication strategy. Communications experts, researchers, and civil society leaders need to come together to craft messaging that reframes global cooperation as a strategic investment in shared well-being, rather than as charity or historical obligation. These narratives should be tested and refined in key political contexts—particularly in G7 countries, where public scepticism about global spending is rising. The aim is to connect international action with domestic priorities: lower energy prices, food security, public health, and economic stability.

At the same time, advocacy and campaigns that emphasize helping “them” need to be replaced by campaigns that emphasize working together. The language of generosity must be rebalanced towards the language of shared benefit. Shifting decades of narrative habits will take time, which is why it must start as soon as possible, laying the foundation for broader political buy-in later. To support this work, a dedicated effort should be made to expand the research and communications capacity of the GPI movement.

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[45] Beyond Global Public Goods. Damluji, H. and Glennie, J. 2023. https://substack.com/home/post/p-109840555

Scaling the narrative

The eventual goal is to bring this narrative into the mainstream of global discourse. A sustained, global campaign – spanning media, civil society, education, and political advocacy – should promote GPI as a smart investment in national and global well-being. The campaign could highlight real-world examples of GPI in action, using powerful human stories alongside data to demonstrate results.

Importantly, the mutual interest narrative must not only persuade publics in the Global North – it must also reflect and elevate the voices of the Global South. Leaders, academics, and civil society from lower- and middle-income countries have long articulated a vision of cooperation based on solidarity and dignity rather than dependence. Their leadership will be vital in rebalancing the narrative landscape and reinforcing the message that GPI is about partnership, not paternalism.

As this new framing gains traction, it must begin to shape political and institutional language. Policy frameworks, G7 and G20 communiqués, and multilateral development strategies should reflect the principles of mutual benefit and shared responsibility. Ministries of finance and development should be encouraged to connect their global financing strategies to national priorities, making the domestic case for global action.

The narrative renaissance is the essential groundwork for institutional evolution. Without a new story about why we act together, the financial and political support for GPI will not materialize; with a narrative that speaks to shared futures, domestic returns, and global dignity, GPI can move from idea to norm.

Seizing moments to embed institutional mutuality

If the narrative of mutual interest helps mobilize political will and public support, the institutional evolution toward mutuality ensures that this new global cooperation is built on fairness, voice, and effectiveness. The challenge is not only to generate more international public finance but to spend it better – through governance systems that reflect the evolving realities of a multipolar world. This means seizing the right moments to reform existing institutions and build new ones that embody the principles of global public investment: all contribute, all benefit, and all decide.

Piloting mutuality

The years ahead offer several key opportunities to advance institutional reform. Chief among them is the 2025 Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), which will be a critical moment to advocate for the principles of mutual interest and mutuality in global financial governance. Advocates should push for the inclusion of GPI-aligned language in the conference outcomes, and for formal recognition of fair-share contribution models and inclusive decision-making structures.

Other strategic forums – such as the G20 Summit in South Africa, where the African Union is likely to play a leading role, and ongoing processes around the UN Development

Cooperation Forum (UNDCF) – can be leveraged to begin embedding GPI principles into mainstream institutional thinking. These moments are not just symbolic; they are windows through which new norms and operational models can be introduced into global finance.

Beyond the global stage, pilot reforms should be pursued in existing institutions that are already somewhat aligned with GPI values. The Global Fund, the Green Climate Fund, and the Global Partnership for Education already offer partial models of mutuality, with contributions from a wide range of countries and more representative governance structures than the Bretton Woods institutions. These bodies can serve as testbeds for deepening mutuality – enhancing recipient country voice, increasing transparency, and formalizing fair-share contributions.

At the same time, regional development banks – such as the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank – offer another layer of opportunity. With their strong regional ties and flexible governance arrangements, they are well-placed to adapt GPI principles to regional contexts. In some cases, new regional funds could be created from the ground up to demonstrate what fully GPI-aligned governance might look like. These reforms not only improve institutional performance – they also build legitimacy and ownership among countries that have long felt sidelined in global decision-making.

Institutionalising mutuality at scale

Once the principles of mutuality have been tested and refined in smaller institutions, the focus must shift to embedding them in the broader architecture of international public finance. The longer-term goal is to influence the governance structures of the World Bank, the IMF, and other large-scale financial institutions that continue to shape the global economy.

Reforms here will be more contentious, but momentum built through successful pilots will help. A focus on creating new budget lines for Global Public Goods, governed separately from traditional aid mechanisms, can provide a politically feasible entry point. These lines could be managed through finance ministries or foreign affairs departments, but with clear mandates and accountability to contribute according to a fair-share model. Civil society and oversight bodies should be involved in ensuring transparency and follow-through.

At the same time, a dedicated global oversight body for GPI must begin to take shape. Housed within the UN system - possibly under the expanded mandate of the UNDCF – this body would monitor GPI flows, assess institutional alignment with mutuality principles, and provide a platform for dialogue and accountability. Much like the OECD DAC has done for ODA, this new entity would establish soft norms, set expectations, and track progress across the ecosystem.

This process should be as participatory as the governance structures it promotes. Peer review mechanisms could be introduced, allowing countries to assess one another's contributions and governance practices in the spirit of mutual accountability. Public dashboards and performance scorecards could bring transparency and public engagement into the system, reinforcing trust and political support.

Finally, a fair-share contribution framework will need to be formalized – one that takes into account economic capacity, responsibility and special circumstances. Though the exact formula will need careful negotiation, the principle is clear: all must contribute, but not all equally.

Afterword: How will we know when we have arrived?

The road to implementing a new model of global finance based on the global public investment approach is undoubtedly challenging. But in an era of increasing global interdependence, rising demands for reparations and decolonization, and the urgent need to address Global Public Goods, the necessity of a new approach has never been clearer. Failing to sufficiently integrate GPI principles into global institutions and approaches risks perpetuating the inequities and inefficiencies that hinder meaningful global progress. Private and philanthropic funding, while valuable, cannot replace public, collective action, with its focus on equitable, transparent, and inclusive decision-making processes.

GPI represents an opportunity to reimagine global finance by addressing systemic gaps. It offers a framework that appeals to wealthier nations through a narrative of mutual interest and shared responsibility, while empowering the Global South with shared ownership and decision-making. By expanding the financial pool, incorporating fair-share contributions, and fostering collaboration across regions, GPI can establish a system better suited to the interconnected challenges of the 21st century.

Without bold action, the world risks stagnation in outdated systems that fail to meet the needs of both the present and future. By embracing global public investment, we can take a significant step toward a more just, dignified, and sustainable global financial system. There is no technical reason that a full global public investment approach should not be piloted on a number of urgent global challenges. Doing so will help demonstrate what global public investment can do through showing not telling, enable countries and stakeholders to improve it by learning, and light the way for roll out.

This journey has no fixed endpoint. The dream of achieving one world community, as the Pearson Commission put it in 1969, or a “Larger Us”, as Alex Evans has put it more recently,[46] where global cooperation transcends divisions, is an ongoing aspiration. While its realization may be beyond our current imagination, the task before us is to respond to the present moment with wisdom and urgency.

[46] https://larger.us/ideas/?report

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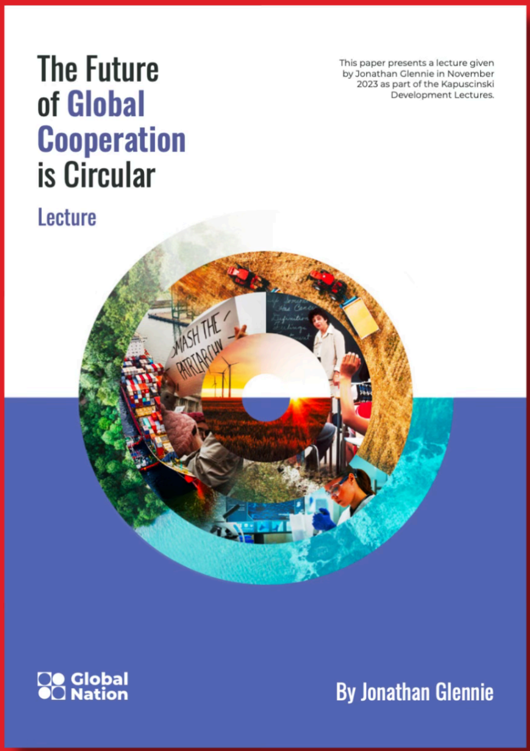

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