



FUTURE
DIALOGUES



Justice-led
approaches
to global
development

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About this document

On 1 May 2024, Bond convened a workshop as part of the Future Dialogues series to consider justice-led approaches to international development. Workshop participants consisted of Bond members, representatives from academia and think tanks. The discussion focused on justice-led approaches because of their transformative potential and because we are at a time when alternatives to the more traditional charity model are needed.

This document brings together two distinct contributions to discussions around justice-led approaches to international development: a 'provocation' commissioned by Bond and prepared by Priya Lukka, an economist specialising in repair-based approaches outcomes of the Bond workshop. It is a snapshot of an ongoing discussion and aims to present an initial surfacing of ideas, innovations and possibilities.

Introduction

Justice-led approaches offer a way of examining and responding to inequalities that have been produced by histories of colonisation, ongoing neoliberalism and the hierarchy of whiteness, gender, class and sexuality (among others) which help to maintain the power imbalance. These approaches encompass ideas for healing and the restoration of dignity and sovereignty, and they provide guidance and ideas for ways in which the UK international non-governmental organisation (INGO) sector can change and evolve.

Current 'charitable' framings of global challenges like poverty, inequality and exclusion are increasingly thought to disempower recipients of overseas development assistance (ODA) and depoliticise development, while a justice-led approach is rooted in solidarity and recognises the desire for equity for everyone. Taking a justice-led approach to development has the potential to build social justice by fostering connection and shared perspectives with movements and activism in low- and middle-income countries. Reparations, repair and anti-coloniality hold the radical potential to tackle the structural harms perpetrated by neo-colonialism which have created economic dependency and eroded economic sovereignty. If these approaches were better understood and explored, they could be front and centre of the international development sector's work. They also have relevance for promoting the transformation of power and governance systems.

What follows is a provocation. It proposes a set of ideas to provide momentum towards a new way of thinking about development. It is meant to evoke a sense of contemplation, discomfort and enthusiasm for what could be possible. Please invite yourself to create space for what follows.



About the Future Dialogues

The Future Dialogues convenes a space where the UK international development sector and others can take the time to think creatively and test ideas about the challenges and opportunities they face. Global challenges like poverty, inequality, exclusion and the climate crisis require new models rooted in justice, equality and solidarity. Those models need to be imagined, created and tested.

Conversations about what an international development system for a post-SDG world looks like are happening all around the globe. Bond's Future Dialogues add to that conversation with a focus on the UK's role. We take this approach, not because we believe the UK is or should be centred in discussions of international development, but because Bond's remit is explicitly UK-focused.

Over the past two years, Bond has convened and led a series of discussions to surface and interrogate key ideas and innovations with the potential to transform international development for the better. The Future Dialogues project takes an innovation-led approach rather than focusing on higher-level values or principles. We wanted to step beyond critiques of the current system while providing tangible ideas and ways forward.

Throughout the project, we have used the Three Horizons approach to organise our thinking about what the future could look like across four sites of transformation.¹ This framework helped us identify patterns of growth and decline within the system. Horizon 1 focuses on current practices (often in decline), Horizon 3 envisions transformative futures aligned with emerging

trends and needs, and Horizon 2 represents the transition zone where responses to current shortcomings and actions for future opportunities are developed. In this report, we will be using an amended version of this framework, which focuses on Horizon 1 and Horizon 3 for the discussion.

We grouped the emerging ideas into four sites of transformation. They are best thought of as areas where change is happening which are both impacting upon and being impacted by what we call the international development system. Using these groupings is a way to break down these complex and overlapping processes. We will be using them to help frame emerging themes in the discussions around justice-led approaches to international development.

The sites of transformation are:



Agency and
solidarity



International
architecture



Economics
for people
and planet



Finance
and funding
models

1. For more on the Three Horizons framework, see Sharp B. (2020), Three Horizons: The Patterning of Hope – 2nd Ed [and this explainer video](#).

The problem statement

The UK international development sector started from an idea of generosity, launched from charitable endeavours rooted in the concepts of benevolence and acts of faith. However, its origins are also tied to the UK government's former British Colonial Office which engaged with geographies under the UK's control using economic, political and ideological power to colonise not only territories but also people's minds and bodies. This colonialism shaped the sector's origins and evolution, and it has influenced the sector's priorities and how it is organised. UK international development INGOs remain closely connected to the UK government, particularly the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

As part of its commitment to realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, the UK has a role to play, both nationally and globally, to reverse chronic underinvestment in public services, combat inequalities and prevent further poverty, hunger, exclusion and environmental degradation. It also has an obligation to protect the environment and contribute to climate adaptation, given how close we are to a potential tipping point for climate change which will lead to ecological breakdown. As it currently stands, the charitable trickle of UK ODA, disbursed via development activities, is accompanied by larger-scale damage the UK, alongside other high-income countries, is causing through its trade, tax, military and debt policies that are still shaped by colonial dynamics and attitudes. These policies enable the UK and other high-income countries to accumulate wealth unfairly while counterpart countries, for example trading partners, are economically and environmentally drained.

The UK INGO sector plays multiple roles within the international development system, some of which may have compromised

its core mission. The UK INGO sector is simultaneously :
a) a consulting partner to the FCDO and its predecessors, shaping government policies and political positions relating to development, b) a recipient UK aid and programme delivery agent, and c) an advocate and critical voice on the role and voting patterns of the UK in multilateralism, especially its power to veto. This is particularly relevant to recent circumstances; the war in Palestine highlights the crucial link between conflict and development. The international development sector's role in the UK government's international development project calls into question the validity and purpose of the sector and presents an urgent challenge for transformation.

The sector's origins and history may have informed its current structure, ways of working and priorities, but it does not have to stay this way. It is possible to transform the sector, and in doing so transform its ability to help equalise conditions and achieve basic human rights. The impact of the current socio-economic, climate and other crises on people and countries in need of support demands this fundamental change. Justice-led development offers an alternative model.

Making space for a stronger justice-orientated approach means confronting elements of coloniality and structural forms of racism² within and around the international development sector. The way we work in the UK must change to be in solidarity with countries that lack the sovereignty to chart their own development. This could mean giving up power, changing roles by giving up some functions and investing more in others, as well as developing

² International Development Committee (2022), Racism in the Aid Sector.

The problem statement

more equitable ways of working. For example, organisations moving towards models could take a further step and no longer accept funds to implement projects outside of their place of origin, ceding that space, funding and power to communities. Instead, organisations based in the UK and other high-income countries could re-focus their resources on campaigning, advocacy and awareness-raising in their own markets.

Solidarity can also mean organisations and actors in the sector recognising system-wide problems with the way that development processes work and their role within them. This could include reappraising how the sector uses its voice and access to high-income country governments and populations, and whether current advocacy asks go far enough. For example, working to reframe issues around migration as protecting lives rather than policing borders. The limitations created by current UK charity law and the UK Charity Commission's regulations would need to evolve to enable these new approaches.

The origins of the UK's wealth from colonial extraction and drain have not been acknowledged, and the harm the UK caused through its empire remains unremedied. A first step is to look at the government's 0.5% of GNI ODA budget disbursement (£15.4 billion for 2023)³ relative to other flows. The UK aid budget can be compared with the financial transfers owed as a result of stolen wealth. It has recently been estimated that Britain is required to pay US\$24.011 trillion as reparation for transatlantic chattel slavery in 14 countries⁴. In India, the drain from the British Raj is estimated at US\$45 trillion. The amount that the UK government dedicates to ODA should also be viewed alongside the extent of lost revenue it facilitates through its enabling of tax havens, in effect an ongoing policy of colonialism. This is estimated to be a loss of US\$4.7 trillion which could provide much needed domestic revenue for public services in many countries where there are huge gaps in meeting basic needs. These figures

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 3 House of Commons (2023), [Statistics on International Development](#).

4 Brattle Consultants (2023), Report on Reparations for Transatlantic Chattel Slavery in the Americas and the Caribbean.

make the UK aid budget seem modest in comparison. They also present an important opportunity to address and remedy the harm that has impoverished many aid-recipient countries and created the need for aid. This colonial drain is a root cause of poverty. Remedy requires moving beyond treating development challenges as a matter of getting the right policies in place (i.e., aid effectiveness). It means addressing the injustice of previous and ongoing coloniality.

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 5 Patnaik, U. and Patnaik, P. (2016), *A Theory of Imperialism*, Columbia University Press.

6 Tax Justice Network (2023), [The State of Tax Justice](#)

Justice-based approaches: some core aspects

In the development landscape, rethinking approaches through a stronger focus on the pursuit of justice can provide new ways of re-imagining the world. Justice is seen as something objective that has the purpose of making the world a better place. From a decolonial perspective, the justice of the present is a function of the justice of the past.⁷ Its pursuit is multi-faceted. Justice is achieved, as history would demonstrate, through people and their movements fighting for change and resisting structures that serve the interests of powerful and elite groups. Justice is not necessarily achieved through more rule-based structures.

Repair/remedy for harm caused: 'A way of acknowledging historic wrongs and accounting for them'.⁸ Throughout history, reparations have been pursued by people, groups and communities which often act as agents of change in the move to interrogate structural power relations and factors that perpetuate the exclusion of people who are marginalised, minoritised and excluded.

Colonialism has resulted in many forms of damage; economic, ecological, societal, political and psychological. The concept of reparations is based on the idea of repairing this damage. A reparations approach acknowledges the harm and the impact of policies designed to extract resources from former colonial states, resulting in unjust enrichment at the cost of oppressed communities. Repair and remedy also seeks to restore people's dignity, and it is crucial to working in solidarity with communities that have experienced harm.

7 Macklem, P. (2005), 'Rybna 9, Praha 1: Restitution and Memory in International Human Rights Law, European Journal of International Law, 2005-02, Vol.16 (1), p.1-23.

8 Bhambra, G.K. (2022), 'A Decolonial Project for Europe', A Journal of Common Market Studies, Volume 60, Issue 2p.229-244.

Reparations are rooted in the idea of planet repairs, as coined by activists and scholars in the pan-Afrikan, holistic reparations movement where there is an interconnection between cognitive justice, reparatory justice and environmental justice. In this approach, there is a focus on how we are in relationship to one another, to the planet, to our ancestors and to spiritual knowledge. Restoration (returning to original position) and restitution (restoring lost items like land) to rehabilitation (restoring from damage) also fall under this framing.

International human rights law framework for reparations: The United Nations framework for reparations, adopted in 2003 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, outlines what people who experience human rights and humanitarian law violations should receive:

- Restitution: The restoration of the original situation before violation; it could include land, property, identity and liberty.
- Compensation: Calculated not just in terms of mental harm, physical harm and material damage, but also for lost opportunities and moral damage.
- Satisfaction: A need for truthful public discourse, acceptance of responsibility, commemoration and tributes.
- Guarantees of non-repetition: These ensure that violations do not continue or are not repeated.

Anti-coloniality: While some of the more public debates on reparations focus on the need to acknowledge harm caused by

Justice-based approaches: some core aspects

institutions and states and the sums that should be paid, there are broader concepts of reparations that are richly intertwined with anti-colonial perspectives which demand radical and justice-driven change.⁹ The concept of reparations urges us to make links between historic injustice and present-day issues. It argues that the origins of social inequalities matter and should be more central to the way in which we think about development. Repair here could mean returning land and resources that have been taken. Anti-colonialism also provides a lens for unpacking aid distribution patterns, such as why it is allocated to particular settings and not to others, and whether there are patterns of bias in that.

For steps to be made towards this in the UK context, there would need to be a reckoning with Britain's colonial project, the harm it has caused and the mechanisms through which it is continued and legitimised. This requires moving on from notions of guilt to engaging in a truthful and participatory discussion of the inequality colonialism has led to between and within countries. This also requires looking at the UK's role in the G7, the UN Security Council and other decision-making structures, which have critical implications for the erosion or improvement of justice across the world.

Participation: The concept of how harm has been caused to affected communities is central in the pursuit of repair. How claims originate and are articulated by communities is also important. Processes to determine this often establish themselves as truth and reparatory justice inquiries which can lead to consultations and hearings in which evidence can be heard. Examples include the Nuremberg Trials after the end of World War II, which helped to establish the process for Holocaust reparations, and the process for truth and reconciliation in South Africa following the end of the apartheid.

The international development sector could play a role in providing historical education on the harms caused by the former British empire which would serve to engage the public in a more balanced way, as it has done on issues on debt, tax, trade and climate breakdown over many years. Another way for the international development sector to participate would be to work in partnership with diaspora communities based in the UK in the development of their home countries, aligned to the work of organisations like AFFORD and Shabaka.



⁹ Stanford Xosei, E. (2022), 'Indigenous Liberation Day: [Keynote Speech by Esther Stanford-Xosei](#)'; Karenga, M. (31 January 2022), '[The Ethical Imperative of Serudj Ta: To Repair, Renew and Remake the World](#)' [online article, accessed June 2024].

The discussion

Values and principles

The first phase of the Future Dialogues identified seven guiding principles to help ground discussions on the desired outcomes for the future. These were not focused on justice-led approaches but were concepts that the Future Dialogues core group felt needed to underpin any future direction for international development. These provided a jumping-off point for a rapid-fire brainstorm during the justice-led approaches workshop. Participants were asked to add principles and values they felt were necessary or desirable for a justice-led development system. This was a generative rather than a consensus process. The group had limited time to make adjustments, remove concepts or perfect what was surfaced. The resulting word cloud visually reflects this collaborative effort, with larger words indicating concepts that came up multiple times. It is important to acknowledge that these principles are neither complete nor perfect, but a snapshot of a continuing conversation. This word cloud encapsulates aspirations to inspire our discussions and actions toward a more just and equitable international development system.



The discussion

Cross-cutting issues and challenges in the present system (Horizon One)

The current system is working extremely well for an elite minority. It is working exactly as it was intended. Across the conversations of the first horizon, there was a sense that some things were moving in the wrong direction. As one participant put it, they are “losing hope in state-administered systems that can sustain decent lives for all. We are moving away from even a pretence of ending disposability, ethnic cleansing and mass deaths for some. On the contrary, mass death is viewed as a business opportunity”.¹⁰ This concern – that we are collectively coming to accept that some people’s lives are worth less than others or are disposable – permeated the discussions. There was a shared sense that we need to fundamentally change mindsets and paradigms.

White supremacy, neoliberalism, heteropatriarchy, racism, xenophobia, nationalism, militarism and authoritarianism all came up as features of the wider system that are preventing a shift to justice-led approaches in international development. Participants across the groups highlighted that commitment to equal rights for people of colour, women, LGBTQIA+ people, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees is declining, while populism is rising. Amid war and the duplicity of diplomacy, stability and security are declining. Within this context, justice-led approaches face an uphill battle.



To visually capture the innovative ideas generated from the workshop, we are presenting them through a sun-rising metaphor. Here we are imagining a new dawn of international development. The ground, depicted as a slope, represents ideas that are in decline (Horizon One), making way for the radiant rays of the rising sun that represent our bold visions for the future (Horizon Three). Each of the four sites of transformation — agency and solidarity, international architecture, funding and finance models and economics for people and planet — will illuminate its own unique sunrise, showcasing the innovative concepts put forth by our experts. To highlight their transformative potential, the most compelling ideas will shine brighter in larger fonts. As you read these illustrations, we hope they inspire you to see the dawn of a just and equitable global future.

We have amended the Three Horizons framework and focused on the first and third horizons for these discussions – a detailed description of this framework can be found in the introduction.

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¹⁰ Quote from workshop participant, 1 May 2024.

Agency and solidarity



This site of transformation situates us in the social sphere, exploring ideas and innovations for how civil society can work together towards and within justice-led approaches. 'Development' organisations, particularly those based in or shaped by high-income countries, are re-examining their place in the international development ecosystem. In part, this has been spurred on by domestic anti-racism movements like Black Lives Matter in the USA and the UK, coinciding with longstanding demands from people in low- and middle-income countries and so-called 'affected communities' for greater voice, agency and power in the decisions and processes that impact them.

The scale of the social and environmental change needed requires that we work better together at different levels. We want this to be grounded in equity and justice, with all voices valued, and with decisions made by those closest to or by those most affected by the issue being addressed. This means learning to work together differently.

Agency and solidarity

Ideas mapping

This slide details the ideas mapped by participants and which ideas were endorsed more



Unpacking the horizon

Workshop participants discussed both the wider social environment as well as the current role civil society actors are playing.

Relationships and alliances are being reset in recognition of how the existing system entrenches inequality and injustice and, as a result, privileges certain organisations and groups. At the same time, they acknowledged that power is shifting or has shifted – not fast or far enough for some, too fast and too far for others – but the transition has started. There were concerns about backlash and the ‘culture wars’.

There is also recognition that development challenges are not restricted to ‘developed’ or ‘developing’ countries. These shared challenges present opportunities for shared learning or solidarity which is very different from a traditional philanthropy model. UK-based organisations are also disconnected from supporters and the UK public. The narratives we have relied upon for support and income are not effective. They rely on oversimplified, paternalistic and racist tropes of victims and saviours that deny agency, voice and power to people in low- and middle-income countries.

Assumptions about where expertise sits, where knowledge originates, where and by whom decisions should be taken and even what success looks like need to be challenged. Organisations, particularly those based in high-income countries, need to reform their structures and processes to redress longstanding and deep-rooted inequalities and biases. Participants highlighted the need to move from discussion to action.

Externally, they highlighted threats to civic space globally and in the UK, a lack of trust and empathy as well as declining political appetite for risk. Technology was identified both as an enabling factor and a risk. There were concerns that technology was exacerbating inequalities and spreading misinformation. For example, artificial intelligence (AI) might further entrench the narratives of high-income countries at the expense of others. The division between people, polarisation and antagonism were felt to be rising. More specifically for civil society, the need for INGOs to be based in high-income

countries is declining. However, a lack of trust in partnerships and the continued cooption of language and movements were identified as barriers to more justice-led approaches.

Participants imagined a world where the aid and development narrative had been replaced by solidarity and collective action to end inequality. A justice-led international development sector would be characterised by curiosity, including interest in decolonisation, active questioning of the sector’s role and comfort in contestation. It would offer space, a multiplicity of solutions and approaches, and improved skills in transformation and adaptation leading to less fear of uncertainty.

This system would be characterised by notions of care for people and the planet. Dignity-led approaches would be the norm. Social movements and coalitions would be a key organising modality. We could even see a resurgence of ‘third worldism’ as a global movement for liberation. At all levels, power structures will be participatory, accountable and inclusive. Accountability will be primarily towards communities rather than donors, and local agency will be centred in all approaches. Young people, with social consciousness connected by social media, will be key players, as will diaspora communities acting as a bridge across geographies.

The discussion paper surfaced other key ideas, including:

The demarcation of the world: Today’s world is organised between a core and periphery of countries or a ‘developed North’ to the ‘under-developed South’.¹¹ There are rich and poor parts of societies in both sections of the world labelled as the lower-income countries and the higher-income countries. Yet development is still structured to give to a homogenized ‘lower income countries poor’. This disregards the notion that there is a global elite and the rest of the world, among which there are deep divides based on structures of class and proxies for class outside of the UK.

11 Narayanaswamy, L. (2013), ‘Problematizing ‘Knowledge-for-Development’, *Development and Change*, 44 (5), p.1065 - 1086.

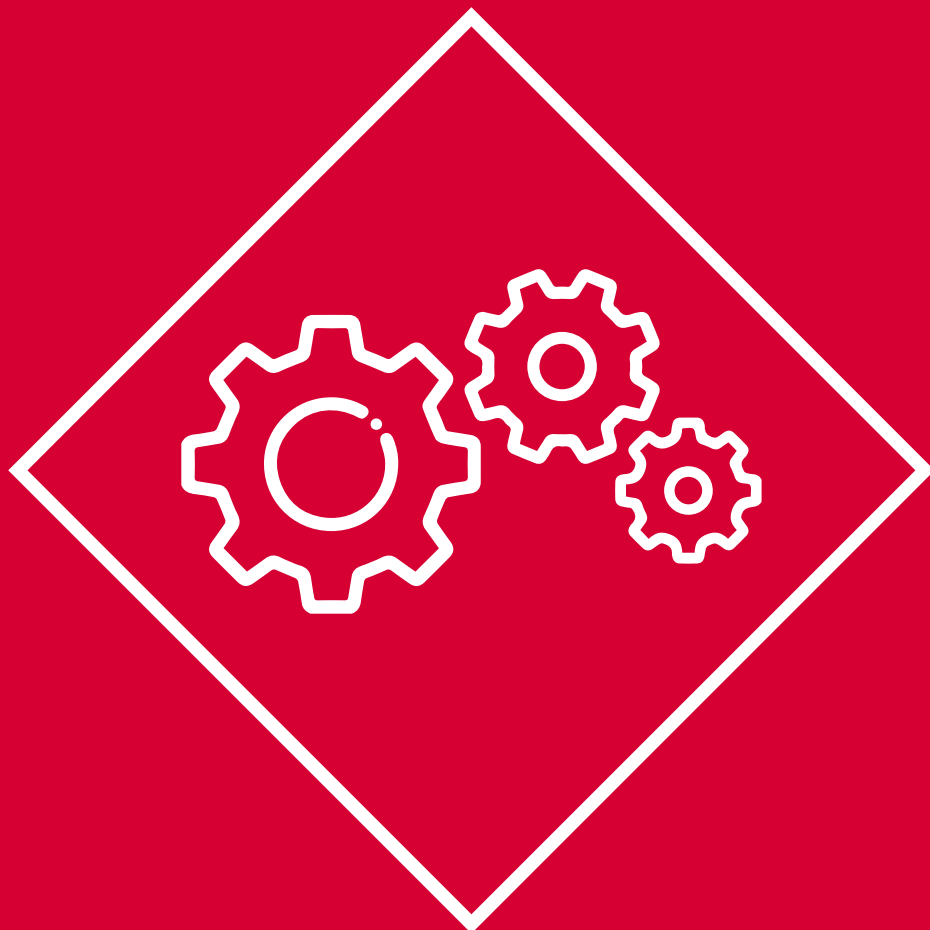
It also ignores the experience of Black liberation movements in places such as the USA, the UK and Europe which fight incarceration, and Caucasian people who were historically part of landless peasantries who laboured without the opportunity for asset ownership and who face disenfranchisement and exclusion in today's wealth structures. These problems of demarcation also apply to the way that migration is not always seen as an issue of justice, but as a border protection issue instead. People often make precarious decisions to migrate because they face destitution, which is linked to foreign policy, and where the UK is implicated in many settings. This means repair and responsibility for the political choices that determine global justice outcomes are crucially linked.

Diverse knowledge generation and terminology: Knowledge and ways of working from what are considered countries of higher-income countries have often been viewed or presented as intrinsically more valuable than those of local and Indigenous communities and/or knowledge from what is termed lower income countries.¹² This is relevant because many of the strategies underpinning humanitarian assistance and development create barriers to understanding or accepting the independent expertise and agency of actors from local settings.¹³ The language of development is significant here – 'race' has seemingly been rejected and has been replaced by ideas such as 'developed', 'underdeveloped' and 'developing'. In part, this has led to the invisibility of racial injustice and the need for the international development sector to focus on these disparities. How does the sector need to change to become demonstrably anti-racist, building on the many commitments like the Pledge for Change, the Charter for Change and CREED, among others?

12 Osofisan, W. (20 November 2020), '[Opinion: Why the Black Lives Matter movement should have us rethinking humanitarian aid](#)' [Devex blog, accessed June 2024].

13 Olowookere, S. (2 June 2020), '[George Floyd's death shows us how international development needs to change](#)' [We Are Restless blog, accessed June 2024].

International architecture: power and reform



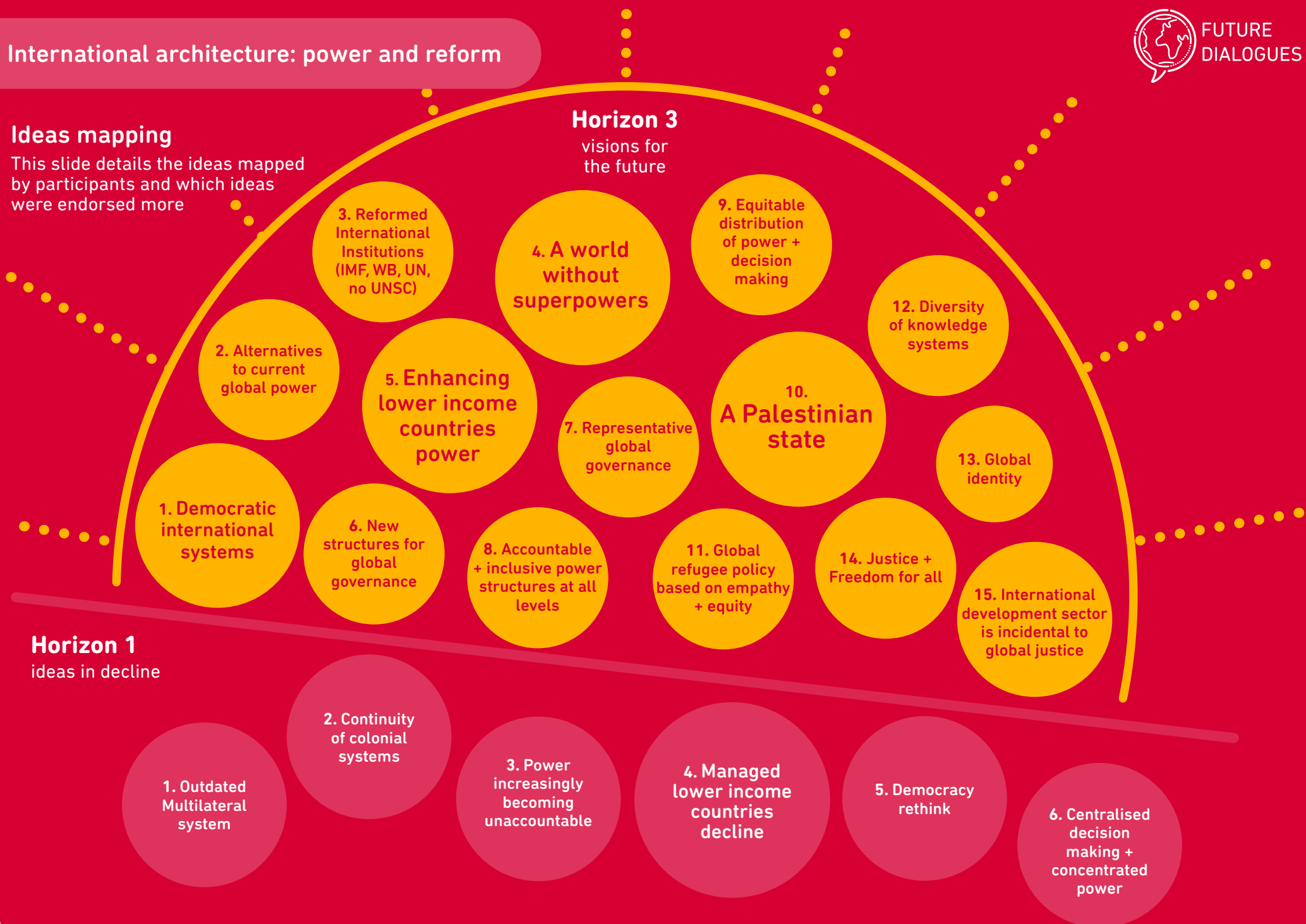
This section takes us from the social to the political. There are growing calls for a global governance system that is purpose-built for the type of development needed for people and planet; a system that is designed to tackle today's global challenges. Some people see opportunities to reform the existing institutions to deliver this (or fear there is no longer the political consensus to build something different with the same power and reach). Others argue that a completely new system is required to upend existing power dynamics.

Workshop participants considered the global governance needed to support justice-led approaches to international development. They discussed the continuity of colonial systems, including white supremacy, racialised capitalism, patriarchy and cis-heteronormativity. Power and decision-making are centred within a few key countries that control not only the flow of finance but also the end goals, processes and success criteria of those institutions.

International architecture: power and reform

Ideas mapping

This slide details the ideas mapped by participants and which ideas were endorsed more



Unpacking the horizon

Participants identified the white gaze, higher-income countries supremacy and the continued relevance of UK/Northern policies and politics as needing to decline to make way for justice-led approaches. Even democracy was identified as in need of a rethink.

The current multilateral system was characterised as outdated, overly centralised and captured by self-interest. Within that system, power was described as increasingly unaccountable and held by too few. The international order, including international institutions, embodies the balance of power of the early-mid-20th Century. This is evident in the UN Security Council's permanent members, but also in the governance structures of the IMF and the World Bank. Those most impacted by the decisions of these institutions are rarely meaningfully represented, let alone leading the processes. This includes humanitarian response coordination, where local actors are still sidelined from UN-led coordination.

Overall, workshop participants agreed that the current system and processes are not working. Many multilaterals are seen as inefficient, ineffective and inequitable. Decision-making is far removed from the local context, recreating a colonial system out of touch with the priorities and needs of communities in low- and middle-income countries.

There is an opportunity to reinvent the system and the key institutions within it to really deliver on solving global challenges. Workshop participants identified the need for a more democratic system, one that enables true justice and freedom for all. There were lots of ideas for how to achieve this, for example, reforming international institutions like the IMF, World Bank and the UN, eliminating the UN Security Council, dismantling existing structures and building new ones. There was significant support for more proportional influence within the system whatever its institutional form, greater power for the lower-income countries, accompanied by a managed decline of the power of the higher-income countries. Some called for more power to go to the UN, others for a fully representative global

governance.

Participants identified the need for inclusive, participatory and accountable power structures at all levels and a willingness to experiment and try new ideas to create a system capable of delivering social goods. Alongside this rebalancing of power within the global system, there were numerous ideas related to equity in terms of global decision-making. For example, equal access to influence and justice, the equitable distribution of power and resources, and the elimination of elites from local elites through to superpowers. This system should have a diversity of knowledge systems, a global refugee policy rooted in empathy and equity, and maybe even a global identity. There was also significant support for a Palestinian state accompanied by a peace and reconciliation process and right to return. Within this system, an international development sector would be incidental to globally just outcomes.

Other ideas from the discussion paper include:

A more permanent form of remedy would move beyond compensatory approaches from a global economic system that keeps reproducing inequalities and only allows countries to participate in global structures on a limited basis. The practice of **accountability through reform of international architecture**, as a way to seek a commitment to non-repetition and confront a lack of transparency, is important. As has been seen with recent progress on tax justice governance, challenging rules-based functioning that operates in the interests of powerful countries and to the detriment of other countries is a critical step forward. However, recognising that a seat at the table is not always enough to change power dynamics of elite interests is also important. While participatory models are important steps towards the pursuit of justice, it is important to build on models that have progressed justice in an inclusive and meaningful way to reform or disrupt global mechanisms. An awareness of patterns that can reify power dynamics that we are trying to get away from should be avoided. It is important to consider what is required to bring about these kinds of changes towards equitable mechanisms for international development and how to build on the positive role that

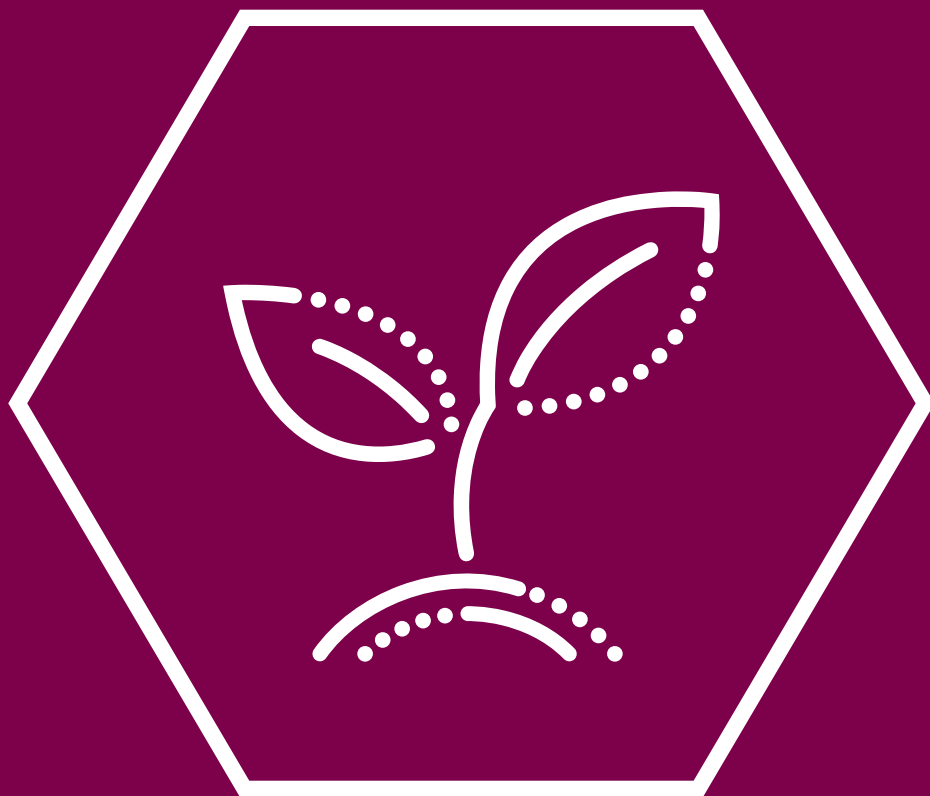
the UK INGO sector has played.

Militarism and justice: As the world has seen in Palestine, the West¹⁴ has been a driving engine for imperialism through its protection of the human rights of particular groups of people but not others. The selective application of international humanitarian law in the name of freedom and democracy has had the impact of unjustifiable genocide in many settings in which the impartiality of Western countries has come into question. This has fuelled the UK's arms and ammunition industry and other sectors which also profit from the economic crisis points that wars create. A justice-based approach would require standing in solidarity with communities in need of support in conflict-affected countries, especially where arms have been provided by the West and support has been provided to particular groups, bringing into question the neutrality of the West. The impact of conflict and post-conflict situations where the UK has played a role through its foreign policy choices and its arms trade must be better understood, and the international development sector's commitment to opposing war for the harm it causes must be resurrected. This requires a deeper level of introspection and a commitment to expose the power dynamics behind decisions for military responses.



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¹⁴ Referring to the USA, UK and Europe

Economics for people and planet



This section explores how aspects of our current economic system and the role of the international development sector within it intersect with justice-led approaches to development. Challenging many of these components requires fundamental and foundational changes that are beyond the direct remit of the international development community. However, they also reach the core of what 'development' means (its definition), what we are trying to achieve (its objectives) and how we get there (our strategies and tactics). We are in a transitional moment. It is a moment to question our base assumptions on what development looks like in the future. This is inextricably linked to the economic system.

Justice-based ideas matter, and they should be centred when economic decisions about the distribution of public spending are made. The foundation of a functioning society rests in its ability to provide public goods that guarantee essential services, such as health, education and social protection, to all. These are human rights obligations for states. Principles of justice guide strategies for the redistribution of resources raised from taxation in an equitable way.

Economics for people and planet

Ideas mapping

This slide details the ideas mapped by participants and which ideas were endorsed more



Unpacking the horizon

Workshop participants discussed how the current economic system, which is based on extractivism, consumerism, belief in infinite growth, unpaid care work and worker exploitation, is a barrier to justice-led approaches. The current economic system is failing to deliver for billions of people globally. Extreme inequality is growing. Mass consumption is pushing us beyond planetary boundaries, and climate and nature are not sufficiently reflected in our practices. The climate crisis is exacerbating patterns of disadvantage for people, communities and countries, and time is running out to mitigate its impacts.

The concept of development was discussed as part of the problem. Orthodox models and goals of 'development', as defined and designed largely by actors in high-income countries, are predicated on the assumption that economic growth is the best or only route for countries to flourish. Progress is reduced to economic growth, but poverty is multifaceted, and inequality is multi-dimensional.

Growth-led approaches overlook the many different markers of well-being and goals a community may have for their own flourishing, including community, spirituality, the natural environment, mental health, work standards and the right to decent work, happiness and well-being. While strategies such as 'leave no one behind' and gender-inclusive programming have sought to extend the benefit of this growth, inequality continues to rise in many countries even as their GDP increases. In its place, participants called for the rearticulation of growth as social justice.

Participants identified the need for systems where everyone can thrive, has access to the means to live dignified lives, and resources are distributed equitably. Key components of this system would be trade equity through fair trade agreements, debt cancellation, ending tax avoidance, and reparations. Loans would no longer be a dominant way of funding development. The relationship between economic justice and migration would be acknowledged and result in transnational migration solidarity.

The discussion paper presented the following innovations for a justice-led approach to economics for people and planet:

Repair for economic harm: The global economy has been organised to facilitate high-income countries' access to cheap labour and raw materials.¹⁵ Wealth is made globally, predominantly using the exploited labour of women and other marginalised and minoritised groups, for trade that benefit countries that are the recipients of finished products. However, the structure of the global economy ensures that most of this wealth ends up concentrated in particular economies. This focus on free and open markets through globalisation has made any well-considered and **equity-enhancing redistribution** challenging to achieve. This means an amplification of risk for many countries¹⁶ which are operating with limited mechanisms for the protection of people and the extraction of their natural resources. Reforming tax regimes for multinationals to pay their fair share in countries of production and reforming exploitative trade rules are vital for economic justice.

A **recognition of planetary boundaries** and the need to quickly transition to decarbonisation are at the forefront of environmental and development agendas. This is a priority due to the risk of a global systemic collapse, understood as the crossing of one or more tipping points leading towards ecological breakdown. A small number of high-income countries account for most carbon emissions and for the ongoing ecological colonialism of fossil fuel industries, extraction and deforestation. A huge amount of financial transfer is needed for this climate adaptation. However, almost 70% of international climate financing is taking the form of debt-creating loans.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the scale of financing required to respond to global loss and damage is

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15 HICKEL, J. (2017), *The Divide: a brief guide to global inequality and its solutions*. London: Penguin Random House.

16 Rodrik, D. (2007), *Governance of Economic Globalization. One Economics, Many Recipes*, pp. 195–212.

17 UNCTAD (2023), [A World of Debt](#).

projected to reach approximately US\$1.2 trillion a year by 2060.¹⁸ This is a justice-based issue as countries cannot be expected to finance their adaptation when richer countries have caused much of the damage they are exposed to, with many lives lost every year as countries experience extreme weather conditions. How does the international development sector support climate adaptation and avert ecological crises using instruments other than debt, given that debt has been the mechanism used so far and is the mechanism envisaged in current loss and damage plans?

The regulation of markets and sectors relevant for development:

The value in commodity and financial markets is above all other financial flows and repositories, and it is the focal point of corporate power that becomes political power. Every 24 hours, trading valued at US\$16 trillion and rising takes place across key groups of commodities, many of which are food items that many communities depend on.¹⁹ Nearly two-thirds of all global speculation and trading takes place in the UK and the USA. Orientating capital and financial flows towards development outcomes is vital given the challenges faced the world over, particularly by investing in public systems and services to ensure more equitable outcomes.²⁰ Similarly, fairly distributing the benefits of science and technology and the impact of AI is important. While AI can help to generate disaggregated data, it may help powerful countries accumulate more resources and result in more unequal world societies.

Monetary policy sovereignty: Many countries face challenges in financing their development needs because they lack accessible and affordable finance. Countries with a need for external finance, especially where this is required to deliver essential services, need to be able to borrow in their own domestic currency. This should not be more expensive to borrow, as it currently is for developing

countries. The affordability of finance is a critical challenge, with expensive loans issued in Western currencies creating a culture of indebtedness for developing countries. This can only be disrupted by challenging the underlying market dynamics that assign Western currencies as more credible, credit-worthy and, therefore, powerful. The other challenge for many countries' monetary sovereignty is the fact that loans are seemingly the only mechanism that international finance institutions offer to finance development. Progress towards development should not rest on such a precarious resourcing model. Remedying this would mean former colonised countries would gain more control over the mechanisms of their own economies, such as being able to opt out of currency pegging to the US dollar or the French franc – as is the case for many countries in Francophone Africa – and being able to trade in their own currencies. This would enable greater domestic resource mobilisation for critical public spending. Strategies are urgently required that do not incentivize the unjust enrichment of high-income countries and which re-envision ethical methods for public financing beyond ongoing debt financing. This is also critical to meet the challenge of financing climate change adaptation.

18 Aldy, JE. and Pizer, WA. (2009), 'Issues in Designing U.S. Climate Change Policy', *The Energy Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 3 pp. 179-209.

19 Bharadia (2 November 2023), Webinar on Reparative Justice and Systems Change.

20 Slobodian (2018), *The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*.

Funding and financing



This final section looks at funding and finance within justice-led approaches to international development. The climate crisis, protracted and new conflicts and rising inequality are increasing demands on development finance. On the supply side, rising debt, limited domestic resource mobilisation and shrinking ODA budgets, as well as the failure of innovations like blended finance to deliver the promised step-change in resourcing, mean that less is available. We do not currently have sufficient resources in the right places to address global challenges and achieve global well-being and equity.

Justice-led approaches do not just address questions of volume, but also questions about the logic, purpose and fairness of the financing. Justice-led international development turns the question of financing on its head, focusing on what is owed as a result of past harm and expropriation of wealth. It challenges the binary of 'developed' and 'developing', calling for a financing system that is rooted in justice and equity, rather than charity and power imbalances. The solution cannot be just more of the same.

Funding and financing

Ideas mapping

This slide details the ideas mapped by participants and which ideas were endorsed more



Unpacking the horizon

Workshop participants coalesced around the need for an overhaul of the aid system. The donor system and its charitable models are no longer fit for purpose. The notion that funding needs to be managed by INGOs in high-income donor countries is outdated. Participants argued that the channels through which resources and information flow needs to change and shift direction, reflecting the imbalance between ODA inflows and outflows, such as debt repayments, resource extraction and untaxed profits that flow from low- and middle-income countries to high-income countries. Some participants also challenged the concept of effectiveness and whether it was serving the needs of people and communities in low- and middle-income countries, seeing it instead as an offshoot of coloniality.

Looking to justice-led approaches, there was significant support for atonement and reparations to replace ODA and charity. Domestically, participants identified the need for adequate funding for social justice and equity, and an anti-austerity, global public investment mechanism to address global challenges. In the medium-term, participants called for funding to be diverted to local actors. The relatively limited number of ideas around funding and finance is both a result of consensus within the group on the need to move to a reparations-based model as well as an anticipated reduction in the importance of development financing under justice-led approaches to global development.

Ideas from the discussion paper include:

There are many ongoing campaigns for **reparative justice for enslavement and colonialism** from all corners of the world in relation to people whose subjugation, and the theft of whose labour, lands and virtually all wealth, have not been acknowledged. This desire to seek outcomes broader than monetary compensation is reflected in the UK movement for reparations. At its 2020 conference, the Green Party of England and Wales passed a motion based on a proposal pioneered by the Stop the Maangamizi Campaign. It called on the UK government

to establish a Commission of Inquiry for Truth and Reparatory Justice and commit to atonement and reparative justice for Afrikan enslavement. This is also relevant for addressing the harm caused by other aspects of the UK's former empire and associated campaigns for repair, for example in relation to former Caribbean countries of the Commonwealth. However, in 2023 when UK Primer Minister Rishi Sunak was asked about the need for reparations, he responded by saying: "Trying to unpick our history is not the right way forward."²¹ We are still in the early stages of excavating the structural legacies of the UK's colonial past, and this is a clear potential area for UK INGO engagement and solidarity.

The provision of essential services that are public goods and require state provision is both a rights and justice-based issue when so many communities within countries across the world are denied their rights or see their rights eroded as public services are cut or defunded. Poverty and its eradication have been the focus of donors, INGOs, states and grassroots collectives since the birth of the neoliberal system, a late 20th Century idea that promotes reforms towards free markets and gained dominance after the end of World War II. We have enough food the world over, but there are perverse incentives within markets to speculate on food commodities that leads to shortages. Efforts to mitigate the worst impacts of this have become what development is about, rather than challenging the system to create an equitable world. A justice-based approach would start at the root cause of why so many countries are not able to currently provide adequate education, health, social protection, sanitation and other critical services for their populations without a model of privatisation. What role has the UK played here in extracting resources and deploying them towards its own infrastructure while leaving former colonised countries deep in poverty? Should INGOs be in the business of filling gaps left by the state delivery of critical services, or should they address why those gaps exist? What would closing service delivery mean and what would it mean transitioning to?

²¹ House of Commons (2023)

So how do we get there?

During the workshop, we asked participants to identify what could be done now to start to shift the dial towards justice-led approaches. Adopting a justice-led approach to international development is clearly a significant undertaking. It requires far-reaching changes to the international system beyond the limited scope and remit of the international development sector. However, there are steps and actions UK-based organisations can take now to make that different world possible and more likely. Their ideas speak both to how the international system needs to change, but also to our own role in it.

The following list is not comprehensive. It pulls together the ideas that were generated by workshop participants during the discussion. It is best thought of as a menu of possible actions. There are many ways to do things. They might not all work together or be for every organisation; what follows are some places to start.

1 Invest in mechanisms for collective action and power to support action against vested interests including by:

- a. Collaborating with other actors to create agile social movements that can operate across street, state and funder
- b. Funding agility in social movements
- c. Supporting and funding more 'South-South' dialogue
- d. Moving towards the shared creation of meaning to help realise collective action
- e. Building a shared vision, goal and strategy for justice-led approaches to international development

- f. Preparing for and resisting the backlash and co-optation to be able to actively progress our vision (not just firefight)
- g. Developing tactics of 'fugitivity', practice navigating the existing funding/development landscape but moving towards liberation
- h. Investing resources in repairing civic space
- i. Using technology to serve solidarity and movements, for example:
 - i. For translations and organising
 - ii. Using AI to create a perfect world as a thought experiment
 - iii. Identifying and requiring the use of algorithms that support social justice

2 Organisations originating in high-income countries should shift their practice towards solidarity, advocacy and campaigning. This could look like:

- a. Funding global advocacy for social justice
- b. Repoliticising our work, acknowledging that development is political and creating conditions that support political action from the sector
- c. Investing in global sector schemes to build solidarity around education, technology, health and creativity
- d. Getting out of sector or thematic silos; for example, unifying migration and development movements to reinforce global dignity movements

So how do we get there?

- e. Cultivating more comprehensive and complementary initiatives across development, humanitarian, peace and climate spaces
- f. Investing in youth-led solidarity and shared approaches, including funding exchanges and learning
- g. Shifting our influencing approaches to no longer reinforce the privileged position of the UK and other high-income countries and their policies, aid and military social justice

3 Advocate for policies that address the root causes of injustice and inequality, including:

- a. Starting from the acknowledgement that the power we have in high-income countries like the UK is imposed on low- and middle-income countries.
- b. Focusing campaigning on bigger issues like reparations, debt justice and tax justice rather than for more aid/money for the current multilateral system
- c. Working towards the end of extractive capitalism
- d. In the short and medium term, advocating for funding to go direct and local
- e. Being bold in asking hard questions and taking action, avoiding being overly pragmatic
- f. Moving beyond development to global horizontal solidarity

4 Create space for the plurality and a diversity of cultures, perspectives and knowledge systems by:

- a. Accepting that there can be more than one way of doing things; locally-led development should be a celebration of diversity, not one size fits all

- b. Creating spaces and cultures within organisations and movements where it is safe to disagree
- c. Investing in public debate and interest-building of the middle ground
- d. Supporting and engaging in more critical thinking
- e. Actively managing the risks of plurality, such as contestation, including rising ethnonationalism
- f. Considering representation and participation at the outset to create diverse spaces that breach the 'echo chamber'
- g. Thinking critically about the dogmas of effectiveness and efficiency and how they deliver impact

5 Foster an accountability culture that supports justice-led approaches by:

- a. Creating internal cultures that support action rather than rhetoric; 'don't just say it, do it'.
- b. Challenging organisations that perpetuate old ways of working
- c. Enabling a social shift away from decontextualised 'expertise'
- d. Tackling personal self-interest
- e. Funding community-facing accountability mechanisms

6 Supporting political and rights-based education by:

- a. Acknowledging the role of individual education in creating constituencies, for example learning from liberation movements in Brazil

Concluding reflections

In this discussion, the link between the accumulation of profits, wealth and consequently political power through processes of exploitation have been explored through a recognition of the need for repair. People and their movements need the space to heal and tend to the grief and wounds of rupture, displacement and violence. Justice-based approaches offer perspectives on political resistance towards these inequalities of the international system. The public financing required for sustainable development and redistribution needs reparative justice and system change. The international development sector has the potential to lead and embolden the actions needed. This can lead to re-imagined positions, priorities and practice. The justice-based imperative facing international development is also relevant for the philanthropy sector. Directing funds that are from the same colonial machine that produced the need for development initiatives is another area that must also be confronted.

As you continue reflecting on the potential for justice-led approaches to global development, we invite you to consider the following questions:

1. What would change in the international development sector feel like? And what does the sector need to be grappling with? What would be at the other end of these changes?
2. What would such changes mean for the way the sector needs to evolve to work towards a just future?
3. What kind of UK organisational structures, including roles and functions, are needed to make the sector fit for a newly envisioned purpose?
4. To embrace any/some of these ideas, how would the role of your organisation change? What would make this change possible? What would need to be faced/overcome?

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