

Change in our sector is inevitable - and in many respects, welcome.

A message of solidarity from members of the Bond CEO Anti-Racism Group to our peers across the sector.

The UK international development sector is undergoing a dramatic contraction and change. We are living through a well-documented crisis, driven by shrinking funding and fundamental questions about our sector's legitimacy. The concept of international development is being questioned more so than ever before as part of wider reflections on the post-Second World War settlements that sought to impose Western dominance.

In the coming weeks and months, it seems inevitable that more international charities will close, shrink or merge, following the unprecedented cuts to Official Development Assistance (ODA) that has long underpinned much of the sector's work.

In this moment of reckoning, the sector is imagining multiple futures. For some within the Bond CEO Anti-Racism Group and beyond, this lies in the future of development work being as being deeply connected to how countries relate to one another globally, including foreign policy, diplomacy, and justice between nations, not just as charity or 'aid'. Others are shifting towards people-led movements. Still, others are seeking to partner with UK institutions that are increasingly committed to acting and learning globally.

A globally engaged UK civil society will emerge, but it will look very different. It will not carry the historical coherence of a sector that once provided conspicuous – if contested – global leadership.

The insights gained through the CEO anti-racism work supported by Bond should give us confidence to embrace this change. For too long, our sector has prioritised UK-based organisational and professional interests over those of local actors. We have misrepresented the lives of many people in poorer countries in our media, fundraising and campaigns. We have undervalued the knowledge and expertise that is abundant across low- and middle- income countries. We have too rarely asked what we, in the UK, can learn in return. We haven't placed global solidarity at the centre of our work. And we have consistently failed to connect the poverty experienced in many parts of the UK with that faced by our international partners.

We are reminded that, while these are challenging times organisationally, it is a moment of opportunity for us to put into practice the ideas and ambitions we have been grappling with, to reimagine our work based on global solidarity, equitable relationships, mutual learning and collective action; as members of a global eco-system of actors playing appropriate roles given our different contexts and opportunities, building on our commitment to shifting power and anti-racist practices.

This week marks the first anniversary of the summer riots that took place across the UK driven by Islamophobia and racism. Today, we continue to witness unrest in places around the UK where racism intersects with legacies of political and social division. These incidents are not isolated, but part of a wider, systemic problem. These events remind us why challenging racism -both at home and abroad- and stepping beyond the legacy of post-war dominance is urgent, necessary, and interconnected. These events remind us why challenging racism -both at home and abroad- and stepping beyond the legacy of post-war dominance is urgent, necessary, and interconnected.

As leaders, we must recognise our role in either perpetuating or challenging the unequal systems our organisations are part of. Tackling racism means confronting how power operates within our governance structures, funding relationships, and leadership cultures. It means confronting how we engage with partners and communities, how we think about expertise, and whose voices count. It means indeed questioning our very existence.

We have found that anti-racist leadership requires courage and deep reflection. It means being willing to shift power and challenge our own assumptions. Leadership in this moment is not just about navigating a crisis; it is about creating space for justice to take root.

We have found in our deliberations that anti-racist leadership is not only about structural change, but also about cultivating cultures of trust, learning, and wellbeing. It must be evident in how we lead, through humility, listening, redistribution of power, and by creating space for those who have long been marginalised to shape the future. You can [read three of our personal reflections on these themes here](#).

If you are a CEO working with your Board of Trustees to confront these realities, you are not alone.

A new, globally engaged UK civil society is taking shape. It may not include every organisation - and that's okay. What matters now is that we seize this moment to help shape a future that acknowledges the role that racism and colonialism have played in shaping the international development sector to date, and embrace the opportunities to create new, just and connected futures for global solidarity and shared humanity.

Signed,

1. Alex Kent, Co-CEO, Restless Development
2. Alex Ritchie, CEO, Global Giving UK
3. Alice Oyaro, CEO, Transform Trade
4. Alison Wallace, CEO, SOS Children's Villages UK

5. Alvaro Bermejo, Director General, IPPF
6. Amber Shotton, Chair of Trustees, Small International Development Charities Network
7. Ben Simms, CEO, Global Health Partnerships (formally THET)
8. Caroline Barber, CEO, Transaid
9. Catherine Klirodou, Interim Co-Director, Gender and Development Network
10. Christina Bennett, CEO, START Network
11. Christine Allen, Executive Director, CAFOD
12. David Thomson, CEO, All We Can
13. Dylan Mathews, CEO, Peace Direct
14. Eleanor Harrison, CEO, Fairtrade Foundation
15. Emma Wagner, Co Chair, Send My Friend to School
16. Fadhili Maghiya, CEO, Sub Sahara Advisory Panel
17. Frances Guy, Executive Director, Scotland's International Development Alliance
18. Halima Begum, CEO, Oxfam GB
19. Hannah Doornbos, Executive Director, South West International Development Network (SWIDN)
20. John McLaverty, Co Chair, Send My Friend to School
21. John Plastow, Executive Director, Frontline Aids
22. Kate Muhwezi, Co-CEO, Restless Development
23. Kate Newman, CEO, INTRAC
24. Kavita Prasad, Chief Executive, Sense International
25. Kitty Arie, CEO, Results UK
26. Marcos Concepcion Raba, Executive Director, Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction
27. Martin Drewry, CEO, Health Poverty Action
28. Mary Ann Clements, Co-CEO, ADD International
29. Mike Podmore, CEO, STOPAIDS
30. Muhammad Seedat, Chairman, Ummah Welfare Trust
31. Patrick Watt, CEO, Christian Aid
32. Peter Waddup, CEO, The Leprosy Mission Great Britain
33. Petter Matthews, Executive Director, Engineers Against Poverty
34. Qasim Rashid Ahmad, Exec Chairman, Al-Khair Foundation
35. Samia Khatun, Head of Programmes, King's Global Health Partnerships
36. Sheniz Tan, CEO, Asfar
37. Shuaib Yusaf, CEO, Al-Khair Foundation
38. Susan Place Everhart, CEO, Sabre Education
39. Susana Klien, CEO, Saferworld
40. Tim Pilkington, Interim CEO, Tearfund
41. Tricia Barnett, Director, Equality in Tourism
42. Tufail Hussain, Director, Islamic Relief UK

43. Ven Nyamondo, CEO, Chance for Childhood