

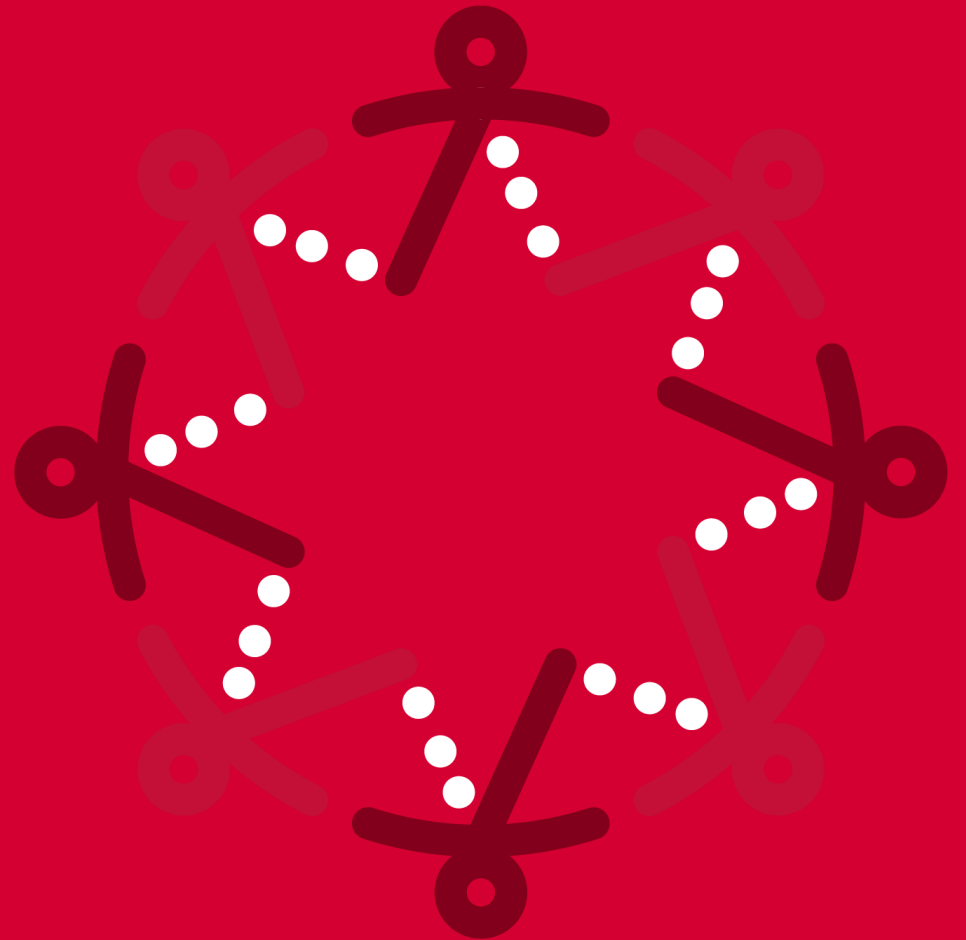


Are INGOs Ready for the future?

**Network: Impact Hub London
Euston Events**

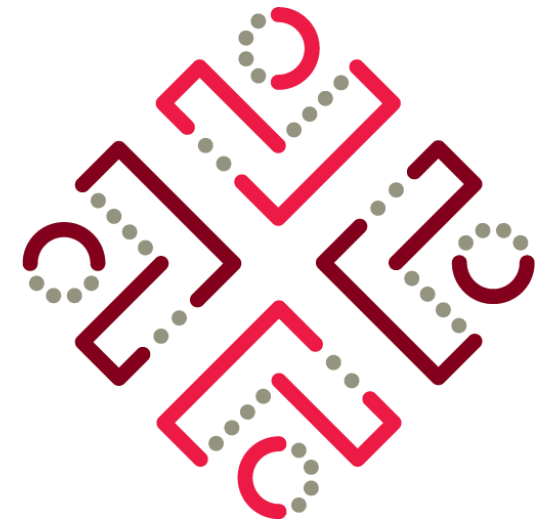
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30th April 2026

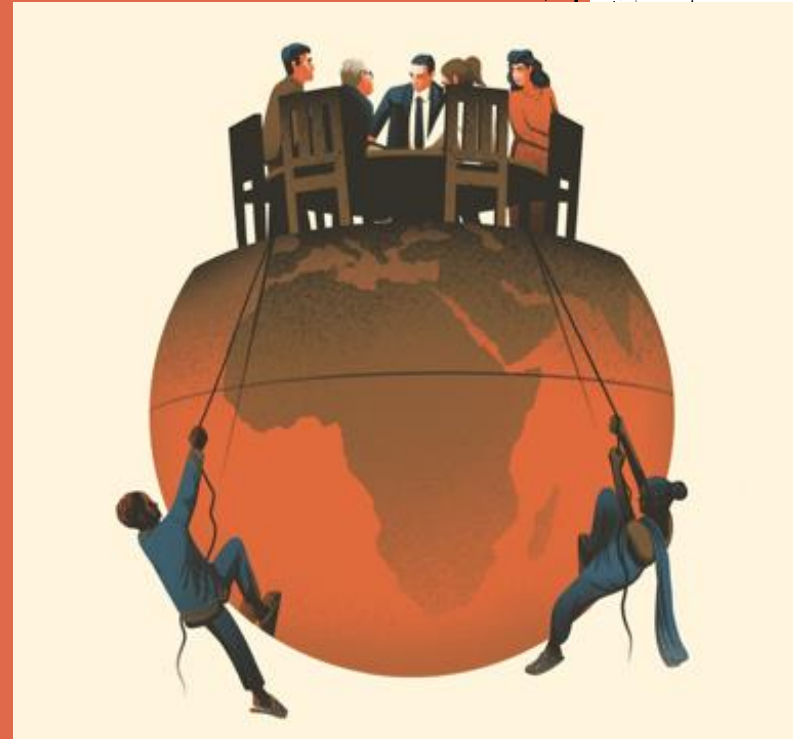


Programme

Time	Activity
9:30	Breakfast/Networking
10:00	Welcome & purpose of the day
10:05	Opening session: Ancestor Practice
10:25	Nine roles of Intermediaries – The now and the future?
11:10	Reflection/Buzz Group
11:20	Future Scenarios - Travelling to 2038
12:25	Lunch/Networking
13:15	Fireside Chat
14:00	Breakout Groups
14:45	Plenary
15:00	Close



THE ROLES OF INGOs IN A REMAGINED SECTOR



ABOUT PEACE DIRECT

- Peace Direct was founded in 2002 in order to support and amplify the voices of local peacebuilders to the international community, and to shift power and resources in the wider system towards locally led efforts.

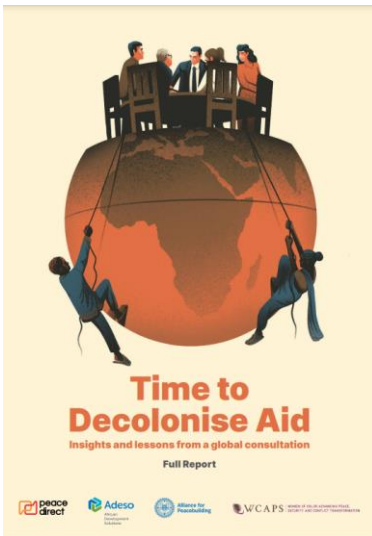
In trying to shift power and resources in the system in favour of local efforts, we have observed that many INGOs:

- Have been slow to acknowledge structural racism and their own neo-colonial attitudes
- Struggle to recognise that in growing their role and reach, they have suppressed the growth of indigenous civil society
- Struggle to imagine a role for themselves which doesn't involve direct implementation

The failure to imagine a different role for themselves is one reason the current sector is failing to live up to its commitments to transfer power and resources to local organisations.

A GLOBAL CONVERSATION

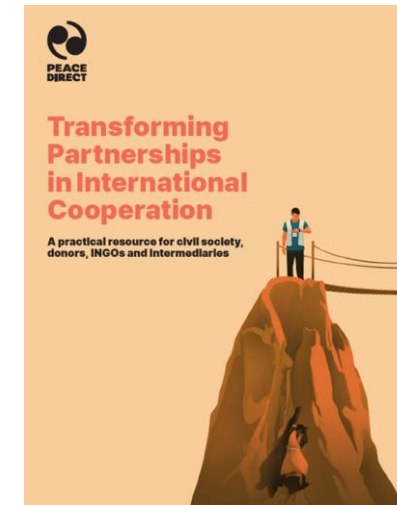
- 1,300+ local practitioners from over 60 countries took part in a series of online global consultations (2020-2025)
- Explored how local actors perceive the international development, humanitarian and peacebuilding system, including how structural racism shows up in the system
- Unpacking the language and terminology around decolonising, localization, structural racism etc
- Manifestos for how to transform the sector



MAY 2021



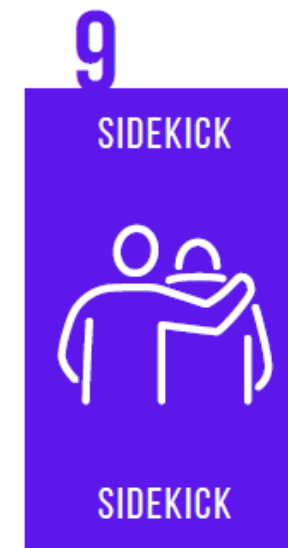
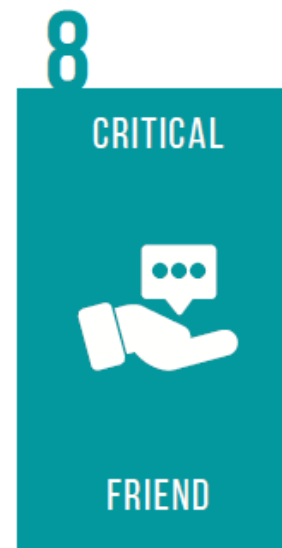
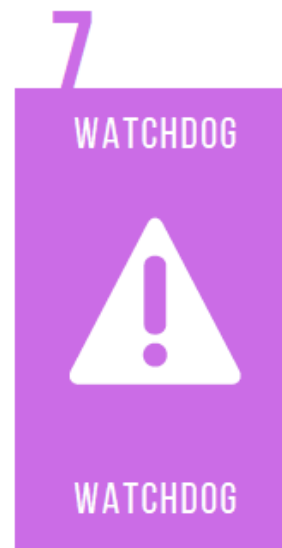
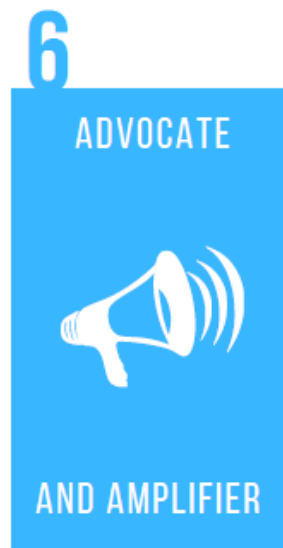
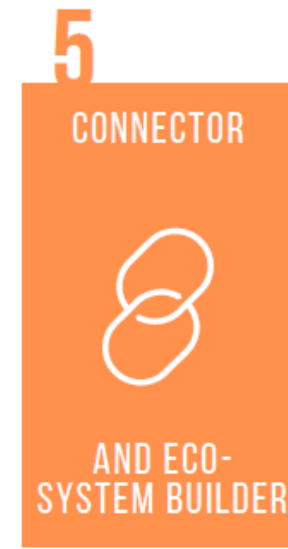
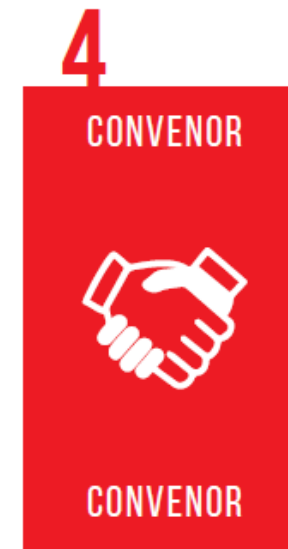
JAN 2023



SEPT 2023

THE NINE ROLES THAT INTERMEDIARIES CAN PLAY IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Peace Direct has identified at least nine additional roles for intermediaries. These nine roles reflect our experience working with local partners for over 20 years, during which time we have learned from our partners about the role they would like us to play.



COMMON ROLES PLAYED BY INGOS



KNOWLEDGE BROKER AND PRODUCER

- Wealth of knowledge residing in the experiences of organisations and practitioners around the world
- Most local actors do not have the time to locate this knowledge
- INGOs can bridge this gap, both GS-GN & GS-GS
- INGOs can also more intentionally share the knowledge they produce***

Transition challenge: INGOs are still too focused on the role of knowledge producer than broker. Knowledge producer is intrinsically linked to organisational ego and influence. Is this why INGOs are still slow to change?



3

TRAINER,
COACH



AND CO-
LEARNER

TRAINER, COACH AND CO- LEARNER

- While local orgs are rightly critical of the Global North fixation on ‘capacity building’ they also acknowledge that they want to learn from others.
- INGOs provide some of this training***
- Co-learning is also an important role – agreeing a joint learning agenda

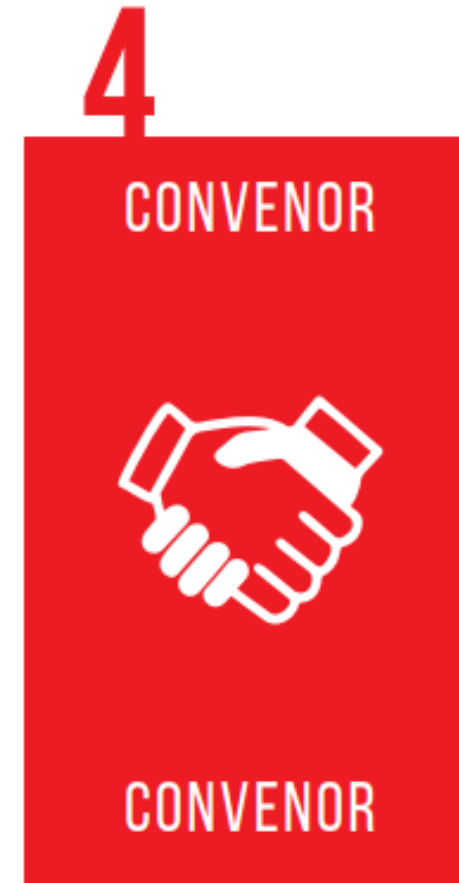
Transition challenge: INGOs appear uncomfortable moving from trainer to co-learner. Is this because of organisational ego?



CONVENOR

- Opportunities for collective reflection and learning among civil society actors are extremely limited.
- Plus the current systems pits local orgs against each other in competition for scarce funds, weakening civil society
- INGOs can play a very useful role in providing spaces for local groups to reflect, plan and learn together

Transition challenge: INGOs appear to be taking this role seriously. However, there seems to be a reluctance to move beyond convening partners to convening civil society actors more broadly.



ADVOCATE AND AMPLIFIER

- A well established role for INGOs
- Still highly valued by Global South civil society
- This role includes traditional advocacy, campaigning, creating space for GS led advocacy.
- Also includes important role to educate the public in your own country of the need for greater solidarity with communities in the GS.

Transition challenge: Appears to be little appetite for INGOs to move into advocacy roles if they didn't have this function already.

6

ADVOCATE



AND AMPLIFIER





WATCHDOG

- Another well established role and still highly valued by CSOs in the Global South
- Doesn't have to be high profile monitoring like CIVICUS, HRW or Amnesty.
- Can be done very discreetly to the donors and policymakers you know

Transition challenge: Appears to be little appetite to transition to this role unless it isn't already part of the DNA of the organisation



UNCOMMON ROLES PLAYED BY INGOS



1

INTERPRETER



INTERPRETER

INTERPRETER

- Sector reports are couched in jargon
- This makes it inaccessible to local actors
- Translating these for local actors breaks down the information gap between Global North and Global South.

Transition challenge: It is unclear to what extent INGOs are embracing this role. Sector chaos has led to INGOs tackling their own internal financial challenges, rather than bridging the information gap



5

CONNECTOR



AND ECO-
SYSTEM BUILDER

CONNECTOR AND ECO-SYSTEM BUILDER

- Civil society in the Global South is highly fragmented, caused by a scarcity of funding, competition and poor infrastructure
- Two types of fragmentation: horizontal and vertical
- INGOs can play a very useful role in bridging the divides both horizontally and vertically – acting as ‘connective tissue’ linking actors in the system together.

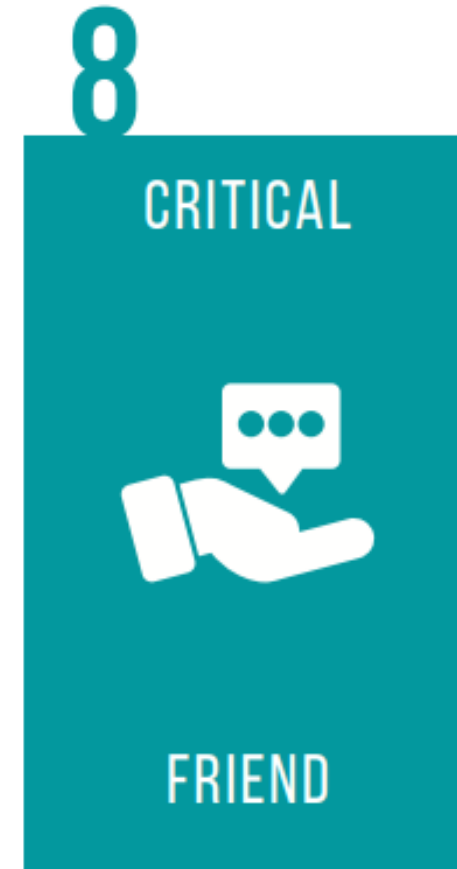
Transition challenge: There appears to be a lot more interest in thinking and acting systemically, including support local ecosystems. However, funding challenges are making investments in local systems difficult to achieve



CRITICAL FRIEND

- Being a critical friend is one of the most neglected roles, due to the ‘projectization’ of so much international work
- Being a critical friend means to be a sounding board for your partner, to offer advice when asked and to offer support when mistakes are made
- Being a critical friend can only be achieved if you have established a meaningful equitable partnership with your local partner

Transition challenge: While there is a lot more emphasis on building equitable partnerships, changes to practice appear very slow.



9

SIDEKICK



SIDEKICK

SIDEKICK

- The least know role for INGOs as we aren't accustomed to being the sidekick
- More of a state of mind that a series of practices
- Aims to reverse the status quo, by putting GS civil society in the driving seat

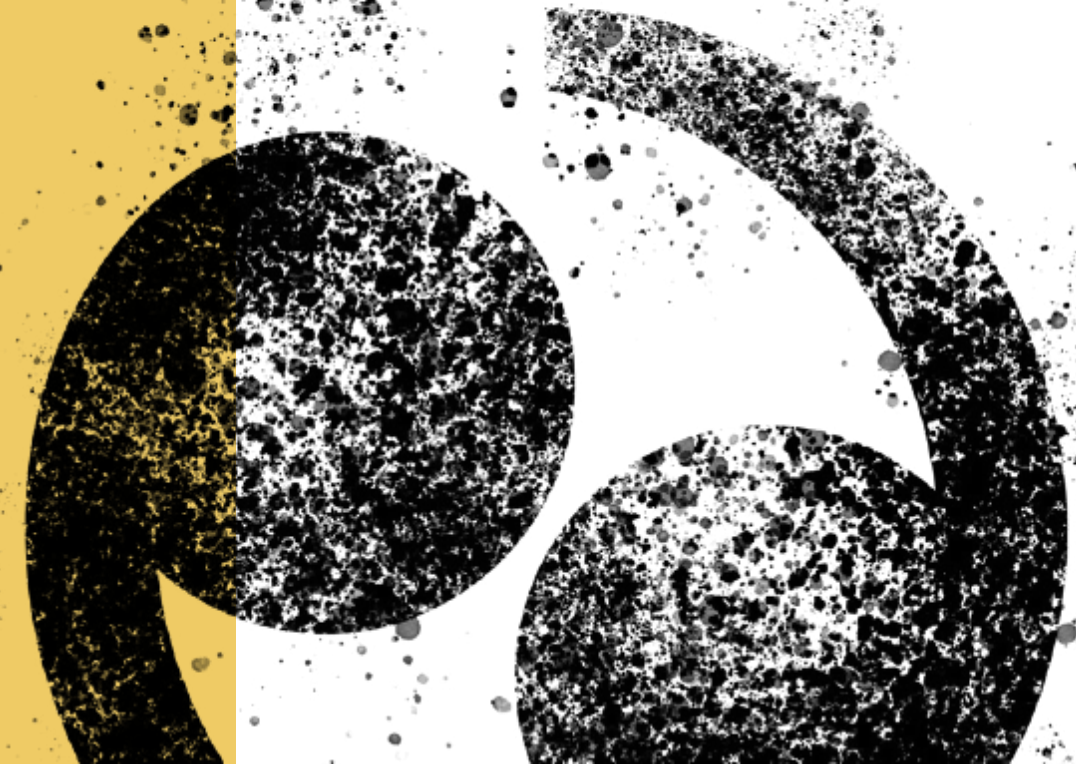
Transition challenge: As with critical friend, the role of the sidekick appears to be very challenging for INGOs and there appears to be little progress.



HEALTH WARNING

Many of the above roles are temporary. They are designed to plug holes in a system that does not work. For example: the interpreter, knowledge broker, convenor and trainer roles should not be necessary if the system orients towards supporting local efforts more thoughtfully.

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Questions for reflection (5 mins)

Looking at the transition challenges outlined earlier, what is your interpretation of why progress has been so slow?

What roles can you see your organisation transitioning to in the future?

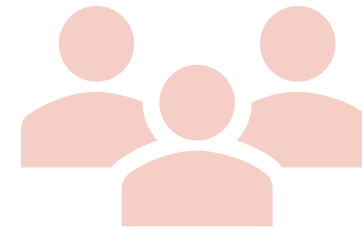
Are there any roles are missing?



Reflection/Buzz Group



Please take 5 minutes for quiet reflection



Then in 5 mins in pairs/at tables discuss your shared reflections

Future Scenarios – Impact Works

8 groups - each to spend 20 minutes exploring two futures with these guiding questions:

Does your organisation still exist?

If so, what role is it playing? (refer to earlier session)

Who is it working with?

How is it funded?

How is it engaging with civil society?

How is it acting in an anti-racist and decolonial way?

Lunch

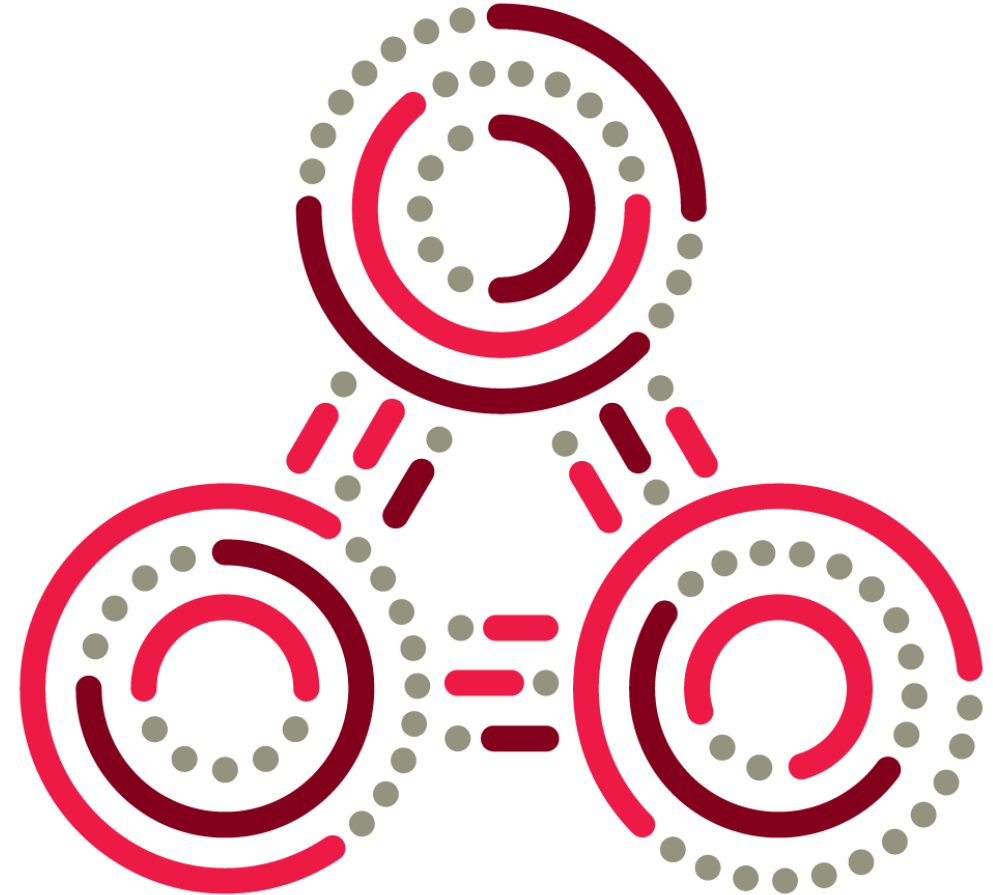
Back at 13:15pm

You are encouraged to have lunch with someone from a different future, or to reflectively visit the futures on their own

Fireside Chat & Q&A

We will now have three sector leaders sharing their stories and transformation journeys:

- **John Plastow**, CEO, Frontline Aids
- **Anna Becker**, Trustee, AVERT
- **Catriona Fox**, Co- executive director, One to One Children's Fund



Futures Scenarios

- You've travelled to the future, had some ideas of potential roles and been inspired by stories from your peers
- **Now in smaller groups**, you're going to go deeper, and think about what these provocations mean for your organisations

How to get your NGO ready for the future

Guiding questions for breakouts:

What roles do we think we need to be playing to make the positive parts of the future MORE likely and the negative parts LESS likely?

In order to play this role; what might my organisation need to start doing; stop doing; do more of; do less of; today?

What roles do you think we need to STOP playing if we want to make the positive parts of the future MORE likely and the negative parts LESS likely?

As we think about these questions, how can we take an actively anti-racist, decolonial and power-shifting approach...

Please do feel free to take a break during this activity

Plenary

Please share:

- **What support would you like from BOND to help you with your own transformation journey?**

Bond is keen to support its members with your transformation journeys, what sort of support might be helpful to you?



Please share any reflections you may have on today's session before you leave





Thank you for attending! We will be in touch soon

Bond, Impact Hub Euston, 1 Triton Square, London, NW1 3DS, UK

+44 (0)20 7837 8344 ▪ bond.org.uk

Connect

