



# REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES REPORT

SIGNS OF CHANGE & VISIONS OF  
THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL COOPERATION

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the narratives and diverse perspectives that emerged from a series of regional dialogues held between September seventh and October fifth, 2023. These sessions convened a wide range of stakeholders to explore emerging issues, signs of change and visions for the future of global cooperation.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the individuals who contributed to the success of these dialogues and helped shape our collective understanding of the global cooperation landscape.

## Regional Partners

- Bihter Moschini
- Daniel Prieto Hernández
- Gina Romero
- Hans Tippenhauer
- Marie-Jose Saade
- Nadège Robertson
- Oluseyi Babatunde Oyebisi
- Robert Mabala

## Strategic Foresight Partners

- Donna Dupont
- Fisayo Oyewale
- Moises Rendon
- Steven Kenney



The report was authored by Andy Roxane Ouédraogo, Research and Program Officer at [Cooperation Canada](#). It is a product of the [Global Cooperation Futures Initiative](#), funded by the [International Development Research Centre \(IDRC\)](#).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 Introduction
- 02 Co-creating Knowledge
- 03 Africa - Ubuntu Futures
- 04 Asia - Shared Futures
- 05 The Caribbean - Ancestral Futures
- 06 Latin America - Depoliticized Futures
- 07 The Middle East & North Africa - Revisioned Futures
- 08 Signals of Change
- 09 Conclusion & Future Outlook

# INTRODUCTION

Our world today is undergoing a myriad of changes, encompassing geopolitical shifts, the triple planetary threat of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, economic disruptions and technological advancements, changes leaving a compounded imprint on the dynamics of development cooperation. This complex global context underpins [Cooperation Canada](#)'s efforts at re-imagining next generation global development through its [Global Cooperation Futures Initiative](#) funded by the [International Development Research Centre \(IDRC\)](#). The 20-month strategic foresight research project aims to equip civil society organizations in Canada and globally with high level insights for strategic innovation and better future-preparedness by developing three transformative scenarios for the future of international development cooperation.

Studying the future of any sector or industry is an intricate task that requires a high degree of awareness of drivers and signals of change around us. Studying the future of global development cooperation is an even more complex task given the wide geographic scope and thematic range such a study must cover. The success of this undertaking therefore lies in one's ability to pull in diverse voices and contextual perspectives, allowing for a nuanced understanding of evolving trends, challenges and opportunities, without which the study risks turning into an echo chamber that mirrors existing dominant views.

Understanding that good foresight hinges on the diversity of the data set, we sought to reconcile our statistical data with observational insights. Our preliminary environmental scan produced a comprehensive inventory of information regarding the external factors impacting global development cooperation, including current and emerging global trends, developments, changing dynamics in the political, economic, environmental, technological and economic spheres. To bring in intra-personal observational knowledge<sup>[1]</sup>, we partnered with civil society networks and strategic foresight experts in five regions.

[1] Knowledge stemming from participants' own observations of change on the ground, their perceptions of the future of development influenced by events and trends at the local/regional level.

# CO-CREATING KNOWLEDGE

Involving communities in the research process fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment. Local knowledge empowers community members to actively participate in shaping the development agenda, contributing to more inclusive and participatory decision-making.

Cooperation Canada aimed to collaborate with foresight practitioners from or with extensive experience in each region to capture variations in the use of foresight (if any), taking into consideration how different regions might think about the future and what tools and methodologies were used in the process.



We extend our sincere appreciation to Donna Dupont, Fisayo Oyewale, Moises Rendon, and Steven Kenney, whose expertise in strategic foresight and futures thinking has significantly enriched the regional dialogues, contributing to the overall depth of our findings. Their commitment to excellence and collaborative spirit had a lasting impact on the success of this research.

Special thanks to Robert Mabala, Oluseyi Babatunde Oyebisi, Jyotsna Mohan, Gina Romero, Bihter Moschini, Marie-Jose Saade, Hans Tippenhauer, and Nadège Robertson. We are immensely grateful for their commitment to the dialogue's success and the positive impact it had on shaping our shared understanding of regional priorities, emerging trends and signals of change.





**AFRICA**

**UBUNTU FUTURES**





## THE FUTURE IS HUMAN-CENTRED, COMPLEMENTARY AND AFRICAN-LED

For the civil society organizations (CSOs) we engaged with in Africa, the future of global development cooperation in the region ought to be complementary, human-centred and African-led. This vision, emerging from our dialogue, represents a collaborative and integrated approach to development that harnesses the strengths and synergies of various stakeholders, including communities, CSOs, governments and the private sector. It imagines a future where development initiatives are designed and executed by Africans for Africans, ensuring that local voices and needs are at the forefront.

### Enablers

- Access to flexible and long-term funding
- Equitable access to new and emerging technologies
- Institutional strengthening
- Beneficiary-driven and culturally sensitive programming
- Seamless collaboration among CSOs, the private sector and governments
- Integration of development and peace efforts

### African values and principles

At the heart of this vision is the human-centred approach to development. This approach prioritizes the well-being, dignity and aspirations of individuals and communities, ensuring that development efforts are tailored to their specific needs and contexts. Participants underscored the significance of Ubuntu, a philosophy that emphasizes community, shared humanity and mutual respect. These values foster solidarity and cooperation, ensuring that development initiatives are inclusive, responsive and resonate with local populations over the long run.

## How might international cooperation actors help?

- Support initiatives that promote educational opportunities, peacebuilding and justice
- Invest in technology and infrastructure
- Facilitate collaboration between CSOs, governments and the private sector to create integrated development solutions
- Ensure that efforts are not only inclusive but also rooted in the cultural and social fabric of African societies



### A link with the development, humanitarian and peace nexus

African CSOs' emphasis on complementarity aligns seamlessly with the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) [Triple Nexus approach](#). With complementarity between stakeholders and across sectors, international cooperation actors are best able to address multiple dimensions of community well-being, ensuring that interventions and programming are holistic, sustainable and effective.

## African Regional Dialogue Civil Society Partners

**The Nigeria Network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NNNGO)**

**The Network of NGOs in Central Africa (REPONGAC)**





# ASIA

## SHARED FUTURES





## SOLIDARITY AND SYNERGY FOR AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE

Global cooperation futures are anchored in shared responsibility, mutual accountability and a revitalized civil society sector. That is the vision of the Asian civil society organizations (CSOs) who took part in our regional dialogues. Participants imagine a future where cross-sectoral collaborations and synergies drive meaningful change, democratizing development processes and ensuring that no one is left behind. They emphasized the need for financial justice, climate justice and development justice, all grounded in the principles of people over profit and local first. This vision also seeks to democratize multilateralism and enhance South-South cooperation, ensuring that the leadership and resources of the global majority play a pivotal role in shaping global policies and strategies.

### Enablers

- Building democratic systems that include all voices, particularly marginalized and indigenous communities
- Addressing systemic inequalities and ensuring fair distribution of resources and environmental protections
- Empowering local governance units to deliver gender-responsive climate justice and other essential services
- Prioritizing the reform of international institutions to better reflect the needs and aspirations of the global majority
- Facilitating the recognition and operation of non-profit organizations

## How might international cooperation actors help?

- Encourage practices that ensure clear intentions and accountability in development efforts
- Fund initiatives that promote cooperation among various sectors and movements
- Provide resources and platforms for raising awareness and fostering democratic reforms
- Invest in programs that address systemic inequalities and promote environmental sustainability

## Consistency of thought and action as a foundational principle

Identified as a core principle in achieving the desirable future, this concept of consistency underscores the imperative that policies and rhetoric align with tangible actions and outcomes. It calls for a unified approach where intentions and declarations are faithfully reflected in implementation, ensuring that developmental promises translate into real-world benefits.

Consistent thought and action promote a culture of integrity and reliability, vital for sustainable and inclusive development. This approach mitigates the risk of performative contradictions where grandiose plans fall short due to lack of actionable follow-through, thereby reinforcing the principle of leaving no one behind.

## Asia Regional Dialogue Civil Society Partner

**The Asia Development Alliance  
(ADA)**





# THE CARIBBEAN ANCESTRAL FUTURES





## ANCESTRALITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE FRONT SEAT

“Ancestral Futures” best summarizes the vision of Caribbean civil society organizations (CSOs) for global development cooperation. This term, coined by one of the participants of the dialogue, was described as a forward-looking paradigm rooted in the reclamation and revitalization of cultural identity, heritage and knowledge. It emerged from conversations on emerging trends and indicators of change in the region, where participants highlighted among other things, the growing anti-West sentiment tied to the history of colonialism and its omnipresent legacy on communities and institutions. This vision of a future rooted in ancestry hence emphasizes the importance of reconnecting with ancestral roots and traditions as a foundation for sustainable development. It seeks to address today’s challenges with true and tried tools, wisdom and practices of the past, while restoring justice and forging a stronger socio-political identity.

### Enablers

- Dedicated spaces for Caribbeans to be in community
- Breaking barriers and building bridges between the diaspora and ancestral communities
- Using language to reclaim roots
- Achieving socio-political autonomy

## How might international cooperation actors help?

- Prioritize funding for programs that involve significant input and leadership from local communities, ensuring that development initiatives align with the needs and aspirations of the people they are meant to serve
- Prioritize initiatives that address historical injustices and promote social equity. This might involve supporting restorative justice programs, land rights issues and initiatives aimed at reducing disparities and fostering inclusive development
- Fund initiatives that promote and preserve cultural heritage, language and ancestral knowledge systems

## A link with the Localization and Powershift Agenda

Emphasizing ancestrality can contribute to the decolonization of development practices, challenging traditional power dynamics and fostering a more equitable partnership between donors and recipients. This approach encourages mutual respect and collaboration based on shared values and goals.

Ancestral knowledge systems often include practices that are well-adapted to local environmental and social conditions. By integrating these practices, international cooperation actors can enhance the resilience and adaptability of communities in the face of climate change, economic disruptions and other global challenges.

**Caribbean Regional Dialogue Civil Society Partner**

**Foundation Hope Ayiti**

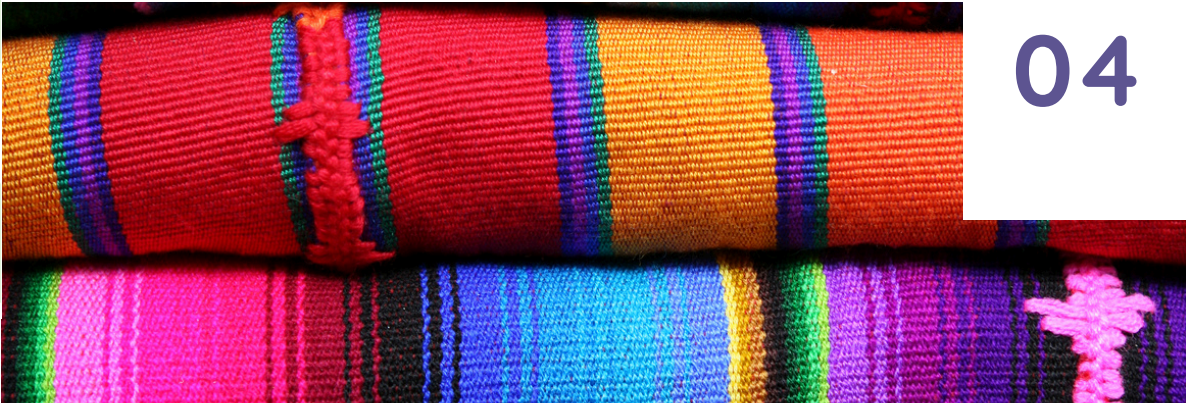




# LATIN AMERICA

## APOLITICAL FUTURES





## THE FUTURE IS DEPOLITICIZED

Envisioning a future where global cooperation is depoliticized, Latin American civil society foresees a landscape where collaboration transcends political agendas and power struggles, focusing on genuine needs such as enhancing security and addressing migration challenges. Amidst the rise of the far right, escalating violence and the proliferation of militias and narco-states, a depoliticized approach would empower international cooperation actors to tackle these issues effectively. By addressing the root causes of migration, such as economic instability and violence, civil society organizations (CSOs) can help create safer, more prosperous communities. This vision prioritizes partnerships based on mutual respect and shared goals, enabling Latin American CSOs to advocate for policies that reflect the true needs of the people, ensuring cooperation remains a tool for collective progress and sustainable development.

### Enablers

- Transparent and accountable governance
- International support and solidarity
- Integrated security and development programming
- Legal and institutional reforms
- Inclusive economic policies



## How might international cooperation actors help?

- Provide technical assistance in areas such as legal reform, public administration and digital governance to help build robust institutions that uphold human rights
- Foster partnerships between international organizations, local CSOs and governments to create a collaborative approach to development that leverages the strengths of each actor
- Advocate for policies that promote human rights at both national and international levels. This involves engaging in dialogue with governments, multilateral organizations and other stakeholders to push for legal and institutional reforms
- Support depoliticized, grassroots initiatives aimed at addressing security, migration and economic development

## A human rights-based approach (HRBA)

Participants highlighted the importance of a human rights-based approach to international cooperation to ensure that all efforts are guided by principles of dignity, equality and justice.

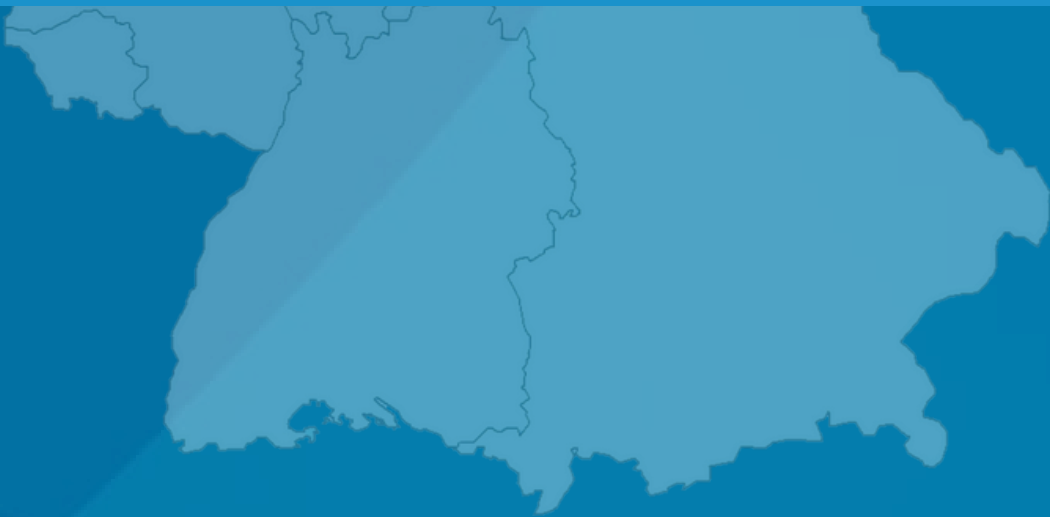
By prioritizing human rights, international cooperation actors can advocate for policies and practices that uphold the rights of individuals and communities worldwide. This approach not only addresses immediate challenges such as security threats and migration issues but also tackles the root causes behind them. It fosters inclusive governance, promotes accountable institutions and empowers the most marginalized by developing their capacity to know, exercise, claim and seek redress for their rights.

## Latin America Regional Dialogue Civil Society Partner

**The Latin American and Caribbean Network  
for Democracy (REDLAD)**



# THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA REVISIONED FUTURES





## THE FUTURE IS A PARADIGM SHIFT

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the vision for the future of global cooperation is one of radical transformation. Arab civil society organizations (CSOs) foresee a landscape where a realignment of organizational priorities reflects the demands reminiscent of the Arab Spring: democracy, peace and justice. This vision calls for a critical review of social protection systems and selective programs contributing to exclusionary practices, fostering a future characterized by inclusive, equitable and transformative international development cooperation. It requires a commitment to inclusive and participatory development processes that actively engage marginalized and vulnerable populations, including women and youth, who played a significant role in the Arab Spring. The narrative embraces a paradigm shift, marked by a more radical discourse, alternative plans for sustainable development and the importance of forging a new model for international relations while solidifying CSO solidarity globally.

### Enablers

- Stronger and inclusive institutions
- Global and regional solidarity among civil society organizations
- Peace-driven approaches
- New social safeguard mechanisms

## How might international cooperation actors help?

- Amplifying the voices of regional CSOs on the global stage, advocating for policies and practices that support democratic principles and social justice
- Design and implement development programs that are inclusive and participatory, ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups, including women and youth, are heard and their needs addressed
- Encourage and support reforms that promote democratic governance and the rule of law, making institutions more responsive to the needs of all citizens, particularly marginalized groups

## Transforming the frames of reference

A new paradigm would reassess what development means, where it is located and who contributes to it, considering new and emerging trends in the global cooperation landscape. This shift acknowledges that development challenges are not confined to any one region but are differentiated and faced by all parts of the world. In the context of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, this paradigm shift is particularly relevant.

The Arab Spring underscored the need for local voices and leadership in shaping development outcomes, highlighting the power dynamics and the importance of grassroots movements and local leadership in driving change. By moving beyond the binary North-South understanding, the new paradigm promotes a more equitable, inclusive and participatory approach to global development, empowering local actors and addressing the diverse needs of communities worldwide.

## MENA Regional Dialogue Civil Society Partner

**The Arab NGO Network for Development  
(ANND)**

# SIGNALS OF CHANGE

Emerging from our regional dialogues are five signals of change that demand careful consideration. These shifts in political, social and cultural dynamics could have wide-reaching implications for the future of international cooperation.

## **1. Rise of the far-right and shrinking civic space (all regions)**

---

Civil society organizations (CSOs) across the five regions are increasingly alarmed by the rise of authoritarian governance, which coincides with a global trend of shrinking civic space. Political regimes are adopting new censorship measures to control narratives and restrict the dissemination of information by CSOs. Arab CSOs have voiced concerns over hegemonic regulatory frameworks and intricate bureaucratic procedures that delay or deny legal recognition and registration, severely restricting their operational freedom.

In Africa, CSOs are facing growing politicization and are often viewed as opposition entities, while in Asia, some CSOs contend with heightened surveillance as governments employ advanced technologies to monitor online activities. These trends signal a concerning trajectory for the future, suggesting a potential erosion of democratic norms, increased challenges to civil liberties and heightened restrictions on the activities of civil society. If these trends persist, they could undermine transparency, accountability and the ability of CSOs to advocate for human rights and social justice effectively across the globe.

## 2. Reclamation of ancestral roots and identity (The Caribbean, Africa)

---

In the Caribbean, a notable resurgence of post-colonial discourse is driven by the reclaiming of ancestral roots and identity. This movement reflects a profound cultural and identity-driven shift that challenges entrenched power dynamics and colonial legacies. It goes beyond nostalgia, emphasizing the significance of indigenous cultures, traditional leadership, and community autonomy. This trend signals a future where Caribbean societies derive strength from their cultural heritage, fostering greater unity and resilience. Similarly, African CSOs echo similar sentiments, advocating for the preservation of traditional customs, languages and practices and calling for African-led development. Together, these movements underscore a critical reassessment of historical injustices, urging concerted efforts to address colonial legacies and promote social justice.

## 3. Shift towards regional and national cooperation (All regions)

---

A shift from global cooperation towards increased regional and national-level engagement has been noted across multiple regions, indicating a shift in geopolitical dynamics and priorities. This transition is influenced by several factors, including rising regional conflicts and security challenges, the demand for customized solutions to local issues and efforts to assert regional identities and interests on the global stage. It also underscores the effectiveness of addressing specific concerns such as economic integration and security cooperation within local and regional contexts.

This trend suggests a reassessment of traditional models of global governance and cooperation, as highlighted in our [Global Landscape Analysis of the International Cooperation Sector](#). It reflects a growing emphasis on finding a balance between global interconnectedness and regional autonomy to enhance resilience in a changing world.

## **4. Decreased motivation and enthusiasm among local CSOs (Africa, Asia)**

---

Insufficient support and funding significantly dampens the enthusiasm of CSOs, impairing their ability to effectively carry out projects. African CSOs flagged the impact of inflation exacerbating financial pressures by redirecting funds towards essential organizational expenses, rather than project activities. In Asia, the rising costs of living add additional strain, compelling CSOs to reevaluate their priorities and potentially scale back their project ambitions. A continued decline in CSO motivation resulting in reduced CSO engagement could lead to a loss of valuable grassroots perspectives and community-driven solutions in development discourse. This may result in policies and interventions that are less responsive to local needs and less effective in addressing systemic challenges like poverty, inequality and climate change.

## **5. Growing challenges in managing diversity (Latin America, Middle East and North Africa)**

---

Attitudes towards international cooperation and aid, particularly in developed countries grappling with economic hardships, are rapidly changing. There is a growing sentiment among the public that government resources should prioritize domestic needs before extending support abroad, leading to reduced backing for international development initiatives.

In Latin America and the Middle East and North African regions, CSOs warn that these changing attitudes can have profound implications. In addition, reduced international support and increased hostility towards migrants can exacerbate the challenges faced by migrants in these regions as conflict and political instability continues to drive forced displacement. This would not only affect the well-being of migrant populations but also threaten regional stability and international cooperation efforts aimed at addressing migration issues holistically and humanely.

# CONCLUSION

Navigating the complexities of our rapidly changing world demands keen attention to early signs of change and potential disruptors. It requires us to broaden our information sources beyond the usual suspects and to engage closely with communities most affected, as they are often the first to perceive shifts in their surroundings. By paying heed to these signals, we can enhance our ability to anticipate, prepare for and effectively respond to emerging issues in global cooperation.


From the outset, the [Global Cooperation Futures Initiative](#) sought to transcend conventional perspectives by actively involving diverse stakeholders and amplifying voices from different regions.

The narratives emerging from these dialogues reveal a spectrum of perspectives and aspirations, each uniquely shaped by regional dynamics and historical contexts.

The signals of change identified—from the rise of authoritarianism and shrinking civic spaces to the resurgence of ancestral identities and the shift towards regional cooperation—underscore both challenges and opportunities on the horizon. These signals demand a proactive response to safeguard democratic norms, promote cultural resilience and enhance adaptive governance frameworks that balance global interconnectedness with local autonomy.

Moreover, diminishing enthusiasm among local civil society organizations (CSOs) and shifting attitudes towards international cooperation underscore the urgency for inclusive policies and collaborative efforts. Addressing these challenges will require concerted action, fostering solidarity among global partners and empowering communities to shape their development trajectories.

As we conclude this report, we extend our deepest gratitude to all partners, experts and stakeholders whose invaluable contributions enriched our understanding and shaped our vision of the international cooperation sector for the next 10 years.





# FUTURE OUTLOOK

[Cooperation Canada](#) is poised to unveil three plausible scenarios for the future of global development cooperation. These scenarios have been co-created with global partners through a rigorous, iterative research and strategic foresight process that captures existing challenges, emerging trends and signals of change, along with transformative visions of the future.

The findings will be published in the fall of 2024, during our second [International Cooperation Futures forum](#). We hope that by engaging our members and partners in strategic conversations about the future, we can create space for innovation and foster collaboration in anticipating, preparing for and shaping a better tomorrow.



## **About Cooperation Canada**

Cooperation Canada brings together Canada's international development and humanitarian organizations and advocates for them by convening sector leaders, influencing policy and building capacity. Together, we work with partners both inside and outside Canada to build a world that's fair, safe and sustainable for all.

## **Land Acknowledgement**

Cooperation Canada acknowledges the historical and ongoing oppression and colonization of all Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and lands in what we now know as Canada. The land on which Cooperation Canada's office is located is the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabe People. We believe that social justice in Canada and globally depends on reconciliation with all Indigenous peoples, including the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, who are the original guardians of the land we are grateful to be sharing.

[www.cooperation.ca](http://www.cooperation.ca)

123 Slater Street, Ottawa, ON, K1P 5G4

613 241-7007, [info@ccooperation.ca](mailto:info@ccooperation.ca)

All rights reserved. © Cooperation Canada 2024