

RE-IMAGINING INGO

PROTOTYPES

MAY 2022

**SUMMARY OF THE INITIAL RINGO PROTOTYPES
ENDORSED BY THE RINGO SOCIAL LAB**



SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

PROTOTYPE: LANGUAGE AND LEXICON

How might we advocate for multiple stakeholders (UN agencies, INGOs, funders, academics etc.) to abandon the terms 'developed', 'developing', North/South etc, so that we can encourage a new decolonised narrative?

How might we disrupt colonial/traditional perceptions of capacity, knowledge and expertise, rather than perpetuating the narrative of the North doing capacity building 'to' southern civil society?

This prototype addresses the barrier issues of Language and Communications, based on the understanding that without meaningful language change, systems change is likely to remain superficial, if at all.

The team will explore the use of technology to enable more inclusive communication that is less (or not) (implicitly) neo-colonial or racist and made more accessible for Global South practitioners.

The team will:

1. Test the application of IT/AI to redress and replace the lexicon of (pejorative) jargon, idioms and terminology 'imposed' on civil society organisations involved in international aid and development. They will develop a 'Grammarly' style search and suggest function software that can be used to scan blogs, reports, marketing messages, and formulate 25-50 'replacements' of problematic terms, and trial this out in a number of places. It will act both as a learning tool and an advocacy tool. The team will draw on work already being done by BOND, Partos and others.
2. Undertake a trial using Google translate or a similar platform, initially with Swahili, to enable CSOs to use their local language to write proposals or reports for INGOs and funders. If successful, they would advocate for major uptake of this approach.

SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

PROTOTYPE: A NEW APPROACH TO RISK SHARING AND COMPLIANCE MANAGEMENT

How might we organise risk sharing and compliance management differently within international development and humanitarian actions in ways that is more effective, trust-based, empowering, and equitable?

How might we co-create partnerships of genuine solidarity between international actors and local civil society, where risk is shared and continuously navigated and negotiated by all stakeholders, including funders?

This prototype tests whether well designed and facilitated 'brave' encounters in specific context(s) between in-country CSOs, present in-country INGOs and donors can crack open the current system of risk and compliance management, looking at:

1. the incentive system: what is gained for whom, and what is lost for whom from the current system of risk and compliance management, and
2. what immediate or future improvements could be designed so that the system is less transactional and reflects proportionately local needs, and risks, alongside donor needs for accountability – and also to support meaningful impact.

The prototype seeks to re-imagine the approach to risk sharing and compliance by working in a specific in-country

CSO/active in-country INGO/ donor loops in at least one context to:

- pick out and work on specific parts of the relevant value chain in workshop/'brave conversation' settings, separating out the different types of risks and compliance, and surfacing issues of power and control;
- focus on the middle management layer (which often drives systems change, is applying own rules in real time);
- interrogate what risk and compliance requirements are real or imagined, where possibly a lack of imagination, inertia or force of habit is holding us back;
- support people to experience conversations which bring diversity of thought and look beyond the (Western) managerial approach to managing risks and accountabilities, which is based on capitalist and patriarchal ideologies and tends to ignore the social/cultural.

Based on this, the team seek to identify different ways to share risks and organise compliance requirements through the entire value chain.

SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

PROTOTYPE: MULTI STAKEHOLDER APPROACH TO CLIMATE JUSTICE TRANSITION

How might we disrupt colonial/traditional perceptions of capacity, knowledge and expertise, rather than perpetuating the narrative of the North doing capacity building 'to' southern civil society?

How might we actively influence INGOs (internally and externally) to courageously reframe their purpose, to embed solidarity and collective civil society power, and restore power to local CSOs?

How might we incentivise INGOs to step out of (inappropriate) leadership roles and enable Global South CSOs to step into those roles, in order to enable equitable partnerships?

This prototype seeks to understand the most effective process of bringing grassroots organisations to engage from a position of strength and power vis a vis influencing plans and policy reforms needed within a 'Just Transition' framework. It will test and develop a more effective partnership model with INGOs (peace building and environment), grassroots organisations and other actors, including the private sector, to help frame the process and purpose of INGOs, where local organisations take the lead in

large-scale climate solutions, supported by INGOs. Decisions around climate investment from multilateral banks following COP 26 will be led by local grassroots organisations, rather than imposed, and we will learn how to negotiate challenges around economics, conflict and environment.

In the Philippines, there is a risk that climate-friendly solutions could exacerbate conflict dynamics in volatile areas in Mindanao and the Bangsamoro, where most of the climate-affecting investments are to be located. Alert Philippines has previously established a "multi stakeholder group for energy concerns" model in the peacebuilding and environment sectors, alongside the country's biggest energy producer and distributor, i.e., Aboitiz Power Philippines. The prototype can draw from the experience of this multi stakeholder dialogue process to test what aspects of the engagement model are suited to build a solidaristic multi stakeholder approach to climate justice transition rooted in local, grassroots power.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

PROTOTYPE: FOR AND BY THE PEOPLE: AN ALTERNATIVE SOLIDARITY MODEL

How might we re-imagine a new approach and organisational model for international civil society solidarity and action?

How might we enable and mainstream a justice and solidarity based approach that changes the way INGOs think/measure their success and shifting power to local activists and CSOs?

This prototype seeks to create disruption and propose a new (adaptable) online/offline solidarity platform model building on indigenous systems and processes. This platform will be owned and driven by local activists. It will turn the current 'call for proposal' models on its head by asking donors/INGOs/supporters to respond to 'reverse calls for proposals' which lay out the kind of support identified by members of that platform. This platform will give them a common coordination space and voice in articulating their outside

needs for support and oblige outsiders to be(come) demand driven/respond to the realities on the ground.

This platform will be tested in the context of Swaziland* and seeks to set up a demand driven alternative to projectized, and institutionalised 'solidarity spaces' dominated and 'owned' by INGOs (such as Crisis Action), create space for civic action in an environment where civic space is closed, and secure outside support on the 'terms' and based on the needs of local actors (activists, movements, and organisations). The prototype challenges INGOs in their role and behaviours towards local actors through articulating a strong and coordinated "demand side" in the development / international solidarity chain.

*Democracy supporters and opposition groups in Civil Society continue to use the name Swaziland as opposed to Eswatini.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

PROTOTYPE: DECOLONISING ADVISORY SERVICE

How might we disrupt colonial/traditional perceptions of capacity, knowledge and expertise, rather than perpetuating the narrative of the North doing capacity building 'to' southern civil society?

The past few years have seen an exponential growth in the number of discussions among INGOs, think tanks and funders around how to 'Decolonise' the sector. However, the surge in interest has not been met with a corresponding increase in the supply of advisors who can support such processes. This prototype aims to establish a knowledge advisory service or centre, made up of activists and advisors

from the Global South who would be willing and able to offer their services to stakeholders in the Global North to 'Decolonise' their practice and thinking. There will also be a focus on building the expertise and access to the knowledge around the decolonising process, perhaps through the creation of a knowledge centre based in the Global South. There is significant momentum for change within the system right now, which could dissipate if the demand for support is not met with a corresponding supply in services. Moreover, there is a risk that the decolonising process will not be guided by those in the Global South.

ACCOUNTABILITY, IMPACT AND MEASUREMENT

PROTOTYPE: THE PLEDGE FOR CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

How might we design a system that also holds INGOs and donors accountable to the local/national CSOs they support or partner with?

The Pledge for Change convenes key INGOs' CEOs to develop principles and public pledges to decolonize their INGOs and influence the wider aid system. The coalition includes Oxfam, Care, MSF, Save the Children, Plan, Christian Aid and Mercy Corps. The pledges focus on leadership, equitable partnerships and decolonised communications and will be rolled out in June 2022. This prototype is to develop a Southern-led accountability mechanism that shifts the accountability equation and redresses power imbalances in the sector. The progress and success of the model must be defined by, and accountability led by, actors in the Global South. The accountability mechanism for Pfc will aim to meet the following criteria:

1. Informed by cumulative experience and good practices in collective accountability
2. Informed by models of accountability originated and tested in the GS
3. Co-designed with GS activists, practitioners and local partners of INGOs
4. Housed and managed by a Southern entity
5. Possibly include both third-party and peer-to-peer learning and accountability
6. Fit for purpose for a coalition that seeks to grow with new signatories

Whilst focussed on the Pledge for Change, this will have broader applicability to demonstrate creative, bottom up accountability mechanisms and processes.

RESOURCE FLOWS

PROTOTYPE: UNTYING AID TO NORTHERN CSOS

How might we decrease the imbalance in civil society funding to assure that a larger share of funding goes to global south CSOs?

This prototype involves a high-level policy and advocacy campaign towards donors that contribute to the structural imbalance of CSO funding. According to an OECD study in 2020, 93% of all CSO funding goes to northern CSOs or INGOs, with only 7% going to the Global South. One main cause of this skewed distribution is that many donor countries still have tied or earmarked aid to their domestic CSOs, despite the OECD recommendation on untying aid from 2001. For Global South/local CSOs to access a larger share of funding, and strengthen their ownership and power, tied aid needs to stop.

The campaign targets these donors and the forums where they meet (OECD-DAC etc) to raise the awkwardness of tied aid to domestic CSOs, creating awareness that this is a reflection of structural racism. The aim is to pressure OECD-DAC and the bilateral donors themselves to stop the practice of tying or earmarking aid to their domestic CSOs. The idea seeks to redress bilateral donors' policies, which set the standards for the entire architecture of the development cooperation sector. It challenges bilateral donors' underlying structural racism/inbuilt power imbalances and, if the campaign is successful and aid to civil society stops being tied to bilateral donors' domestic CSOs, it would gradually and strongly increase local ownership and power in global south civil society.

RESOURCE FLOWS

PROTOTYPE: PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING LEARNING PLATFORM

How might we ensure that those most directly affected are in the driver's seat of INGO policy and practice (eg driving agendas) and are not instrumentalised in the interests of perpetuating top-down models of charity?

This prototype explores how demand meets supply when it comes to understanding how Global South and North actors can develop alternative models of collaboration that are mutually beneficial and equitable. This prototype will test a range of participatory grant-making approaches that seek to:

- Disrupt existing hierarchies of power by putting local actors and communities in the driver's seat - making decisions and leading the agenda, resource allocation and process of engagement

- Enable INGOs to transfer resources without perpetuating problematic power dynamics and for the INGO to become a resource to the community, to be drawn on at their initiative
- Prototype a practical alternative model for INGOs that can be scaled and replicated and challenge existing top-down models of charity

This idea will be tested in Kenya, Ghana and potentially India. In bringing these 3 PGM experiments together, the prototype seeks to answer a shared set of learning questions that look at how power can be shifted and new models developed that reimagine the role of the INGO. The output will be a body of learning, involving CSOs, INGOs, donors, in different geographies, that resonates with the INGO sector and the wider funding ecosystem, that influences systemic change.