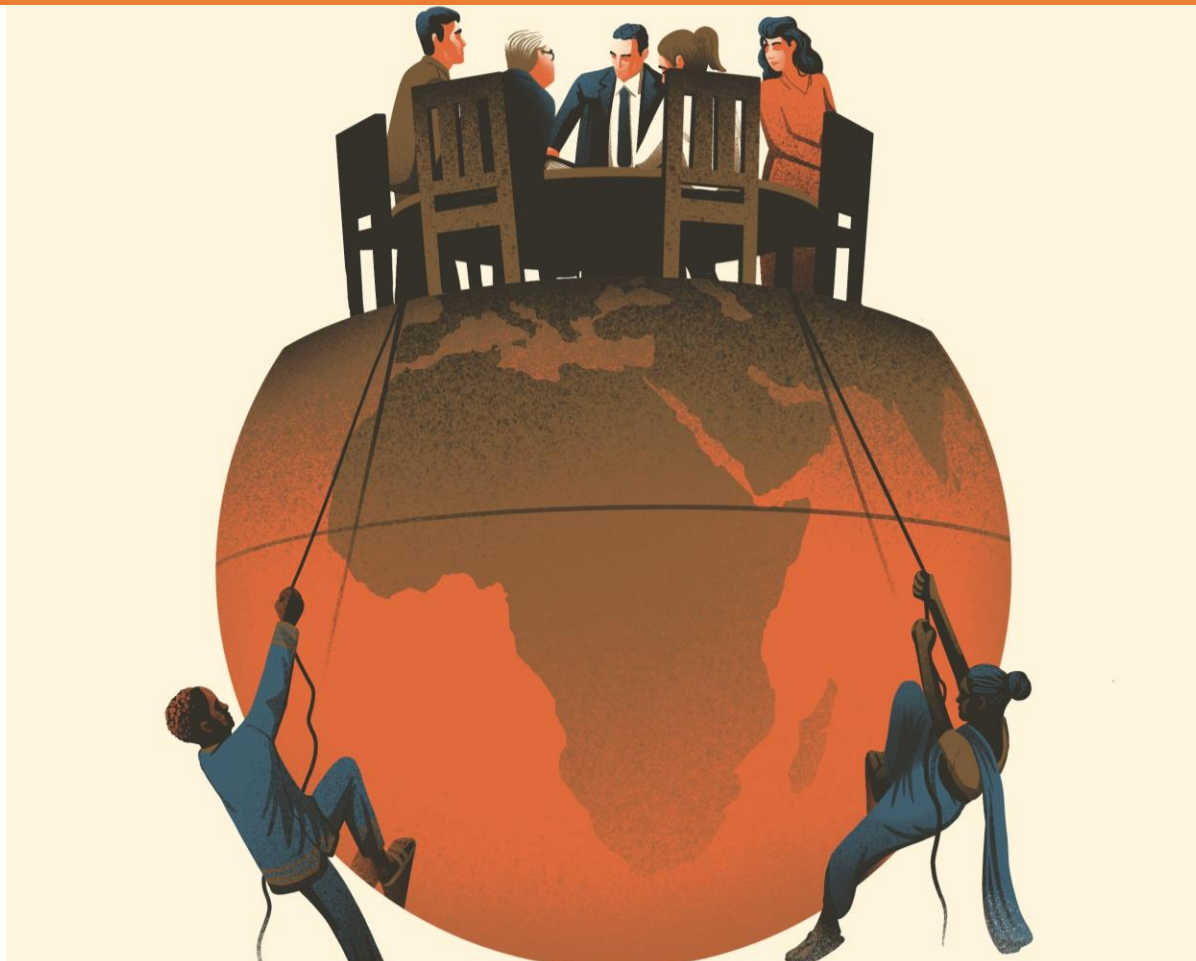


# Time to Decolonise Aid: findings and recommendations



# About Peace Direct

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- 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 peacebuilding system towards locally led efforts.
- Rooted in the belief that local civil society organisations represent the single biggest source of untapped peacebuilding potential globally.

# Why we produced this report

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- We believe that the current system needs radical reform, particularly in how it prioritizes top down/external and INGO efforts over local efforts.
- In trying to shift power and resources in the system in favour of local efforts, we have encountered significant resistance, with excuses ranging from:
  - *Local actors can't be trusted*
  - *They lack capacity*
  - *Local civil society doesn't exist in this region*
  - *The risk of fraud/ funds going into the wrong hands is too great*
  - *Local groups can't meet our strict compliance require*
  - *Local groups aren't effective*

**The root of much of this resistance lies in overt and structural racism which is barely acknowledged by those in the system**

# General overview of the consultation

- Global online consultation held in November 2020
  - Jointly organized by African Development Solutions (Adeso), Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP), Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS), and Peace Direct
  - Participatory Research design – the virtual ‘Peace Exchange’ model
  - 158 participants took part – a mix of practitioners, academics, activists and decision-makers
- **Topics of discussion**
  - Unpacking the language and terminology around decolonisation
  - Colonial roots of the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding sectors and their legacy in the modern-day aid system
  - Current structural and personal barriers that perpetuate power imbalances
  - Manifestos for decolonising the aid system
  - Recommendations

# Key findings

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**Decolonisation:** A useful term for framing the conversation, though its use generated differing opinions among participants.

**Colonial Roots:** The modern aid sector believes it either doesn't have any colonial history or has divorced itself from its colonial roots through professionalization and strong values so that history is neutralized/depoliticized. Participants rejected the idea of aid workers operating neutrally and ahistorically.

**Structural racism:** So deeply embedded in the everyday culture of the sector stretching as far as affecting how local staff of INGOs regard their own communities. It even rewards local orgs who know how to 'play the system' by feeding into assumptions.

**Sector language:** Common terms and expressions reinforce neo-colonial perceptions of non-White populations 'lacking capacity' etc.

# Key Findings contd.

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- **Programme and research design:** Is rooted in Western values and knowledge systems. Local knowledge is devalued and often, not even recognised.
- **Intersectionality:** Practitioners described being made to feel lesser than White practitioners, even in their own countries when engaging with INGOs and donors from outside their country. Those holding other identities (e.g. if they were youth, a woman, had a disability, etc.) experience this dismissal more frequently and intensely.
- **Covid-19:** The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities, but it also presents an opportunity to even the playing field as international actors become more dependent on Global South practitioners.



# Participant manifestos for a new aid system



## Participant 1:

We need to be willing to test out new methods of operation and engagement, fail at them, and then learn from that. [...] I would perhaps want to add the following commandments:

**1) listen, listen, listen 2) act with humility 3) be open 4) be inclusive and accessible 5) admit failure** and learn from that. would add the spirit of compassion as well to the manifesto - treat others as they wish to be treated.

## Participant 2:

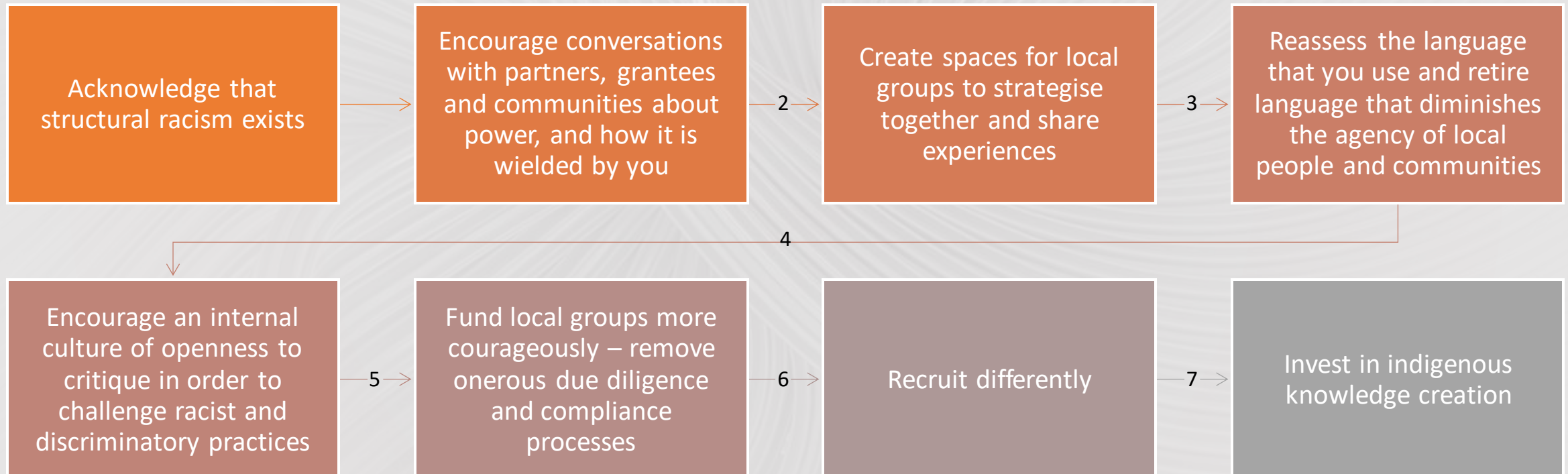
Language matters, but also, we also need to think about **how we value knowledge, knowledge production and agency.**

## Participant 3:

If we change the framing of humanitarian and development funding to **reparation**, **then the funding** that is currently withheld from locals as if they are "risky" and lacking capacity, **is a RIGHT and not a favor** being awarded to local organizations.



# Main recommendations for donors, INGOs and policymakers



# Main Recommendations for INGOs

1.	End the process of White gaze fundraising
2.	Adopt a transition mindset for organisational strategies, particularly for country offices
3.	Avoid localisation 'spin'
4.	Re-evaluate your partnerships with your local partners and other local organisations. Challenge your organisation to strive for more mutually accountable partnerships

# Recommendations for individuals

<p>Reflect on Your Own Positionality</p>	<p>How have you benefited from the existing racist and discriminatory systems? What efforts have you been involved with in your own community? How have you inadvertently reinforced structural racism?</p>
<p>Remain Humble</p>	<p>There will be criticism. How will you respond? Remain open to new forms of knowledge and thinking.</p>
<p>Shift Access &amp; Power</p>	<p>What makes you the best person to address a particular issue? If there are others better suited, pass the mic. Consider refusing opportunities if a diversity of perspectives were not invited.</p>

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**THANK YOU!**