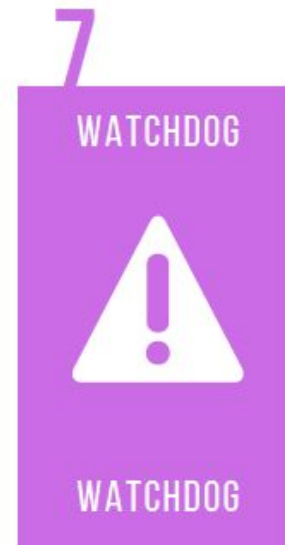


# THE NINE ROLES THAT INTERMEDIARIES CAN PLAY IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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.



# 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 peacebuilding system towards locally led efforts.
- We believe that the current international system needs radical reform, particularly in how it prioritizes top down/external efforts over local efforts.

# About Peace Direct

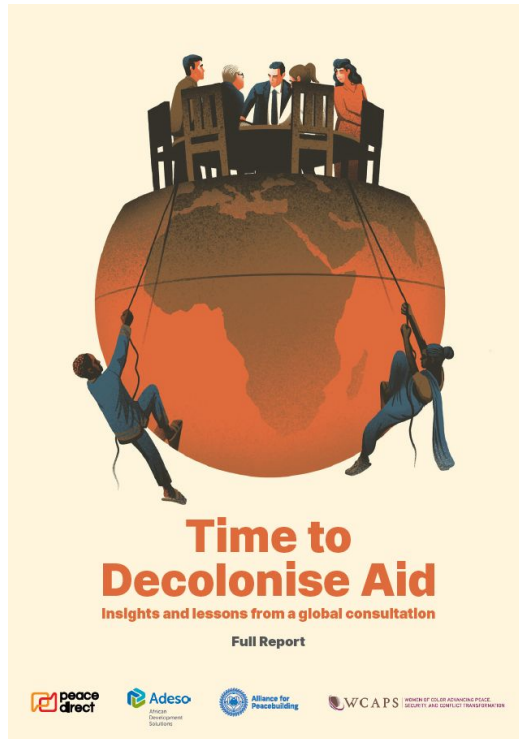
In trying to shift power and resources in the system in favour of local efforts, we have observed that many INGOs:

- **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**

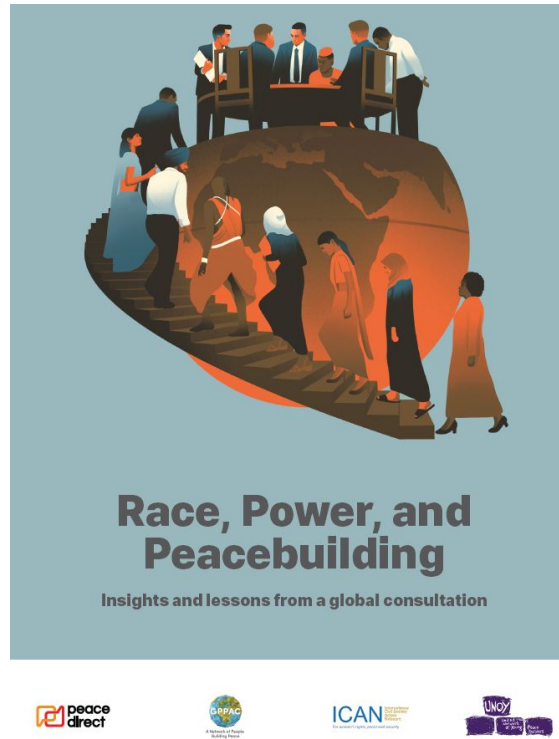
**The failure to imagine a different role for themselves is one reason the current sector is failing to live up to its commitments to transfer power and resources to local organisations**

# Decolonising aid – a global conversation

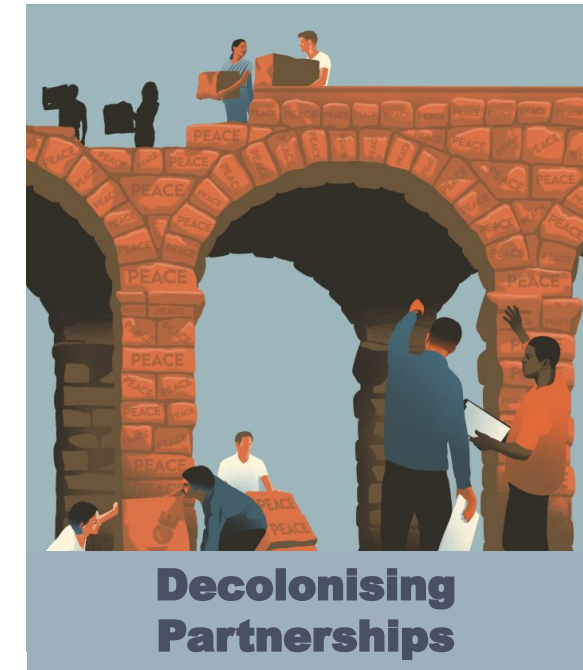
- 500+ local practitioners from over 50 countries took part in three online global consultations (2020, 2021 & 2022)
- Unpacking the language and terminology around decolonising, structural racism etc
- Colonial roots of the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding sectors
- How structural racism shows up in the current system
- Manifestos for how to decolonise the sector



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# The nine dimensions of structural racism in the modern day aid sector



**Is there a role for INGOs in the future?**

# Yes, but....

A decolonised and transformed sector will mean:

- A smaller INGO sector
- Donors and INGOs intentionally giving up power and control
- Greater humility among Global North actors - the end of white saviourism.
- Donors providing more direct support to local organisations
- INGOs transitioning away from direct implementation to supporting indigenous civil society organisations
- No more country offices



- **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.**

Example: Could you translate UN SDG progress reports or donor statements for your partners?





- **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\*\*\***

Question: How often do you identify knowledge from other GS actors that could be of use to your partners?

3

TRAINER,  
COACH



AND CO-  
LEARNER

- While local orgs are rightly critical of the Global North fixation on the ‘capacity building’ of the Global South, 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

Question: Could you consider a co-learning agenda with your partners?



- **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**

Question: How often have you built in opportunities for your partners to learn and reflect with their peers in country and across different countries?



- **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.**

Question: To what extent does your strategy look at the health of the civil society ecosystem that you are operating in?

6

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.**

Question: Even if you are not an advocacy organisation, how can you be an advocate for your partners?



- **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**

Question: Are you prepared to play a watchdog role even if it is something unfamiliar to you?

8

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.**

Question: To what extent are you are true critical friend to your partners?

9

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**

Question: What current practices enable or inhibit you from being a sidekick?



# 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.**

**THANK YOU!**