



THE FUTURE IS COMMUNITY-LED

The Movement for Community-led Development
2026-2029 Strategic Plan

Cover Photo: Members of Kasangadzi Area Program, Dowa, Malawi, apply MCLD's Participatory CLD Assessment Tool. Credit: MCLD, 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The world is going through big changes, and at the Movement for Community-Led Development (MCLD), we believe now is the time to shape a new way forward—one where everyone has a say in the decisions that impact their lives. That’s the heart of our 2026–2029 Strategic Plan: building a future led by communities themselves.

Developed through the collective work of our members, this strategic plan outlines a pathway to not just reimagine the current system, but to actively build towards it over the next four years.

We will do this through four key pillars: Practice, Policy, Solidarity, and Self-Reliance, and two cross-cutting themes: gender justice and ecological solidarity.

Since officially becoming an independent “movement organization” on January 1, 2024, we have gone through a deep, inclusive planning process to figure out what is most needed in today’s changing world. Our priorities reflect that process: challenging power imbalances, supporting strong local leadership, protecting civic space, building global connections, and making our movement more resilient.

Today, MCLD is a Majority-World led network of networks with 3000+ local, community-based and international organizations and networks. Our presence spans Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific, with allies across Europe.

The last decade has shown us the transformation we can bring about by embracing our core values and leveraging our collective strength.

As we step into our new strategic plan, we remain committed to taking courageous action rooted in interconnectedness. We firmly believe that a just, peaceful and sustainable future can only be achieved through inclusive, self-reliant communities that act together to realize their own visions for their future.



MCLD Uganda Members in the Northern Region Celebrating 10 Years of MCLD, May 2025. Credit: MCLD

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INTRODUCTION



2025 was a tumultuous year for the world and for the international development and humanitarian sectors. The system of development that was rooted in neo-colonial power structures and funder-driven initiatives began to crumble as the world's biggest aid agency was dismantled without notice. The closure of USAID combined with the dramatic cuts to aid budgets across Europe led to an immediate lack of access to health, education, essential medicines, food supplies and livelihoods around the world. OECD estimates a 9-17% fall in Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2025 with a 16-28% decline in ODA for sub-Saharan Africa.

The devastation caused by these cuts coupled with increasing geo-political uncertainty, climate disasters, and attacks on civic space, has been felt acutely by communities around the world. And yet, with it has come an opportunity - an opportunity to create a new system rooted in collective power, shared humanity and ecological solidarity.

MCLD began its process of strategic planning in May 2024, just five months into our new structure and way before the world as we have known it had started to disintegrate. We wanted a strategic plan that reflected our values and the collective aspirations of our members from over 40 countries.

Over 15 months, our members worked across time zones, geographies, language and cultural barriers to create a vision for the world we would like to see. A world where every person has a voice in decisions that affect their lives and every community thrives. A world which is not defined by ruthless competition and greed, but by human dignity, compassion, justice, equity, peace and sustainability.

Together we created the pathway towards this world and it is this pathway that you will see in the following pages. In crafting this plan, we started with local realities, examining how they shape and are shaped by national, regional and global forces. It is for this reason that the plan remains relevant and responsive to the changing context of 2025 and 2026.

2026 has once again begun on a treacherous note – multiple wars are ongoing with no end in sight, the spectre of an unprecedented energy crisis and nuclear weapons hangs over our head, multilateralism is crumbling and fear and apathy lead many to turn a blind eye to the thousands of lives lost to greed and poorly disguised imperialistic ambitions. But in this strategic plan, local community based organizations, international non-governmental organizations, networks, and individually committed to a just world envision how we might move from the current path of destruction to a path which recognizes, celebrates and strengthens our interconnectedness.

This is not just a strategic plan, it is also our belief that we have the power to transform the world, but only if we come together!

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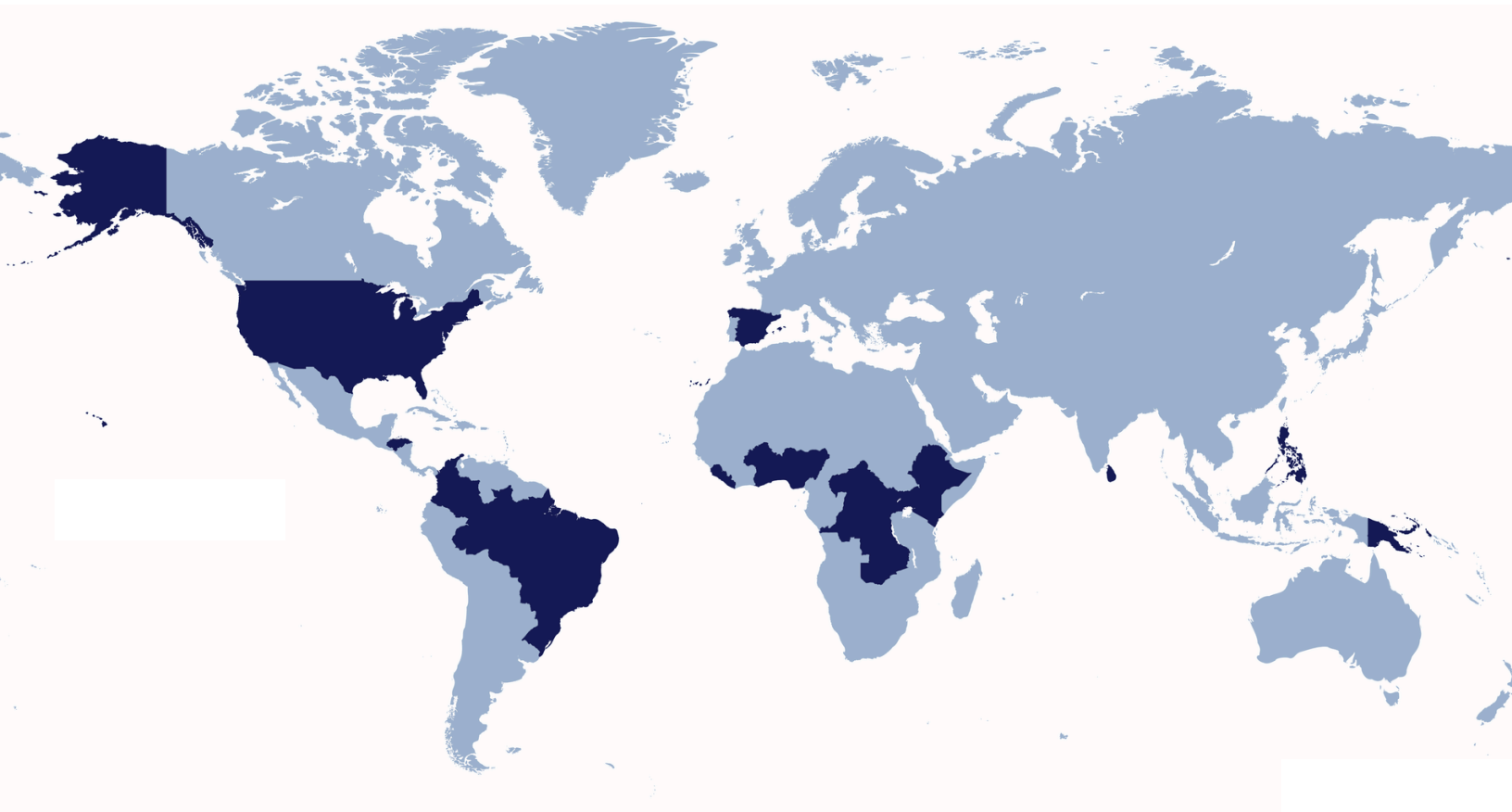
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WHO WE ARE

The Movement for Community-Led Development (MCLD) is a Majority World-led network of networks committed to ensuring that every person has a voice in decisions that affect their lives.¹ We are a values-based organization, committed to transforming unjust and unequal systems through courageous collective action, solidarity and continuous learning and adaptation.

Our membership includes 3,000+ local civil society organizations (CSOs) and networks from 40+ countries, and 25+ international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). After a year of listening and consultation, MCLD adopted a new, independent structure on January 1, 2024, transitioning from a movement to a “movement organization.” This allows us to have a formal governance structure, while also retaining the characteristics of a movement: energy, dynamism, values-based collective action, and shared leadership.²



Existing, Under-formation or Aspiring National Associations (NAs) in:

Africa: Benin, Burundi, Central African Republic, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, Zambia

Americas: Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, United States of America

Asia: The Philippines, Sri Lanka

Europe: Spain

Oceania: Papua New Guinea

¹ For more information about MCLD, visit our website: mclد.org.

² Veda, G. (2023). Chronicles of a Transformative Movement: Strengthening our Interconnectedness. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, 10(1), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.24926/ijps.v10i1.5458>

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Four primary components make up MCLD's structure:

1. **Members:** Individual and organizational, across the world, both in countries with and without National Associations.
2. **National Associations:** These are self-governed, self-directed groups of civil society organizations, individuals and networks in a country, with elected boards that engage in collective action towards their shared vision of community-led development.
3. **Global Secretariat:** A globally distributed team that supports the National Associations, facilitates mutual capacity strengthening, undertakes global advocacy, and drives MCLD's access, visibility and funding.
4. **Global Assembly:** Comprising two representatives from every MCLD National Association and from regions without associations, the Global Assembly is our apex decision-making body for issues that affect all MCLD National Associations and members.



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WHAT WE DO AND HOW WE DO IT

At MCLD, our vision is for every community in the world to have the resources, skills, knowledge, autonomy and equitable partnerships to achieve their own goals and visions.

Inclusion and the power of human connection shape not just *what* we do, but *how* we do it. We work in a collaborative, participatory manner, bringing together a wide range of voices to imagine (and re-imagine) solutions, drive advocacy, take action, and keep learning together.

Our approach involves taking a hard look at power dynamics through shared reflection and dialogue. We focus on mutual learning and unlearning, encourage practices that free people to lead their own change, and prioritize mutual accountability and transparency across all our work.

OUR VALUES

These values³ will be the foundation of every initiative, partnership, and activity outlined in this strategic plan.



³See Annex 1 for the description of each value.

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OUR STRATEGIC PLAN



1. PROCESS: CO-CREATION THROUGH THE TRANSFORMATIVE SCENARIOS METHODOLOGY

MCLD's strategic planning process was grounded in our core values and the belief that, together, we have the power to create real change. We adapted and used the transformative scenario process, planning for how to transform the world we are likely to see to **the world we would like to see.**⁴ This approach helped us prepare for uncertainty while staying focused on building a more just, equitable, peaceful, and sustainable future.

Over 15 months, we followed an inclusive and collaborative process, engaging as many of our members as possible through virtual and in-person meetings.

We began with collective visioning exercises, held in-person and virtually, where we explored three big questions: What kind of world are we living in now? What might the future look like? And what kind of world are we trying to build? Along the way, we didn't just identify key global uncertainties—we also took stock of our shared values and strengths, which are key to shaping the future we want.

A drafting committee⁵ comprising members from different National Associations used these discussions to finalize four scenarios for our future.⁶ These scenarios addressed potential outcomes based on different types of possible action taken by key stakeholders between now and 2035.

Using those scenarios, MCLD members worked together to define priorities, shape strategies, and outline the activities that will move us forward. We also set clear outcomes and ways to track our progress. This framework will guide our work over the next four years as we move closer to the world we're aiming to build.

The process of Strategic Planning was led by the Global Secretary with support from the Secretariat staff and a drafting committee. The [Global Assembly](#) through its Strategic Planning Committee provided oversight and guidance.

⁴ To read more about the process, refer to Annex 2.

⁵ Emmanuel Singa (CAR), Joseph Bagudu (Nigeria), Lansana Kondeh (Sierra Leone), Noel Rwagasore (Rwanda), Grace Boone (U.S.), Pascal Djohossou (Secretariat - Benin), Cathy Ameyna (Secretariat - Kenya), Cassidy Miller (Secretariat - U.S.).

⁶ The drafting committee decided to adapt the detailed scenarios created by [the RESPACE initiative](#) as the scenarios mapped closely with the inputs from members and National Associations. You can find the summary of the scenarios we used in Annex 3.

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1 PARTICIPATORY MAPPING OF VALUES

Members, coordinators and staff map our values and collective powers.



2 SCENARIO CREATION

Members & National Associations create visions of the world we are likely to see and we would like to see.

3 IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIES

Members and National Associations identify strategies and key activities to move us towards the world we want to see in 2035.



5 FEEDBACK

Members, staff, and National Associations provide feedback through multiple channels

4 DRAFTING

The drafting committee uses inputs from all National Associations to draft a strategic plan.



6 ADOPTION

The Global Assembly ratifies the plan, and it is adopted by MCLD for 2026-2029.

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2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY-LED LEARNING

In the spirit of continuous learning, MCLD's strategic plan outlines not just our strategies and the actions we intend to take but also how we will measure progress and continue to adapt our work. This learning process is guided by the principles of community-led learning.

Shared Ownership

We work with members to figure out what changes matter most to them, how to track those changes, and what evidence is meaningful in their context. We also work with them to adopt this same principle in their work so that communities help define what success looks like.

Blending Methods

We mix hard numbers with real stories. While we track things like the number of people trained or policies influenced, we also use community-led tools like storytelling and reflection sessions to understand the deeper meaning behind the numbers.

Awareness of Power

We know that measurement isn't neutral—it often reflects who holds power. So we ask questions like: Who defines success? Who owns the data? Who benefits from it?

Mutual Accountability

Everyone involved—members, National Associations, Secretariat, Global Assembly and the communities where our members work—should be able to hold each other accountable. Through feedback loops and transparent processes, we create space for honest conversations about what's working and what needs to change.

Learning First

Measurement isn't about reports—it's about learning, improving and adapting.

Inclusive Voices

We include people who are often left out by using culturally relevant methods, removing barriers to participation, and honoring different ways of understanding change.

Accessible Information

We share findings in ways that make sense locally—whether it's translating materials, using visuals, or hosting meetings—so that the information actually supports local action.

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3. OUR PLAN

MCLD’s 2026–2029 strategic plan focuses on working together for sustainable development—one that centers communities, strengthens social equity, and supports lasting peace. We do this by creating enabling infrastructure for self-reliant organizations, local ecosystems and communities through four pillars and two cross-cutting themes.

Through our collaborative effort, we’re imagining a future where communities and civil society not only survive but thrive without being dependent on external aid. By centering inclusion, partnership, and shared responsibility, we’re building a new table, one that has space, voice and visibility for everyone.

For too long, civil society has been focused on responding to crises as they unfold. While firefighting is important we know that it is not sustainable. Instead, we need to focus on preventing the fires and the crises in the first place. This requires strategic action to lay strong foundations for our desired future. Therefore, our framework is forward-looking, practical, and action-oriented.

3.1. OUR FOUR PILLARS

This section delves into the four pillars of our strategic plan, contextualizing what is changing in MCLD’s strategy, outlining activities we will undertake, the outcomes we hope to achieve, and the ways in which we will measure progress.

The Four Pillars of Our Strategic Plan



FROM ADVOCACY TO ACCOUNTABILITY



Under this pillar our strategy is to:

1. Undertake policy advocacy at global, regional and national levels to address power inequities through community-led development, decolonial practice and devolution.
2. Strengthen mutual accountability and support institutions and governments in translating the intent of policies into action. We hold governments, multilateral institutions, funders and all relevant stakeholders, including ourselves, accountable to commitments and policies.

We defend multilateralism, albeit one that is grounded in equity and justice, and is not so inaccessible. We hold governments, multilateral institutions, and funders accountable to their existing human rights and gender commitments. And we advocate for inclusive, equitable governance at the global, regional, national and sub-national level, reimagining both development and financial architecture. We don't just add seats to the table, we actively advocate for and support a process for re-making the table in a collaborative manner.

What we have done before: Policy advocacy has always been an integral strategy for MCLD, both at the global and national level. From language access and increased overhead costs with USAID to promoting devolution with initiatives like the [School for Devolution and CLD in Kenya](#), we have successfully advocated for policy changes.

The shift: We recognize that policy advocacy, while important, is insufficient. We are moving toward ensuring accountability for existing and new commitments. We are also focusing on issues beyond aid.

What we think this will do: In the short term this will mean not just more inclusive and responsive policies but also effective implementation. This will build trust thereby strengthening the government-citizen compact at the subnational and national levels. Implementation of policies itself, over time, will improve the quality of life.

At the global level, our efforts will address power inequities and enable equitable, trust-based partnerships to re-shape the financial and development architecture. We will make multilateral spaces accessible for local actors, ensuring that they can meaningfully participate in them and shape decisions.

POLICY: KEY ACTIVITIES

Activities	Measures of Success
<p>Ensure MCLD’s Representation in Key Decision-Making Bodies, sectoral working groups, national, regional and international forums to actively influence policies and decisions. Get ECOSOC recognition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of MCLD representation in key policy forums • ECOSOC accreditation
<p>Organize Advocacy Platforms for Dialogue and Action at the community, national, regional, and global levels, addressing power inequalities and ensuring that policies prioritize community-led development. Facilitate discussions between communities, governments, multilateral institutions, and key stakeholders to foster accountability and ensure the creation and effective implementation of community-centered policies. Launch communication and awareness campaigns using local radios, social media, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Campaigns launched • Impact on policies at global, national and sub-national levels. • Impact on key resolutions or discussions • # Policy provisions implemented due to MCLD/member campaigns
<p>Ensure Representation of Community Voices in Policy Forums: Advocate for and facilitate participation by community representatives, local organizations, women, youth and other marginalized groups in policy forums; demystify agendas; ensure adoption of Majority World guide on how to organize inclusive events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of women, youth and local representatives in key policy forums due to MCLD advocacy
<p>Strengthen Advocacy Capacities at All Levels: Enhance the capacity of MCLD members, partners, National Associations, and local communities to engage in effective and evidence based advocacy. Facilitate capacity strengthening for existing and upcoming National Associations on collecting data for policy advocacy, strategies for influencing public policies, raising awareness among authorities, and addressing social and environmental threats with proactive solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Associations and members feel they have the capacity to undertake successful advocacy • # Advocacy campaigns launched by National Associations and/or members
<p>Track Progress on Key Commitments: Support National Associations and members to identify key commitments on which to track progress. Co-create mechanisms to track progress in partnership with other networks and key stakeholders. Examples include: a) Gender Assessments and Climate Resilience Assessments at community and sub-national levels in Burundi; b) Supporting communities to track how much funding is coming to them through various sources and how it is being used; c) Supporting communities to use the Participatory CLD Assessment Tool to hold local governments and NGOs accountable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Tracking mechanisms organized at the community/national/ global level • Accountability measures put in place by governments, multilaterals and funders • Quality of policy research and evidence produced

POLICY: KEY ACTIVITIES

Activities	Measures of Success
<p>Strengthen Devolution and Citizen Engagement: Support the development and adoption of policies on public participation, participatory budgeting. Disseminate information to communities on existing policies and organize forums for regular citizen-local government engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Policies drafted with MCLD/community input • # Citizen-local govt forums • Trust between citizen and government
<p>Document Learnings and Provide Thought Leadership: Publish articles, podcasts, case studies to demonstrate what audacious transformation can look like. Carry these ideas to conferences and key policy spaces. Document and disseminate success stories, lessons learned and adaptations needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Articles, podcasts, case studies developed and published • Reach of materials • Citations

Training on the Participatory CLD Assessment Tool in Makueni County, Kenya, June 2023. Credit: MCLD



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FROM CAPACITY STRENGTHENING TO COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

Under this pillar our strategy is to:

- Strengthen the practice of community-led development and strong, accountable local governance.

We do this by enhancing the practice of CLD and co-creating resources to enable organizations, governments, institutions and individuals to change their ways of thinking, being and doing. This ensures that policies we advocated for are implemented and implemented well. We create spaces for diverse stakeholders to pool together their learning, experience and resources to unlearn colonial and patriarchal values and develop tools that enable community-led practices.

Most importantly, we have a renewed focus on **community mobilization**. The ability of communities to come together to exercise collective leadership and action is fundamental for community-led development. This not only strengthens self-reliance within communities, it also builds trust between communities and civil society, creating a greater appreciation of the need to protect civic space.

What we have done before: We have focused on mutual capacity strengthening through co-creation with our members through platforms like (Un)Learning Labs and working groups, developing tools like the Participatory CLD Assessment Tool and the Quality Appraisal Tool for CLD Evaluations.

The shift: While we continue to learn and unlearn together, supporting various stakeholders in translating intent for community-led development into practice, now we are placing greater emphasis on community organizing and mobilization.

What we think this will do: In the short term this will lead to more intentional listening by civil society, funders and governments. Supporting changes in practice will result in effective implementation of commitments and policies. It will also widen our spectrum of knowledge and understanding. In the long term it will result in inclusive and resilient communities who step into their own agency and work towards realising their own vision of the future. It will also enhance trust in civil society and create allies who are committed to protect civic space.

PRACTICE: KEY ACTIVITIES

Activities	Measures of Success
<p>Facilitate Community Organizing and Mobilizing: Facilitate mutual capacity strengthening between members and associations for community organizing and mobilizing. NAs may set up citizens assemblies, forums to co-create key policies or a Local Leadership Academy to train community actors in participatory governance using the Participatory CLD Assessment tool and other trainings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members feel equipped to undertake community organizing and mobilising, raising awareness among communities about their rights and collective strengths.
<p>Facilitate Multi-Stakeholder Platforms and spaces to bring together communities, civil society, private sector, and local governments for dialogue, collective action and learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Multi-stakeholder dialogues organized/ # participants • Response to platforms and spaces
<p>Reshape and Strengthen Partnerships: Facilitate partnerships between Majority and Minority World organizations that align with CLD values, while promoting regional integration, market access, and government-civil society collaboration for local development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Partnerships and alliances created between different members/ stakeholders • Satisfaction with type of partnerships
<p>Develop Sustainable Funding Models: Facilitate the creation of innovative funding models that prioritize collective, long-term well-being and community empowerment thereby fostering local economies and domestic resource mobilization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative funding models developed • Support generated for innovative funding models (write-ups, financial, etc.)
<p>Strengthen Stakeholder Capacities: Facilitate capacity strengthening of communities, local governments, and relevant institutions in participatory governance, sustainable development and environmental protection, community-led action, community-led monitoring and evaluation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant stakeholders feel better able to undertake CLD work and shift practice
<p>Enhance Member Skills and Capacity for Action: Strengthen the skills of MCLD members and National Associations by co-creating and sharing tools, training, and resources related to CLD, integration of sustainable development into all work, environmental protection etc. Conduct Training of Trainers and tool trainings on the Participatory CLD Assessment tool.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members and NAs feel better equipped to undertake CLD • Increase in awareness about CLD and relevant topics among members • Level of knowledge exchange between National Associations
<p>Create a Global Inter-generational Mentoring Network, that supports MCLD members to share knowledge and mentor youth across the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and active engagement by members in mentoring network • Youth members feel better supported

PRACTICE: KEY ACTIVITIES

Activities

Undertake Collective Action: Pool together knowledge, resources and agency to collectively undertake action. Examples include establishment of safe spaces for women and girls in Nigeria, the Local Superfoods and Green Communities campaign in Benin.

Measures of Success

- # of collective action programs initiated by NAs and communities.
- Impact of collective action campaigns.
- Confidence in collective ability

Creating a Theory of Action with the Community, Tarail Bangladesh, October 2023. Credit: MCLD



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RENEWED COMMITMENT TO INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND INCLUSION



Under this pillar, our strategy is to:

1. **Strengthen Global Solidarity:** Create greater awareness of our interconnectedness at regional, national, and subnational levels, and the need to work together to uphold human rights, demand accountability, transform systems and influence policies. This includes the need to fight misinformation that often divides people and sows the seeds of distrust, fear and insecurity.
2. **Be intentional in operationalizing our commitment to Diversity and Inclusion** with special focuses on youth mobilization, safe spaces for co-creation and dialogue and equitable access to technology. We continuously ask ourselves who is being excluded and work to include them.

What we have done before: Traditionally, we have worked on building connections between our members and different national associations. In recent years we began strengthening connections with other networks on specific issues.

The shift: We are now actively identifying values-aligned networks and strengthening our connection with them to collectively fight against the pushback on rights, inclusion and diversity.

What we think this will do: First and foremost, this will ensure that MCLD is true to its own values, thereby strengthening both MCLD and the trust in it. This will also strengthen civil society as a whole and enable us to come together for systemic change. Experience has shown us that any systemic change campaign is stronger when it brings together multiple networks and stakeholders.

SOLIDARITY: KEY ACTIVITIES

Activities

Measures of Success

Strengthening Interconnectedness: Create a strong MCLD volunteer cadre and nurture connections across regions through virtual exchange initiatives. Map and connect with movements that share our values, creating spaces for strategic coordination among aligned networks.

- # Volunteers and engagement
- # and quality of strategic partnerships facilitated
- # Joint campaigns initiated
- Strength of movement ecosystem connections

Support Solidarity Actions Through National Associations and Regional Forums: Facilitate collective action campaigns and solidarity efforts through National Associations, at the community level, and where appropriate, at the regional and global levels.

These may include:

1. Supporting communities to create Local Solidarity and Social Justice Pact, bringing together citizens, social movements and civil society organizations to take collective action against systemic injustices and promote human rights.
2. A “Connected Communities” Digital Platform for local groups to share experiences, solutions, and collaborate on common goals, enhancing solidarity and collective action across communities
3. Exchange visits between National Associations and members to facilitate cross learning.
4. A decentralized solidarity fund for members to respond to local emergencies or launch innovative community initiatives.
5. A Commission on Indigenous Migrants in Urban Contexts

- # Collective action efforts launched by National Associations
- # Collective action efforts launched by Secretariat
- # Collective action and solidarity efforts at the community level
- Level of collaboration and coordination between National Associations
- Assessment of network belonging and solidarity support through participatory surveys

Create Inclusive Spaces for Intercultural and Interregional Dialogue: Create safe spaces for intentional listening and constructive dialogue based on compassion. Facilitate intercultural and intergenerational dialogue through open spaces and workshops for diverse worldviews to engage with and learn from one another.

- # Inclusive spaces and dialogues facilitated at various levels
- Levels of participation and connection experienced

Fighting Misinformation and Shrinking Civic Space: Supporting networks of community organizations to develop locally-relevant counter-narratives to challenge misinformation about civil society and human rights and support peer-to-peer learning on responding to misinformation.

- Innovative campaigns for fighting community misinformation by members

Ensure Inclusive Leadership Within MCLD: Ensure the active participation of women, youth, and people with disabilities in leadership positions, decision-making panels, and initiatives at MCLD.

- % of women and historically marginalized groups in leadership positions within MCLD groups, National Associations, boards.

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SOLIDARITY: KEY ACTIVITIES

Activities	Measures of Success
<p>Foster Dialogue and Intentional Listening: Support National Associations and members to promote inclusion and dialogues within schools, universities, and communities, with a special focus on incorporating the voices of youth and women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Activities at the National Association level to facilitate dialogues
<p>Promote Gender Mainstreaming, Inclusive Leadership and Representation Sectorally and at the community level: Foster a deeper understanding of the value of gender mainstreaming, focusing on the positive roles of youth and women in community-led development. Encourage members and other institutions to adopt inclusive policies. This may include creation of an Observatory of Inclusion and Representation to evaluate and recommend actions for equitable participation in decision-making spaces and development initiatives at country, regional or global level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive actions taken by members due to MCLD's efforts
<p>Ensure Accessibility and Digital Inclusion: Provide interpretation and translation services in all MCLD activities and materials to ensure accessibility. Support National Associations in launching a "Tech for All" initiative to provide digital tools, training, and internet access to marginalized communities, bridging the digital divide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of MCLD calls and events with translation • Accessibility survey among members • # Tech for All initiatives at the National Association level

Climate School Women Leaders in Action Activity in Ulpriano lloreda Neighborhood, Cali, Colombia, October 2025. Credit: FUNVIMUFRON



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MODELING ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES



Under this pillar, our strategy is to:

Strengthen MCLD, its National Associations and members such that they are able to respond to shocks, are resilient, sustainable and true to MCLD values, demonstrating that alternative organizational structures are possible. In a development sector dominated by hierarchical structures that often replicate the power dynamics we seek to challenge, MCLD is intentionally modeling a different approach.

Most civil society organizations are not fit for purpose and have adopted structures that are guided by funding flows not values. This hugely impacts the sustainability of these organizations and their credibility amongst community members. Through continued experimentation and learning we are designing structures that are fit for purpose for the work we do, modelling collective leadership, mutual accountability and care. We are developing robust governance systems that balance efficiency with inclusive decision-making, creating sustainable funding models that reduce dependency on traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA), and building resilience mechanisms that enable local decision-making during crises. We are also investing in well-being support, recognizing that systemic change requires sustainable human energy.

What we have done before: This is a new pillar that reflects our responsiveness to the current state of our world.

The shift: Our goal is to strengthen MCLD, our National Associations and member organizations because we believe it's important not just for us but for the world to demonstrate that alternative types of organizations are possible. We also want to underscore the importance of well-being.

What we think this will do: Organizational transformation is not just an internal necessity but a form of advocacy itself. By creating alternate types of organizations, we will prove that more democratic, participatory ways of organizing are not only possible but can also be more resilient and responsive than traditional models. Our success in building sustainable, inclusive organizational practices becomes evidence for the viability of community-led approaches more broadly. Furthermore, fit for purpose and resilient civil society organizations will eventually strengthen the public trust in civil society which is at an all time low. Well-being measures will ensure that people in civil society enjoy basic human rights and dignity. They will also increase sustainability of our work.

SELF-RELIANCE: KEY ACTIVITIES

Activities	Measures of Success
<p>Establish Robust Internal Governance and Accountability Systems: Develop strong internal governance processes and policies with clear accountability mechanisms and feedback loops to ensure transparency and responsiveness within MCLD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of MCLD governance and accountability systems • Trust among members in the MCLD structure and mechanisms
<p>Accompany NAs in Strengthening Governance Practices: Support National Associations in developing comprehensive procedure manuals, implementing inclusive governance models and sound financial practices to enhance their operational effectiveness and sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of National Associations' governance and accountability systems • Trust among members in the National Association structure and mechanisms
<p>Strengthen Membership and Reach: Identify and engage new partners that align with MCLD values (mapping, communications, community governance summit); co-create plans for sustained member engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach of MCLD membership at the global, regional and National Association level • Quality of member engagement
<p>Strengthen Local Organizations and Local Decision-making: Support member organizations to create fit for purpose organizations. Strengthen capacity of National Associations and members to make decisions collectively and locally, allowing for faster responses to emerging challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Local organizations reporting better governance and structures • Feeling of preparedness for crisis response (members and National Associations)
<p>Sustainability: Strengthen resource mobilization capacities of members and National Associations, and diversify funding streams.</p> <p>Activities may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Testing and documenting new models of resource mobilization and funding; 2. Support to members in developing hybrid economic models, combining income generating activities, local partnerships and access to innovative financing (green funds, solidarity funds, etc.); 3. Training members on mobilizing domestic resources ; 4. Encourage pooling of resources within associations like creation of cooperatives, shared services or joint purchasing platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of funding streams for MCLD • Resource mobilization by National Associations • # Members trained on diverse funding sources and domestic resource mobilization • Improvement in members and National Associations reporting self-sufficiency or confidence in attaining self sufficiency as a result of participation in MCLD
<p>Enhance MCLD's Communication and Visibility: Develop and implement broad-impact communication channels to position MCLD as a leading voice in international sustainable development debates. Utilize digital platforms, visual data, and testimonials to elevate MCLD's profile and strengthen its role in key global discussions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media coverage • Social media presence and following • Invitations for panels and events • Awards and recognitions

SELF-RELIANCE: KEY ACTIVITIES

Activities

Promote Care: Create spaces for well-being support for members and staff. Encourage members to adopt care measures within their own work.

Measures of Success

- Well-being and retention metrics for staff and members



SACD-Nigeria, MCLD's Nigeria Association Celebrating Our 10-Year Anniversary, May 2025. Credit: SACD-N.

POLICY

PRACTICE

SOLIDARITY

SELF-RELIANCE

OUR CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

In addition to the four pillars, two cross cutting themes will guide all the work carried out by MCLD.

Gender Justice

MCLD's vision for the future is a world where women, men, girls, boys, and people of diverse gender identities have equitable access to opportunities, resources, decision-making, and rights.

This means not just addressing disparities in participation and rights, but also transforming the social norms, institutional practices, and power relations that sustain discrimination and exclusion.

Gender Equity has always been a foundational value for MCLD. It is embedded in our governance systems and processes.

By adopting gender justice as a cross-cutting theme, our strategy renews our commitment to the leadership, voice, and agency of women and other gender-marginalized groups. We will adopt and promote policies and practices that challenge unequal systems while advancing dignity, rights, and accountability.

At the beginning of the Strategic Plan, we will launch a Gender Working Group to regularly audit our work and track our progress.

Integrating gender justice across the pillars of policy, practice, solidarity, and self-reliance will ensure that all MCLD initiatives—be they at the community, national, regional or global level—contribute to more inclusive and equitable societies in which all people can participate meaningfully, exercise their rights, and shape decisions affecting their lives.

Ecological Solidarity

People and planet are not just interconnected but deeply interdependent. Social well-being, economic resilience, and environmental health are inseparable.

Our callous treatment of nature has fundamentally altered our planetary ecosystem. About a million species are on the verge of extinction, 40% of the human population is affected by land degradation, while pollinator loss alone threatens \$577 billion in annual global crop production ([UNEP](#)). Already half of the world's population experiences severe water scarcity for at least part of the year, and more than two billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water ([UN STATS](#)). Climate change and environmental degradation are accelerating forest fires, floods, droughts and extreme weather events, exacerbating poverty and hunger.

Now more than ever, it is important to protect and regenerate natural resources while strengthening community resilience and livelihoods. Ecological solidarity emphasizes shared responsibility across governments, communities, and institutions to steward land, water, biodiversity, and climate systems in ways that are just, sustainable, and inclusive.

By integrating ecological solidarity across the pillars of policy, practice, solidarity, and self-reliance, our strategic plan promotes pathways that respect the relationship between people and the planet and ensure that both can thrive together.

POLICY

PRACTICE

SOLIDARITY

SELF-RELIANCE

THE WAY FORWARD



TESTING, ADAPTING, AND COMMUNICATING OUR STRATEGY

As we launch MCLD's 2026–2029 strategic plan, we're embracing a strategy that is globally connected but grounded in local realities. This plan offers a shared direction, with suggested activities and ways to track progress. The real work at MCLD happens through our National Associations. Each National Association has not just co-created this plan, but they have used it to update their own national strategy in close partnership with their members. They have developed implementation plans with activities, timelines and monitoring frameworks co-created by members so that members and the Global Assembly can track progress. These national plans are where the global strategy truly comes to life, making sure it fits the local context and drives meaningful change. In addition to this, the Global Secretariat has also developed an extensive implementation plan to support the vision and work of the National Associations and members.

Learning

To keep pace with a fast-changing world, we will treat this strategy as a living framework—one that we'll test, adjust, and learn from regularly. We'll track progress using data and community feedback, hold regular reflections around each strategic pillar, and work with National Associations on annual reviews. We will also monitor global trends, particularly around areas like Artificial Intelligence, so we can adapt quickly when needed.

Responsiveness to context is a cornerstone of how we work. National Associations will adapt these co-created global goals and strategies to their local needs, while staying aligned with our overall direction. They will also communicate the plan in simple language for members, so that language and literacy are not barriers to adoption and participation. Tools like annual reflection exercises, mid-term reviews and scenario reassessment will help us make strategic adjustments along the way—and lessons learned in one region will inform others across our network.

Adapting

Communicating

Clear, honest communication is key. We'll keep members and partners in the loop through updates, reports, and regular check-ins with NAs and stakeholders. With each National Association playing an active part, this strategy becomes more than just a plan—it becomes a dynamic, evolving tool for collective impact.

ANNEX 1: MCLD'S VALUES



Human Dignity: Every human being is born free and equal in rights and dignity. At MCLD, we respect and recognize the dignity of all human beings, irrespective of our differences. We value their knowledge, experience and agency. And our goal is to ensure that the world does the same.

Inclusion, Particularly of Historically Marginalized Communities: We are intentional in our commitment to inclusion, particularly of those who continue to face marginalization, discrimination and violence. We understand that inclusion is a journey, not a destination. Therefore, we continuously ask ourselves, who is missing and how do we include them in our quest for human dignity. We also work with all stakeholders critical for systems change: governments, funders, multilateral and bilateral institutions, international NGOs, academia, private sector, local civil society and communities.

Gender Equity: At MCLD, we always start with women. We recognize the violence that has denied women and LGBTQI+ communities their rights and dignity for centuries, and seek to address this through every possible avenue.

Solidarity, Interconnectedness and Interdependence: Divide and rule has long been an instrument of control used by hegemonic systems and powers. Transforming the current system requires each one of us and our collective agency. At MCLD, we believe that we are all interconnected like trees in a forest; our actions affect each other and our planet. We practice values-based solidarity, that transcends borders, egos and logos.

Peace and Justice: Peace is the presence of justice, equity, and respect for human rights and dignity. It is the absence of persecution, violence and hatred. Peace and justice are not just our goals, but integral values that we seek to practice everyday, in our lives and in our work.

Collective Action and Leadership: At MCLD, we recognize the power of us. We know that when people come together, united by passion and purpose, the whole is greater than the sum of all parts. We are committed to being a space for co-creation, collective action, reflection and learning. "We strive to create leaderful ecosystems that strengthen shared leadership, are flexible, value multiple perspectives and ways of knowing and intentionally build relationships to embody equity."⁷

⁷ Quoted in Veda, G. (2023). Chronicles of a Transformative Movement: Strengthening our Interconnectedness. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, 10(1), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.24926/ijps.v10i1.5458>

Continuous (Un)learning and Learning: Colonial structures and power dynamics continue to shape our ways of thinking, being and doing. Therefore at MCLD, we are on a continuous journey to unlearn and learn from and with each other.

Trust and Mutual Accountability: Trust is the glue that binds us together, the essential nutrient that nourishes and keeps us alive. And we continue to nurture this trust through mutual accountability. We are accountable to each other, to the communities that we support and the partners who have embarked on this journey of transformation with us.

Intentional Listening: Intentional listening is both a value and a process for MCLD. It is only when we intentionally listen - to each other, to the communities that we support and the stakeholders we seek to transform - that we begin to build trust, develop empathy, understand contexts, identify problems and begin to co-create solutions that work for all.

Exercising Power with Principled Courage: MCLD firmly believes in the power and agency of every individual and community. We also recognize the violence - historical and current - that continues to deny the dignity and agency of large segments of our global population. We are committed to exercising our collective power to transform patriarchy, racism, colonialism and the power differentials that plague our world. We will always challenge unjust systems and power relations. We will not stay silent!

ANNEX 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



- **May - July 5, 2024:** The strategic planning process began with participatory mapping of values and collective powers with MCLD coordinators, members, and staff.
- **July 5 - October 20, 2024:** National Association coordinators conducted visioning exercises with National Association members.
- **October 20 - November 15, 2024:** The Strategic Plan Drafting Committee worked with the [RESPACE](#) scenarios to adapt them to the MCLD context. Scenarios were shared and adapted through calls with coordinators and members to reflect a world we would like to see and are likely to see.
- **November 15, 2024 - February 15, 2025:** All MCLD National Associations met in person during their annual general meetings in their countries, to collectively identify MCLD's overall strategies and activities. The Secretariat organized calls with members in countries without National Associations, coordinators and at the regional level to do the same. These were distilled into four pillars (Policy, Practice, Solidarity, and Self-Reliance) by the Global Secretary and the Drafting committee.
- **February 15 - March 10, 2025:** The Strategic Plan Drafting Committee, used the inputs from members and national associations to draft a four-year strategic plan.
- **March 10 - April 4, 2025:** Conducted online workshops to share the emerging plans, reflect on the current context, and sought feedback through two strategic planning feedback calls.
- **April 5 - May 15, 2025:** The Strategic Plan Drafting Committee, supported by members of the MCLD Global Secretariat integrated feedback on the draft plan.
- **May 16 - July 18, 2025:** The plan was reviewed by the Global Secretary and revised per feedback from various streams including, members and Global Assembly.
- **May 22-29, 2025:** MCLD Anniversary celebrations with previews of the Strategic Plan pillars.
- **July 10 - August 1, 2025:** The plan was sent to all MCLD members for any final feedback.
- **August 2 - 3, 2025:** The plan was finalised by Global Secretary and sent to the Global Assembly members
- **August 4 - 17, 2025:** Global Secretary reviews the final 2026-2029 Strategic Plan.
- **August 18, 2025:** The Global Assembly discussed and ratified the strategic plan and it was shared with National Associations.
- **August 27, 2025:** Global call formally launching the pillars of the plan: [Unpacking MCLD's New Strategic Plan: Our Four Pillars in Action.](#)
- **August 28 - December 31, 2025:** Secretariat and National Associations co-created implementation plans to put the strategic plan into action.
- **January 1 - March 1, 2026:** Global Secretary carried out final modifications to the Strategic plan based on National Association plans and sent consolidated implementation plans to the Global Assembly.

ANNEX 3: THE WORLD IN 2035



MCLD adopted scenarios from the RESPACE initiative to support our strategic planning visioning exercises. We took the existing four RESCAPE scenarios, and adjusted them based on the vision of our members. These scenarios address potential outcomes for the future if no action is taken, and various outcomes based on different types of possible action taken by key stakeholders between now and 2035.

WALLS

2025:

- Increase in nationalist parties, right wing policies on migration, gender and economic matters, disinformation fuelling isolation, mistrust & fear, interstate warfare escalates.
- War in Ukraine moves westward, Middle-east conflict escalates, governments focus on defence not peacebuilding.
- Rising inequalities and impact of climate change exacerbate tensions; floods and droughts in sub-Saharan Africa displace millions, govt declare emergency and curb civic freedoms.
- Increased focus on localization and greater public participation, particularly from the youth.

2030:

- Minority world closes borders and halts global supply chains in response to a new pandemic. Xenophobia, rise of economic inequality and deepening divides.
- States use technology for surveillance, control and to suppress dissent. Private companies are drawn into state security raising concerns about their influence on governance. CSOs find it difficult to operate.
- Attacks on reproductive rights intensify; mental health issues increase.
- Gradually aid is cut, govt spending is more centralised & less resources reach communities.
- Battle for dominance between China, Russia and US. Economic competition leads to resource exploitation, particularly in Central Africa fuelling new conflicts. Debts lead to more failed states. Multilaterals like UN and WHO struggle to remain relevant.
- Human life continues to be valued differently based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender and economic status.

2035:

- The world is more fragmented than ever with strong authoritarian states pursuing their own interests and civic freedoms under threat. Former leaders call for a return to global cooperation, but it remains doubtful.

MAZE

2025:

- Wars in Ukraine & Middle east escalate and possibility of a new world war arises. Deep divisions in UN Security Council prevent decisive action. Conflicts in Myanmar, West Asia, Central Africa unresolved, highlighting inefficacy of global institutions.
- Right wing populist govts stall climate negotiations; increasing loss of life from conflicts & climate disasters.
- Rising debt crisis leads to political instability in the Majority World; state clamps down on civic liberties using technology. Civil society, particularly youth, comes together & fights back, leveraging technology.
- Calls for reform of multilateral institutions (WB, IMF) & UN increase. Progress is slow; global divides deepen.

2030:

- Civil society from the Majority World mobilises; Art 109 of the UN Charter revoked and reformed.
- Greater collaboration among civil society + UN reforms strengthens peacebuilding infrastructure at the global & local level. Civic space gradually begins to open up. Localization and resources at community level.

- In the beginning human life is valued differently; by 2035 greater recognition at the global level of the sanctity of all life. Yet to translate to the national level.

2035:

- A reformed Security Council with more permanent members & restricted veto powers. Power of UN General Assembly increases.
- Global Citizens Assembly created with reps from civil society. It takes up issues of climate, economic debt & digital security and emphasizes community leadership.
- The world is still reeling from conflicts of the past decade, but also beginning to move towards greater equity. Civic space is beginning to open up & under a new, reformed multilateral system, climate and economic justice pacts are being written. But push back from US, China and Russia continues leaving the future uncertain.

TOWERS

2025:

- Wars in Ukraine & Middle east escalate. Global tensions rising. Climate disasters rise leading to large scale displacement and migration. Rise of populism and right wing govts in US and Europe - cut funds to international institutions making them more ineffective. Border controls and economic protectionism escalated in response to growing migration.
- Economic debts put pressure on Majority World governments. BRICS+ countries challenge dominance of Europe + US. As trust in global institutions declines, regional alliances, local civil society groups & Majority World funders step in to fill the void.

2030:

- Global system fractures; regionalism & identity politics becomes dominant. Africa, Asia & L. America strengthen intra-regional collaboration focussing on trade and climate adaptation. They trade in their own currencies or adopt digital currencies.
- Regional powers like Russia & China expand influence through economic & military means; tensions between Iran & Saudi Arabia divide the Middle East; China's annexation of Taiwan fractures Asia Pacific relations.
- Climate change continues in the absence of global cooperation.
- Conflicts managed by controversial power sharing agreements entrenching authoritarian regimes & civic freedoms.
- Each bloc values the life of its citizens more than that of people in other blocs; regionalism also means that rights of minorities in the region take a backseat.

2035:

- World is shaped by regional alliances, each with distinct values and priorities. Movement of people across borders within regions becomes easy, but between regions becomes much more difficult.
- Global civil society's role is diminished, proactive global cooperation remains elusive. Fate of local civil society varies across regions and issues. Future remains uncertain as regions pursue self-reliance and independence, often at the cost of rights, inclusion, empowerment and social justice.

BRIDGES

2025:

- Wars in Ukraine & the Middle East escalate. Global tensions rising. Climate disasters rise leading to large scale displacement and migration. Populist, right wing governments in US and Europe cut funds to international institutions making them more ineffective. Majority World governments struggle with debts. Communities are left to fend for themselves.

- Civil Society steps in & grassroots movements grow challenging power dynamics and demanding systemic change; youth lead a multi-generational initiative to counter dominant media narratives and amplify diverse voices.
- Worker activism rises in response to economic crises.

2030:

- Worker activism results in fairer wages. New political forces push for fairer resource distribution and sustainable economic policies. Countries adopt green technologies, reducing the competition for raw materials and thereby conflict.
- Community owned social media platforms become popular, promoting diverse content. Fact-checking initiatives and open source platforms become the new norm.
- Civil society begins to influence domestic and electoral politics. Many countries, including the US, witness the fall of authoritarian and populist regimes. Civil society begins to demand more inclusive governance.

2035:

- Community driven economies become more resilient & less dependent on global supply chains. As participatory democracy rises, citizens assemblies form across localities & regions, paving the way for a Global Citizens Assembly. This Assembly drives meaningful collaboration, beyond traditional state systems, and pushes for equitable global governance.
- Global Climate Governance framework based on mutual benefit and collective responsibility officially launched; the Sustainable Development Goals seem possible.
- Local & regional civil society, supported by diversified global funding, work with govts to address root causes of violence.
- All human life is valued equally; gender equity & dignity for all.



To learn more about MCLD's work in 40+ countries, visit www.mclد.org

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