Envisioning an alternative ecosystem for global development and humanitarianism

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Envisioning an alternative ecosystem for global development and humanitarianism

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Author's note and acknowledgements

There has been much talk—and continues to be—on the failure of the global aid and humanitarian system and the post-colonial domination of the 'Global North' over the 'Global South'; discussions in which I have been and continue to be personally and professionally involved. But very few of these discussions captured what a new system could actually **look** like. There is a great deal of debate on what should happen, but not on exactly **how** it should happen.

The idea for this paper was born out of this need and literally came about in one day in Karachi, Pakistan, in mid-2022, as I attempted to make sense of the discussions around me. It then sat silent for many months as I searched for support to establish it beyond just a scribble.

Once the opportunity arose, I used a number of my own analyses and approaches towards the conversation to build a narrative around the diagram that forms the crux of this concept. It has not yet been 'tested' or discussed with others on a broader scale. There was no 'research methodology' employed, nor was there any literature review conducted. Much of that is already available publicly and the point was to not dwell on them, but rather to create a completely new structure uninfluenced by existing positionalities.

Therefore, for now, this remains a very personal approach to a very global idea. It could be completely mistaken. It could be partially useable, or it could influence the creation of a new system altogether. That remains to be seen based on how it is received in the world. But it should, I hope, encourage others to also come up with more radical stances on how to change the global development and humanitarian system.

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Karachi, Pakistan
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Executive Summary

This concept paper challenges the terms 'decolonisation', 'localisation' and 'shift the power', which have been the stand-out keywords within the heightened discourse in global development and humanitarianism (among many other sectors). It does so by taking a more radical view:

- firstly, by turning the focus on countries themselves, rather than on specific centres of financial and political power as the key drivers of development and change; and
- secondly, by considering that it is not a 'reimagining' of aid that is necessary, but rather the end of the aid systems—at least as we know them.

This work challenges the change itself that is being advocated for by many in the sector. It is inspired by all the new innovations and reimaginings that do not seem to radically upset the status quo and do not abandon old practices. There is a need to completely move away from the current models of what we call aid and development, towards independent nations meeting their own development needs and generating their own systems of financial and technical support.

In the context of aid, one way of looking at it is that it is less about the impact of colonialism on post-colonial societies and more about creating independent nation states that are self-sufficient in both financial and human resources and which can make and defend their own decisions. Furthermore, the changes that we constantly speak of are not only limited to a 'North' vs 'South' approach to power imbalances, which is how the narrative has been mainstreamed. They can apply to any country in any region or income category.

This is about where we want to go and how, not just a reflection on where we came from. And even if the global development and humanitarian sectors want to continue to invoke terms like 'localisation' and 'decolonisation' as a way to bring about change, it is simply one way of seeking global justice. Another way to do this, is to create an 'ecosystem', as this concept paper terms it, that removes all the various distinctions and terminology that we have created in global development and humanitarianism and equalises the balance between collaborators.

I have developed a 'map' of sorts to illustrate this ecosystem. It constructs a new identity, keeping these contradictions and dichotomies in mind, which not only equalises power between 'North' and 'South', but ends the distinction altogether. It creates a structure that is based in different geographical locations and hence inhabits different perceptions of power and wealth. The high-level goal of this ecosystem is to create not just equality between nations, but also to do so in an ethical way. Indeed, treating all nations as equal is the ethical thing to do. This ecosystem proposes to achieve this goal in three key ways:

1. Remove the distinctions between governments, donors, INGOs, NGOs etc. to view all the participants of global development and humanitarianism as 'State and Civil Society Entities' or SCSEs.
2. Remove 'international' from the vocabulary and view all countries as equal and global in scale.
3. Remove the distinction between the so-called 'Global North' and so-called 'Global South' to move to a more regional perspective.

Ultimately, the end result would be a more equitable and ethical system which allows each country to participate based on its own ability to make decisions and utilise its own resources as much as possible.

This ecosystem contains a number of interlinked components. Each component is detailed as follows:

- *Identifying the ecosystem*: We begin building this ecosystem around the inclusive term 'State and Civil Society Entities' or SCSEs. This signifies an amalgamation of the various formal state and non-state organisations, movements, networks, foundations, membership associations, and informal groups, citizens/community coalitions etc. that work in the global development and humanitarian sectors.

- *Cooperation framework*: This proposed ecosystem advocates for a cooperation framework between regions and regional or national cause-based coalitions/ networks, rather than specifically between the so-called 'Global North' and so-called 'Global South'. The term 'framework' for 'international' cooperation, takes the word at its broadest sense and denies this division between 'North' and 'South'.

- *Scope of the ecosystem*: This third element is the foundation of our new ecosystem— taking the 'I' out of INGOs to level the playing field. Continuing with the earlier element of cooperation, it is imperative that we stop referring to only certain entities as 'international' and others as not. Instead, we must encourage the idea of everything being national. There are no 'international' entities in this ecosystem because every entity is national by virtue of where it is based and is therefore 'international' for every other country.

- *Operating environment*: Entities that have for decades operated globally through the concept of country offices, will have to give up that civic space to allow existing or new in-country entities to take over. In essence, the 'local partners' these INGOs/agencies were previously working with would instead become 'collaborators'. This will require the most radical shift for this ecosystem to function, as it abolishes the concept of the 'intermediary', one that is causing a great deal of controversy amongst existing INGOs who channel funding from major donors to different countries. In this ecosystem, funding will then go beyond the conventional dependence on intermediaries to bring in the money and shift the onus to more non-conventional sources. It will allow SCSEs to access a variety of funding sources and mechanisms such as charitable donations, or diaspora contributions, which are less politically motivated than state-based funding from the so-called 'Global North' but may have a similar level of resources.

This ecosystem would ultimately lead to the following outcomes:

- A move away from the 'Global North'-centred ideas of 'results agendas', 'theories of change' and 'systems change' to address in-country challenges and needs, by in-country, for in-country, leading to a shift from a 'Global North'-centric development lens to a context-specific one.
- Allowing SCSEs to set the policies and priorities.
- Removing the distinction between 'Global North' and 'South', widening funding control mechanisms and encouraging more cross-country collaborations.
- Seeing support come firstly from domestic, internal sources, then from closer regional sources and finally from more external formal sources, as well as a move beyond typical grants and loans to include all types of external support, regardless of who it is provided by, to enable and improve domestic priorities.
- A decrease of bilateral and multilateral funding, in response to an increase in greater domestic resources and revenue.
- Encouragement of growth within each country and a more level playing field for global cooperation.
- Expansion of the concept of collaboration beyond funding, to include, for example, the exchange of knowledge via both human capital and information.
- Ensuring that the country in question has a strong and accountable regulatory system that prevents the exploitation of its entities.

This ecosystem is more about equity and justice, rather than artificially determined international borders. It is more about addressing a cause as directly as possible, rather than ensuring measurable results to satisfy the states of rich countries that are far removed from the contexts in question.

This concept note is a very rough outline of an idea that views countries as the very core of change. Given the many obstacles and resistance that this ecosystem could create, this brings us to the extremely important issue of testing the validity of this concept among those it speaks about. This would include conferring with (in order of importance and priority):

1. National governments of the so-called 'Global South'[1].
2. Civil society organisations—both independent and coalition-based groups—in the 'Global South'.
3. Multilateral and bilateral donors in the so-called 'Global North'
4. Philanthropic and charitable donors in both the 'Global North' and 'Global South'.

It is hoped that some of these entities would be willing to take on this concept and its ideas within their respective structures and see if and how it could work—including its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. But for now, it is hoped that this concept will at least add a more tangible option to the more abstract discussions on global development and humanitarianism currently in the mainstream. It is imperative to move the discussion from the macro to the micro level. It is hoped this proposed ecosystem will be able to encourage that shift.

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[1] I've chosen to use the prefix 'so-called' when referring to the 'Global North' and 'Global South' in this concept paper, or enclosed them in quotation marks, in order to highlight the questions arising around the Eurocentric use of these terms to refer to large swathes of the globe. See also, Khan T, et al. How we classify countries and people—and why it matters, BMJ Global Health 2022:7.

1. Introduction

Over the last few years, the terms 'decolonisation' and 'localisation' have been the stand-out jargon within the global development and humanitarian sectors. Framed as a way to 'shift the power', these phrases cover a number of extremely controversial and historical processes. But one view is that this discourse is not the appropriate way to frame or approach the discussion on how the very unequal power dynamic between the so-called 'Global North' and the so-called 'Global South' can be equalised.

This is primarily because there are many more nuances in this discussion that these terms actually encourage us to avoid but which we must confront if we are to create equity between nations. This includes the violence that surrounds decolonisation (Khan, 2021a & Khan, 2022b), and the fact that everywhere, yet nowhere, is local (Khan, 2021b). This concept paper challenges these terms and their usage in the development and humanitarian discourse by taking a more radical view:

- Firstly, by turning the focus on countries themselves, rather than on specific centres of financial and political power as the key drivers of development and change; and
- Secondly, by considering that it is not a 'reimagining' of aid that is necessary, but rather the end of the aid system—at least as we know it.

Several barriers exist to this approach, including resistance from the powerful 'Global North' where these systems originate from. But a more important barrier is the resistance by the 'Global South' itself towards decreasing its dependency on these systems of power. This is why we as a global community of development and humanitarian academics, practitioners and activists still need to challenge the status quo, and not co-opt the 'Global North' and 'Global South' into doing the same things 'differently' or 'better'.

So how do we do that? How do we create a system of financial and technical support that does not require us to be subservient to anyone who is politically and economically more powerful than us? How do we counter the notions of 'decolonisation', 'localisation' and 'shifting the power' without falling into the trap of continuing exactly those power relations these terms supposedly seek to challenge? How do we operationalise the change we speak about constantly? What will it look like and most importantly, what will it do and who will or could do it?

It is these questions that have prompted this concept paper. This work challenges the change itself that is being advocated for by many in the sector. It is inspired by all the new innovations and reimaginings that do not seem to radically upset the status quo and do not abandon old practices. There is a need to completely move away from the current models of what we call aid and development, towards independent nations meeting their own development needs and generating their own systems of financial and technical support. These include utilising national and regional networks, rather than the 'global' organisations that dominate the sector and are anything but global in their approach. There is also a need to end the discourse which looks only to Western colonialism as the cause of all the problems of the 'Global South', and to start looking at the so-called 'Global South' itself as an independent, non-homogenous entity which has its own identity, as much fraught with historical inequalities and unequal power dynamics as the so-called 'Global North'.

This concept paper presents a 'map' of an ecosystem that constructs a new identity that keeps these contradictions and dichotomies in mind, and not only equalises power between 'North' and 'South', but ends the distinction altogether. It creates a structure that is based in different geographical locations and hence inhabits different perceptions of power and wealth. Finally, this concept paper is exactly that, a concept. It is the first step at something that may (or may not) have the capacity to become much bigger. It will require a series of discussions with various players in the sector in different countries, of their view of this concept, its strengths, weaknesses, possibilities and impossibilities. This will be the second phase of this undertaking[2]. Without adequate consultations with those involved—and those who should be involved—in the sector, any concept is meaningless.

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[2] At present, this phase has not yet been designed or conceptualised and will be based on the response received to this concept paper.

2. Creating an alternate ecosystem

The issues we face in global development and humanitarianism are much bigger than just semantics. They are about how we interpret processes and systems and how we want them to change—or not. They are also about how we contextualise systems and how this context varies based on history, wealth, geography and culture. For instance, we can interpret the act of 'decolonising' certain concepts based on these variables. This could look like:

- 'Decolonising' aid—financial independence
- 'Decolonising' global health—universal access to healthcare
- 'Decolonising' humanitarianism—domestic first responders
- 'Decolonising' migration—open borders
- 'Decolonising' global development—deciding country priorities internally
- 'Decolonising' gender—equal rights for all

And so on. Based on these variables, they could be further interpreted in other ways. It is this **lack of contextual clarity employed by the 'decolonising' discourse that is one of its key disadvantages**. **Situating the conversation simply within the ambit of colonialism, an extremely complex and historical system, is its other disadvantage**. This is because there is a huge gap between the objectives and modus operandi of the aid system. It can be influenced by colonial undertones of the past, but it can be equally influenced by the present system of global geopolitics, which is about a different type of power.

In the context of aid, one way of looking at this concept is that it is **less about the impact of colonialism on post-colonial societies and more about creating independent nation states that are self-sufficient in both financial and human resources and which can make and defend their own decisions**. Furthermore, the changes that we speak of are not just limited to a 'North' vs 'South' approach to power imbalances, but can apply to any country in any region or income category. Power in this case is about wealth inequality, not necessarily the coloniser and the colonised. Many parts of the 'Global North' contain pockets of inequality based on income, race and gender. **This is about where we want to go and how, not just where we came from.**

And even if the global development and humanitarian sectors want to continue to invoke 'decolonisation' and 'localisation' as a way to bring about change, it is simply one way of seeking global justice. Another way to do this is to **create an 'ecosystem' (as this concept paper terms it), which removes all the various distinctions and terminology that we have created in global development and humanitarianism and equalises the balance between collaborators**. This is presented in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: An alternate ecosystem for global development and humanitarianism

SCSE Country 1

National SCSEs (A) specialising in development (B) implementation (C) funded by philanthropy and national government (D)

SCSE Country 2

Community SCSEs (A) working in grassroots advocacy (B) to produce knowledge (C) funded by philanthropy (international) (D)

SCSE Country 3

National SCSEs (A) working in providing humanitarian assistance (B/C) funded by Multilateral and National government (D)

SCSE Country 4

Provincial SCSEs (A) working in skill building (B) implementation (C) with community ScSEs (A) funded by private sector (national/international) (D)

Cross-country partnerships in knowledge exchange, temporary human resource and expertise, technical expertise.

A: Coverage
- National
- Provincial
- Community

B: Classification
- Service delivery
- Advocacy/activism
- Think tank/research
- Humanitarian assistance
- Charity
- For-profit consulting

C: Functions
- Implementation
- Knowledge provision and production
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Relief assistance

D: Funding Source
- National Government
- Multilateral/Bilateral
- Philanthropy (national/international)
- Private sector (national/international)
- Charitable donations (incl. from diaspora)

Country regulatory and accountability environment

Multiple combinations of A, B, C and D, working within and across countries, or all entities at all levels. Do away with the need for complex systems employed by INGOs and donors. Encourage growth within each country and create a level playing field.

VII. Intended outcomes
- Wider pool/options of funding available.
- No direct control of North over South.
- Focus on knowledge exchange rather than leading projects.
- No distinction between "international" and "local".
- No compulsion to seek funds only from Northern donors.
- Priorities are not designed by donors.
- Each country works to strengthen needs in only their own country. Cross-country collaborations will be based on the need to build on and learn from experiences in other countries.
- Everything is national, associated with an individual country. Everything is imagined and designed in-country. Everyone else supports it in some way.

IV. Operating Environment
- SCSEs are not classified as international or local. They are simply in-country organisations based in their country of origin, e.g in Country A.
- Country offices of INGOs do not exist, e.g. Oxfam, SCF etc have one main location in one country and work in collaboration with existing country of origin entities across the world.
- External staff does not exist in these SCSEs. They are run and managed by national staff only.
- There is no SCSEs 'intermediary'. Funding goes directly from source to recipient. If at all, if the funding comes from outside the country, the national government can be the intermediary (see risks).
- Funders have pools of money for specific sectors, e.g. gender, humanitarianism, education, climate, health etc. and sub-sectors within this, but no technical ToRs. That comes from the SCSEs looking for the funds. They design the ToRs to fit the donors ethical objectives to address a cause.
- Sectors, causes and functions will overlap.
- Regional collectives will bring together SCSEs from each region to develop regional knowledge.

The high-level goal of this ecosystem is to create not just equality between nations, but also to do so in an **ethical** way. Indeed, **treating all nations as equal is the ethical thing to do**. This ecosystem proposes to achieve this goal in three key ways:

1. Remove the distinctions between governments, donors, INGOs, NGOs etc. to view all the participants of global development and humanitarianism as 'state and civil society entities' or SCSEs[3].
2. Remove 'international' from the vocabulary and view all countries as equal and global in scale
3. Remove the distinction between the so-called 'Global North' and so-called 'Global South' to move to a more regional perspective.

In simplified terms, this proposed ecosystem suggests the following path:

Figure 2: Summarising the ecosystem pathway

I. Who we are → II. How we cooperate → III. What we do → IV. How we operate → V. What will potentially emerge?

Instead of the 'Global North' being in the driving seat and the 'Global South' trying to 'shift the power' towards itself, this ecosystem is about levelling the playing field. While there will always be power brokers everywhere, particularly in the form of country governments and rich benefactors, **'intermediary' organisations** that funnel financial flows from one country to another, and communicate the decisions of the key donors to receiving organisations, **need not be power brokers**.

Cooperation would not cease in this ecosystem. Instead, it would **revolve around regional and national coalitions or networks that would represent particular issues and/or regions with similar interests**. Instead of 'donors' sitting in headquarters in countries of the so-called 'Global North', these coalitions would be based in closer proximity to the location of the cause, e.g., North Africa, or the Caribbean. This would also have the advantage of providing cultural and social compatibility between the financial providers and receivers. Instead of just one form of conventional funding in the form of 'aid', there will be many different types of funding available and means by which to access them. Ultimately, **the end result would be a more equitable and ethical system which allows each country to participate based on its own ability to make decisions and utilise its own resources as much as possible**.

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[3] This term is open to further discussion/modification.

3. Unpacking the ecosystem

Our ecosystem contains a number of interlinked components. Each component is detailed as follows.

I. Defining the ecosystem

We begin defining this ecosystem by building it around the inclusive term '**State and Civil Society Entities'** or **SCSEs**. This signifies an amalgamation of the various formal state and non-state organisations, movements, networks, foundations, membership associations, informal groups and citizen/community coalitions that work in the global development and humanitarian sectors. It differs from the traditional term, 'civil society organisations' (CSOs) and its more commonly used counterpart 'non-governmental organisations' (NGOs), in that it is **more reflective of the changing nature of civic action across the world**.

The word 'organisation' imposes a limiting formality to the existing ecosystem, which is now growing broader to encompass a range of resistance movements like the farmers protests in India in 2021, or the #MeToo and the Black Lives Matter movements. These are not necessarily formal organisations, but a cross-section of causes within the civic space of different countries. They also directly represent the affected community in question, instead of by 'organisations' that may be external to that particular community.

> **I. Defining the ecosystem**
> State and Civil Society Entities (SCSEs) are a more accurate description of the world of civic action that exist in the development/humanitarian sectors. It is a more inclusive term than non-government, as it includes more informal resistance and advocacy movements that are now defining the direction of civic space in different countries. It also directly represents the affected communities instead of those who may be externally representing the cause.

These entities are as much key players in influencing the policy direction of countries as state institutions. Be it women's rights, racial equality, climate change, or control over land. However, due to the relatively informal structures of many, they do not get the attention they deserve, and many are locked out of the conversations on policy and practice. These entities require support from the broader global development sector, not only to continue representing their causes, but to influence the response to global development and humanitarian action in their respective countries. For example, Africans Rising advocates for a unified Africa on different fronts. Similarly, CIVICUS is a global alliance with over 9,000 members across 175 countries. Global Health 50/50 brings together leading global feminists, doctors, academics, policy and political experts for action on and accountability for gender equality in global health. Other more people-centred movements that could positively influence the policy agenda in countries include *Ni Una Mas*, the women's movement against gender-based violence in Argentina and broader Latin America, or the *zan, zindagi, azadi* women's freedom movement in Iran.

This ecosystem thus encourages a shift from the **current global development emphasis on formal entities, towards broader cause-based, non-formal entities**. As such, the

ecosystem includes entities with formal structures and systems, as well as those that benefit from collective, voluntary action. It is also important to note that the term SCSE denotes entities across the world in any country, and is not only limited to the artificial division between the so-called 'Global North' and 'Global South'.

II. Creating a framework for cooperation

The standard international cooperation framework that exists between the 'Global North' and 'Global South' is a highly Eurocentric one mostly dominated by state-supported entities in the so-called 'Global North'. These include both bilateral and multilateral agencies that control the majority of financial resources, as well as 'Global North'-based non-governmental entities that control the agenda setting in development and humanitarian action. These entities not only control the frameworks used to decide on priority areas, but they also dictate how action is implemented, monitored and reported. For instance, the OECD framework for international cooperation, or the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, dictates a one-way framework on how rich countries will work with poorer countries.

> **II. Creating a Framework**
> **A Cooperation Framework or mechanism should be developed in terms of how entities in different countries working on similar issues can come together to form coalitions or regional groups.**

This proposed ecosystem **advocates for a cooperation framework between regions and regional or national cause-based coalitions/networks**, rather than specifically between the so-called 'Global North' and so-called 'Global South'. Using the term 'framework' for 'international' cooperation, takes the word to its broadest sense and denies this division between 'North' and 'South'. As a result, cooperation between entities can emerge within a specific region belonging to the same cultural context. For instance, countries within East Africa, South Asia or the Caribbean can specify a cooperation agreement based on the common needs of that specific region. Specific regional frameworks like this already exist, including the (now defunct) South Asian Association of "Regional" Cooperation (SAARC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The key observation here is that these regional groups are independent of multilateral associations such as United Nations and remain very much the **creations of countries based on what they can offer each other**.

> **BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa)**
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> BRICS is an oft-quoted example of new and emerging donors. However, BRICS is less a regional collective and based more on geopolitical power, rather than development objectives. However, it can still be viewed as a way to broker power between countries belonging to a mix of income groups, as opposed to just one group. A renewed interest in the group is illustrated through Ethiopia's recent interest in joining as a member[4]. While the efficacy of organisations such as BRICs are still up for debate, especially given its inclusion of controversial rising powers such as India and China and a now embittered Russia, it is still an example of how different global blocs have chosen to contest the dominance of the Global North in the world of hard and soft aid.

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[4] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/30/ethiopia-applies-to-join-the-brics-bloc-of-emerging-economies

The purpose here is to encourage exactly this—**countries deciding for themselves who they want to work with and where efficiencies of scale are most possible**. They then create a framework that reflects those needs most accurately, including knowledge exchanges, financial and human resources. Ultimately, the ecosystem encourages multiple cooperation frameworks across regions, instead of just a handful dominated by the 'Global North'.

III. Defining the scope

The third element in the foundation of our new ecosystem is to **take the 'I' out of INGOs to level the playing field**. It is imperative that we stop referring to certain entities as 'international' and others as not. Currently, so-called 'Global North' entities such as Oxfam, Save the Children, Plan International, the Norwegian Refugee Council, etc. are known as INGOs. Similarly structured entities originating in the so-called 'Global South', such as Bangladesh's BRAC, also work in many countries, but are not referred to as 'international'. Not only does this create the 'power imbalance' that we speak so much of, it encourages it further.

> **III. Defining the scope**
> There are no "international" entities in this ecosystem because every entity is national by virtue of where it is based and is also "international" for another country. This removes the North/South convention of only referring to organisations based in the North, as "international".

Instead, we must **encourage the idea of everything being national**. There are no 'international' entities in this ecosystem because every entity is national by virtue of where it is based and thus is also 'international' for any other country. This removes the North/South convention of only referring to organisations based in the 'North', as 'international'. This also counters the concept of 'local' and 'localisation'. By that definition, a so-called 'Global North' entity is local to its own constituents, as much as a so-called 'Global South' entity is to its constituents.

This emphasises the importance of the **'domestic' environment of each country.** The international cooperation aspect then becomes exclusively about **'domestic' support**, rather than the current system which has created an 'international' layer above the 'domestic' that tries to control activities and policies at the 'domestic' level. If the 'international' system is abolished, then there is no need for 'localisation' or 'decolonisation'. This focus on the country's own governance will also allow its **domestic civil society to hold its own state to account**.

Global Public Investment (GPI)[5]

GPI is defined as concessional international public financing for global public goods and services, to meet global obligations like climate change, natural disasters, economic shocks and post COVID-19, pandemics. GPI will allow countries to contribute to a series of global public funds based on their financial ability to contribute, which can then be equitably redistributed back in time of need. Many such funds currently exist, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Global Fund for Vaccines and Immunization. However, GPI will enable all countries who contribute to be part of the decision-making process, as opposed to only the rich and more powerful.[6]

This is a similar concept to what this paper proposes. However, unlike this new ecosystem, GPI is focused on funding pools. In GPI, even though poor countries would still receive far more than they contribute, richer countries would continue to shoulder most of the burden, until other countries are able to come up to par. Whether this will lead to a replication of the current power structures aid perpetuates, is a valid concern. Global Public Investment may not be for all countries of the world. But it is something that we at the receiving end of aid, could use to develop our own specific models of financial self-sufficiency and cross-country collaboration. At least to meet some of the most pressing needs of our time.

Removing this distinction between international and national, will level the playing field for all SCSEs no matter where they are based. It will also balance out the scope and state of partnerships between entities to avoid one being much larger than the other. For example, when a global multilateral like the World Bank funds or supports a small entity in another country, it automatically tips the scales of power towards the former. **Removing the distinction will allow partnerships between entities in different countries to search for collaborations that equalise the strength between each entity**. Furthermore, some entities may be able to build networks outside their respective countries. Others may be much smaller and may remain connected only domestically. But this will be determined by the respective entities themselves.

IV. Operating environment

This is the most important component. How would we operationalise this new ecosystem in the real world? What funding, management, structures, and collaborations are required? There are no simple answers, particularly since financial resources are mostly abundant in one part of the world and not in the other and entities have a much more open environment to function in at one end, while at the other, many are suppressed and controlled by their states. But this is exactly where we can focus on how to redistribute and raise more 'domestic resources' by each country for themselves, as well as for cooperation between similar regions.

The starting point for this continues on from the previous element—that **'international' NGOs like Save the Children, Care, or multilateral organisations like UN agencies will not physically exist in different countries**. This will require the most radical shift for this ecosystem to function. Entities that have for decades operated globally through the concept of country offices, **will have to give up that civic space to allow existing or new in-country entitles to take over**. In essence, the 'local partners' these INGOs/

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[5] https://globalpublicinvestment.org
[6] Glennie, Johnathan, The Future of Aid. Global Public Investment, Routledge, 2020

> **IV. Operating Environment**
> – SCSEs are not classified as international or local. They are simply in-country organisations based in their country of origin, e.g in Country A.
> – Country offices of INGOs do not exist, e.g. Oxfam, SCF etc have one main location in one country and work in collaboration with existing country of origin entities across the world.
> – External staff does not exist in these SCSEs. They are run and managed by national staff only.
> – There is no SCSEs "intermediary". Funding goes directly from source to recipient. If at all, if the funding comes from outside the country, the national government can be the intermediary (see risks).
> – Funders have pools of money for specific sectors, e.g. gender, humanitarianism, education, climate, health etc. and sub-sectors within this, but no technical ToRs. That comes from the SCSEs looking for the funds. They design the ToRs to fit the donors ethical objectives to address a cause.
> – Sectors, causes and functions will overlap.
> –Regional collectives will bring together SCSEs from each region to develop regional knowledge.

agencies were previously working with as their 'donors' in different countries, would instead become 'collaborators' in each country. Their connection to these (now) only origin-country SCSE's would be via 'networked' ways of cooperation rather than bilateral or multilateral 'partnering'. The distribution of power would then be more evenly spread among a number of collaborators in different countries, which is harder to accomplish in bilateral partnerships.

This **abolishes the concept of the 'intermediary'**, a notion that is causing a great deal of controversy among existing INGOs who channel funding from major donors to different countries. This would not just cut operating costs for many 'Global North' INGOs, which consume large portions of their budgets for internal operations, but it would allow for greater equality between expatriate staff and national staff of SCSEs, each of whom would be functioning according to their individual, context-specific operating environments[7].

A **distinction must be made here between 'Global North' intermediaries/INGOs that work in development and those that work in humanitarian relief**. The latter only go wherever there are emergencies or conflicts, while the former often contribute in both humanitarian emergencies, as well as development. This blurs the lines between identifying intermediaries who actively seek civic space in peacetime versus those that are specifically required in states of emergencies. While the ecosystem advocates to remove the presence of physical intermediaries in-country in the development sector, in the humanitarian sphere, it is more about supporting in-country first responders and allowing them to take the lead.

In this ecosystem, **funding will then go beyond the conventional dependence on intermediaries to bring in the money and shift the onus onto more non-conventional**

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[7] Context also includes nationality—an important factor in determining power in global development and humanitarianism.

sources. It will allow SCSEs to access a variety of funding sources and mechanisms, such as charitable donations, or diaspora contributions, which are less politically motivated than state-based funding from the 'Global North', but may have a similar level of financial commitment. This allows not just greater access, but also greater recognition of the myriad non-conventional funding sources that continue to remain outside the formally identified and acknowledged system of 'aid'. It may also allow for greater flexibility in how SCSEs function, rather than being influenced by the funder's own objectives. For instance, the *Aurat March* is a women's rights advocacy-based resistance movement in Pakistan, that refuses to take any funding from conventional international donors. Rather it fundraises domestically for its advocacy and is made up of several independent entities across the country, each with its own manifesto and system of financial support. Similarly, labour union movements are imperative for a more equitable economic environment, but are usually not supported by funding entities in the 'Global North' due to their politically-motivated methods, which donors are reluctant to support. They are however, supported by sister organisations in other countries, which could be another example of domestic-to-domestic cooperation, as well as leveraging resources closer to home.

The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA)[8]

A Pacific example of regional self-determination/organising is the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, made up of 8 Pacific countries: the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu plus Tokelau. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) went on a journey of commercial innovation and ingenuity, transformation of power structures against the odds. A group of eight countries considered to be small, vulnerable and dependent on others, managed to establish the most sustainable and profitable tuna venture in the world. At its core, the PNA emerged from a shared vision for self-determination through an unwavering commitment by 'the right set' of personalities who had a clear understanding of the regional environment and its culture to ensure that this collective fishing initiative not only took hold, but thrived.

At their meeting in Tuvalu in August 2019, under the theme 'Securing our future in the Pacific', Pacific Island Forum Leaders called for the development of a 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The struggle to secure the sovereign rights of Pacific countries over their ocean continent is driven by the threat of sea level rise due to climate change, as well as intensifying geostrategic competition and geopolitical engagement in the region. Like the PNA, the Pacific Island community is faced with questions on how it can secure our rights to the Pacific Ocean and its resources; and what innovative opportunities exist to leverage the value of the Blue Pacific as a pathway to our development. The Blue Pacific narrative, endorsed by Forum Leaders in 2017, remains the cornerstone of the collective efforts of Pacific leaders to shape and influence the future of the region. The PNA story provides not only the inspiration, but the tools in prosecuting genuinely transformative regionalism for securing a viable future for our Blue Pacific continent.

From the Foreword by Meg Taylor, DBE, Secretary General to the Pacific Islands Forum

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This is also where we can focus on how to get away from 'Global North' donor funding and how we define a 'donor'. **We need to include philanthropy, diaspora networks, endowments, and the private sector as funding sources, many of which already operate**

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[8] Skorkiewicz, Kathryn (ed), Fishing for Succuss. Lessons in Pacific Regionalism, Department of Pacific Affairs, The Australian National University Canberra, 2019, https://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/uploads/2020-07/tuna-aqorau_dpa_book_final_v8_july_2020_centred_cover_smallfile.pdf

in their country of origin and do not always need to look beyond borders for support. And it is possible to secure such funding, as evidenced by many countries (see Van Wessel et al, 2023, chapter 12). With a variety of funding sources, will come a variety of causes that go beyond conventional donor-led agendas. These would prove to be more flexible than simply pigeon-holing issues into 'sectors'. For instance, if more diaspora philanthropy is available, it could fund both small community-based entities interested in providing sports facilities for children, as well as assist in relief operations being led by a large national relief charity. Likewise, the private sector may opt to work with a government department responsible for health, by providing infrastructure required to extend digital health services in remote areas. This **opens up funding to more flexible uses and enhances the meaning and reach of 'development'.**

As a result, this ecosystem will also **change the way we define 'global development' from a project-led effort supported by external agencies to a more national development led framework** supported by in-country SCSEs. Throughout all these efforts and models, **accountability must remain in the hands of those using the funds** and this must be judged by in-country governance mechanisms. Just because countries are driving priorities in their domestic jurisdictions, doesn't mean their priorities are just or correct. This proposed ecosystem in no way endorses such behaviour among states or power holders. Instead, **it strongly emphasises that without domestic accountability, this ecosystem cannot be successful.**

V. Benefits

There are several benefits of such an approach, mostly in the long-term. The first would obviously be the **end of external intermediaries between donor and recipient entities**. This would include the removal of 'country offices', which tend to take away from national civic space and perpetuate power imbalances. Entities would no longer be accountable to an external power in the 'Global North', but to their own citizens and state. This would also reduce the layers of bureaucracy involved when working with funders through intermediaries. For this system to work, it will require buy-in from both the intermediary and the recipient country. This could be a risk in the short-term, because a phased pull-out may take away urgent time needed by domestic SCSEs to take over the vacant space.

V. Benefits (that could also be risks)
-Funding and implementing intermediaries based outside countries are removed (INGOs in current parlance.)
- Country offices do not exist.
- Management is purely national. Accountability is to national staff, beneficiaries and governments.
- No expat staff in charge or HQ to report to (except in financial accountability).
- Can strengthen relationships between national governments and their own civil society – force them to work together and hold each other to account.

The biggest benefit of this ecosystem will be that it will **strengthen relationships between national governments and their own civil society, forcing them to work together and hold each other to account**. Furthermore, countries working with each other within regional boundaries, will have **similar interests, and communities and nations will be more receptive to work better aligned to their needs**. 'Projects' will not be 'imposed' by those not familiar with geographical, political or cultural contexts, but will be decided between the two (or more) SCSEs working together.

This ecosystem would **end the inequality of 'expatriate' and 'local' staff, as there would be neither**. Since SCSEs would exist country by country, it would be the staff of one SCSE working with the staff of the other SCSE. Most of all, if given the support needed by both state and society, particularly **in a humanitarian situation, the need for global entities like the IFRC or ICRC would diminish, and no longer dominate the responses provided by in-country SCSEs**. For instance, the ICRC would enter to follow the lead of the in-country SCSEs with humanitarian expertise, rather than being in the driving seat. Currently, 'international' humanitarian entities are bringing in the majority of emergency-based resources, further cementing the connection between money and power in the existing system. In the new ecosystem, resources would be sourced from a combination of different entities, driven by domestic SCSEs, not INGOs.

African Regional Cooperation

Africa has a number of interregional cooperation groups, that are collectives of African countries. These promote among others, trade, development cooperation, culture, employment, natural resource protection and self-reliance between member states. The South African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC), are all examples of how the continent engages with itself based on mutual self-reliance. These are examples of the regional impact that countries can have while engaging with those geographically closest to them. The African Union in turn, forms the overarching umbrella organisation representing the continent as a whole, globally.

However, some of these benefits could also turn out to be risks. For instance, many states are still anti-civil society and will make operations difficult for their own civic entities. This will create a tense environment for non-state SCSEs to operate in as partners in some countries. Also, many states are themselves not readily equipped with the pre-existing financial and technical resources to take on development and humanitarian projects and will require external assistance on a large scale, which will only continue to perpetuate inequalities.

VI. Risks

There are obvious risks to such an approach. Nothing is perfect, especially in this unstable, ever-changing world. The main risk is that **some SCSEs may start to emulate their northern counterparts in controlling the narrative**, depending on their strength and outreach. The more financially powerful and/or politically-connected the entity, the more powerful it will be in dictating events and processes, and perhaps getting the lion's share of available resources. This would grant them similar power to the large entities of the 'Global North'. How do we know these SCSEs won't simply replace 'Global North' funding agencies?

VI. Risks (some could also be benefits)
– Donor and government funding conditionalities and modalities remain.
– Multiple levels of collaboration among organisations and funders could cause greater complexity in financial management.
– Such a structure may mean that multilaterals may not want to directly fund community organisations if there is no non-national intermediary for country (i.e. INGO in current terms).

Another risk is that **regional entities who provide funding may also emulate the modalities and conditionalities of the current model** of global development and humanitarian aid. Furthermore, there are many **states that violently oppose civic action and suppress entities working for democracy and human rights**. This would prevent these entities from soliciting any funds at all, from anywhere.

Yet another risk may be that the priorities set by more **powerful state SCSEs may not reflect the actual will of the citizens, who may be divorced from policymaking**. But this could also be a benefit, with other SCSEs in the same country or jurisdiction holding these more domestically powerful SCSEs to account. They could do this by using the power of their own citizenry, as well as with the support of SCSEs in other countries who advocate for similar causes. For example, a global justice-based coalition in Country A advocating for the rights of prison reform could voice their support to governments globally for those SCSEs in Country B advocating for accountability at various levels.

Some risks could also turn out to be benefits. For instance, the ecosystem structure may mean that multilaterals may not want to directly fund community entities if there is no non-national intermediary available (i.e. an INGO in current parlance). This would automatically **encourage more domestic sources of funding to open up as alternatives which may have more flexible funding available**. This would also enable work to be accomplished faster and with less bureaucracy.

VII. Intended outcomes

This ecosystem would **move away from the 'Global North'-centred 'results agendas', 'theories of change' and 'systems change'** that completely dominate global development and humanitarian aid. It will instead, **address in-country challenges and needs, by in-country, for in-country**. The regional element will allow more diverse pools of funding to be more aligned with the contexts at hand and allow greater collaboration within similar cultures and contexts. This means **development will not be viewed or controlled with a 'Global North'-centric lens but a context-specific one**. This will also allow much more flexibility in mutually determining the conditions of finance, with **SCSEs setting the policies and priorities**.

VII. Intended outcomes
– Wider pool/options of funding available.
– No direct control of North over South.
– Focus on knowledge exchange rather than leading projects.
– No distinction between "international" and "local".
– No compulsion to seek funds only from Northern donors.
– Priorities are not designed by donors.
– Each country works to stregthen needs in only their own country. Cross-country collaborations will be be based on the need to build on and learn from experiences in other countries.
– Everything is national, associated with an individual country. Everything is imagined and designed in-country. Everyone else supports it in some way.
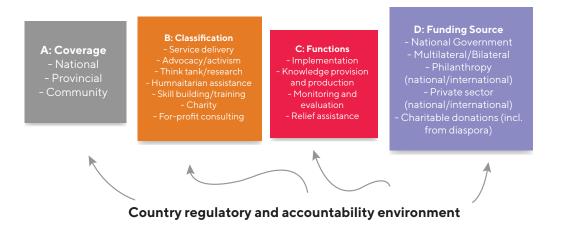
The key outcomes of this ecosystem include equalising the global development and humanitarian sectors, i.e., **removing the distinction between 'North' and 'South';** not allowing a small number of agencies to control funding, and **the development of more inter-country collaborations** through their respective SCSEs rather than through agencies and INGOs. The compulsion to seek funding only from the 'Global North' and follow only their modalities and structures would thus become obsolete once the focus becomes more on national development instead of international development.

This ecosystem does not view external support as *only* being foreign aid from rich OECD countries to poorer non-OECD countries, where accountability is not to the aid receivers, but to the taxpayers of the rich aid providing countries.

This new ecosystem **views support as coming firstly from domestic, internal sources, then from closer regional sources and finally from more external formal sources**. It is a vastly more broad and compatible system that **goes far beyond grants and loans to include all types of external support, regardless of who it is provided by, to enable and improve domestic priorities**.

4. Applying the ecosystem in theory

How would this ecosystem work in the real world? And what exactly are the SCSEs? In this section, I will establish a set of criteria to identify a range of SCSEs spread across four key characteristics. Each criterion will include both state and non-state entities[9]:

A: Coverage
- National
- Provincial
- Community

B: Classification
- Service delivery
- Advocacy/activism
- Think tank/research
- Humnaitarian assistance
- Skill building/training
- Charity
- For-profit consulting

C: Functions
- Implementation
- Knowledge provision and production
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Relief assistance

D: Funding Source
- National Government
- Multilateral/Bilateral
- Philanthropy (national/international)
- Private sector (national/international)
- Charitable donations (incl. from diaspora)

Country regulatory and accountability environment

A. Coverage: What is the geographical scope of SCSEs?
   i. They can exist as state and non-state entities that have a presence throughout the country.
   ii. They can operate at different levels (sub-nationally) across the country, based on administrative divisions.
   iii. They can exist at the very grassroots community levels of towns and villages.

B. Classification: What kinds of work do SCSEs undertake?
   i. They can provide tangible services to the communities they represent, such as education, health, water and sanitation, family planning etc.
   ii. They can advocate for the rights of different groups, e.g. women, LGBTQI+, the disabled, wage workers, children etc.
   iii. They can be research-oriented institutions in the public and private sectors, universities or think-tanks.
   iv. They can provide technical skills to different communities, e.g. training, polytechnics, vocations etc.
   v. They can be charity-based or humanitarian assistance entities.
   vi. They can be profit-driven coalitions or firms.

C. Functions: What do SCSEs do?
   i. They can manage service delivery programs from conception to implementation.
   ii. They can be purely knowledge production entities to promote advocacy through research or they can impart knowledge via educational institutions.
   iii. They can provide monitoring and evaluation services.
   iv. They can provide humanitarian relief services.

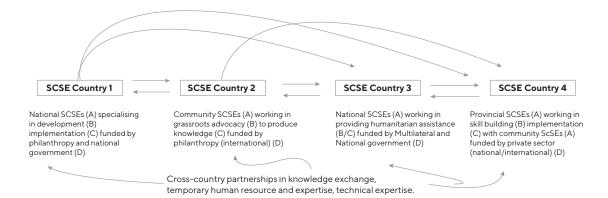[9] None of these listings are exhaustive and only provide a snapshot of each criterion.

D. Funding Sources: Who would fund SCSEs?
   a. Governments grants and public funding support—particularly to public sector institutions.
   b. Conventional official development sources via bilateral and multilateral institutions.
   c. Philanthropy and charity, both in-country and out of country.
   d. Diaspora organisations.
   e. Private sector support.
   f. Other forms of flexible funding, e.g., donations, endowments, profit-based revenue from sales etc.

Connecting these four criteria would be the overall regulatory and accountability environment of the country in question, both in terms of finance and governance. This would obviously vary in each case given the political and economic conditions of each country, as well as their foreign policies. But **the ultimate result should be a decrease of bilateral and multilateral funding, in response to an increase in domestic resources and revenue**.

> **Multiple combinations of A, B, C and D, working within and across countries, or all entities at all levels. Do away with the need for complex systems employed by INGOs and donors. Encourage growth within each country and create a level playing field.**

Entities in their respective countries can work across multiple combinations of the above four criteria. This approach is meant to **encourage growth within each country and create a level playing field**. Having said that, this approach recognises that it is not necessary that relationships between countries will be equal either. Applying these criteria would look something like this:

SCSE Country 1	SCSE Country 2	SCSE Country 3	SCSE Country 4
National SCSEs (A) specialising in development (B) implementation (C) funded by philanthropy and national government (D)	Community SCSEs (A) working in grassroots advocacy (B) to produce knowledge (C) funded by philanthropy (international) (D)	National SCSEs (A) working in providing humanitarian assistance (B/C) funded by Multilateral and National government (D)	Provincial SCSEs (A) working in skill building (B) implementation (C) with community ScSEs (A) funded by private sector (national/international) (D)

Cross-country partnerships in knowledge exchange, temporary human resource and expertise, technical expertise.

We can illustrate these combinations in an ideal world. Let us take Country 1 for example. A national SCSE which specialises in service delivery could be funded by both its own national government, an in-country philanthropic foundation, or both.

Likewise, in Country 2, a small community based SCSE that promote grassroots advocacy in one specific community can be involved in producing knowledge from that community for wider dissemination, and be funded by a small philanthropic entity based in a second country.

In the case of Country 3, an SCSE is national in its scope and provides humanitarian assistance in times of need and is funded by a range of multilateral organisations, as well as through public donations.

The last example shows Country 4 and a specifically sub-national SCSE which works with a community-based SCSE in-country on implementing a service delivery program funded by the local private sector and a multilateral organisation.

These collaborations can work with each other as well. For instance, Country 1 could work with Country 3, Country 2 could work with Country 4 and vice versa. A large-scale approach can see all four countries working with each other, sourcing multiple levels of funding. This could also see inter-country exchanges of human resources expertise, knowledge exchanges, and the sharing of technical expertise etc. The key take-away here is that **SCSEs, no matter what their scale, do not have to depend only on one source of funding**.

How is this different from the current models of collaboration and funding? Doesn't it look suspiciously similar? The answer to that is yes—and in terms of collaboration the models may be similar. But **the difference lies in who the collaboration is with, the operating environment of that collaboration, and whether it is recognised as being part of the 'global development' system**. A collaboration with an anonymous philanthropic foundation from a non-Western country is as much a collaboration as it would be with the Gates Foundation. In the present circumstances, it is the Gates Foundation that is seen as the legitimate 'partner', while an anonymous philanthropic donor is not.

Likewise, a private sector entity in a country of the so-called 'Global South', working with a public sector entity from another country of the same region, is as much a collaboration as one with an entity from the so-called 'Global North', as is a collaboration receiving financial support and/or technical expertise from a third country of the 'Global South'.

This approach does not indicate where the donors/recipients are geographically based, as is currently the case. Instead, this is a more fluid concept based on matching the needs and scope of the various entities across countries and regions. Again, the purpose here is to **expand the scope and understanding of funding and control beyond the typical donor/recipient model**. The purpose here is also to **expand the concept of collaboration beyond funding, to include for example, exchange of knowledge via both human capital and information.**

The most important issue to consider in any of these cases, is how to avoid replicating the system of power we currently see. How do we ensure that even within countries with similar economic, social and political backgrounds, entities are not sharing unequal power? How do we ensure that a small community-based entity is not dominated by its rich financial supporters, regardless of which country they belong to?

This brings us to the issue of funding modalities and mechanisms. And the key issue here is to **ensure that the country in question, in both giving and receiving, has a strong and accountable regulatory system that prevents the exploitation of its entities**. Correcting this requires a massive domestic effort from citizens to hold their governments to account.

This proposed ecosystem in no way endorses all the behaviours of 'Global South' states or power brokers. Just because they are driving priorities in their domestic jurisdictions, doesn't mean their priorities are just or correct. The point is that it is for people and communities in those jurisdictions to hold their own systems to account and work with others outside their jurisdictions, if they choose to do so. **This ecosystem is more about equity and justice than about artificially determined international borders**. It is more about **addressing a cause as directly as possible, rather than about ensuring measurable results to satisfy rich countries far removed from the contexts in question**.

5. Applying the ecosystem in practice: The 2022 Pakistan floods

While the illustration in the previous section is theoretical, it can also be applied to a real world example[10]. In this case, I will apply the 'ecosystem' approach to the humanitarian response to the devastating floods in Pakistan in the summer of 2022.

Pakistan has faced a number of very large-scale humanitarian disasters over the last two decades. These include the Kashmir earthquake in 2005 which killed over 100,000 people and displaced over three million; the national floods of 2010-11 in which over 2,000 people were killed and one-fifth of country was flooded (displacing a staggering 20 million); and the military conflict against insurgents in the northern tribal provinces between 2004-2016 which displaced over 5.3 million people. However, the largest disaster in Pakistan's history were the floods in the summer of 2022. The scale of destruction was devastating (Nabi, 2023), with:
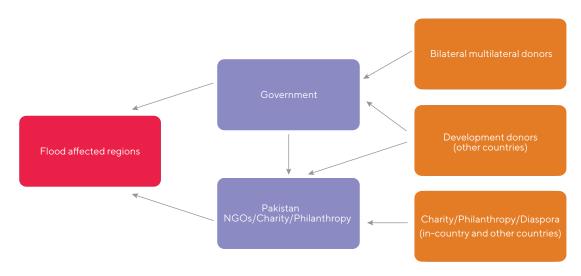
- Over 33 million people affected.
- All four provinces of the country affected, placing a third of the country underwater.
- Over 2,000 people killed.
- Almost four million acres of farmland destroyed (45% of total agricultural cropland).
- Over one million livestock killed.
- Almost two million houses destroyed.
- Over 12,000 kms of roads destroyed.
- Almost 300 bridges washed away.

These floods were unlike any disaster Pakistan had ever faced. Ironically however, this was also one of the most under-assisted humanitarian disasters, given its sheer scale and the extent of the destruction. Relief did not reach the majority of the affected population and international humanitarian agencies were unable to coordinate the massive nation-wide effort required. But if the ecosystem I have proposed had been in place (or at least parts of it), the situation would have been somewhat different.

Instead of expecting the international humanitarian community to take the lead, the focus would have been on supporting domestic humanitarian agencies to expand and scale up their efforts in the immediate term. The Federal and Provincial disaster relief agencies and efforts of the armed forces i.e. the state-based first responders, would have been complemented with the support of civil society organisations including charitable foundations, community-level organisations and private philanthropy, to gain access to affected areas. These 'state and civil society entities', would have collectively been able to address at least some of the macro and micro relief and rescue efforts, filling in gaps where the state was unable to do so and vice-versa. Directly providing these entities with funds, technical equipment, medicines, shelter and supplies would allow them to work in tandem with state-based efforts. On the ground, it was domestic organisations that took the initiative to begin rescue efforts, and then to provide affected people with relief. Their limitation was that because they were all voluntary groups they could not, even collectively, tackle the scale of the disaster alone. As a result, they soon ran out of human
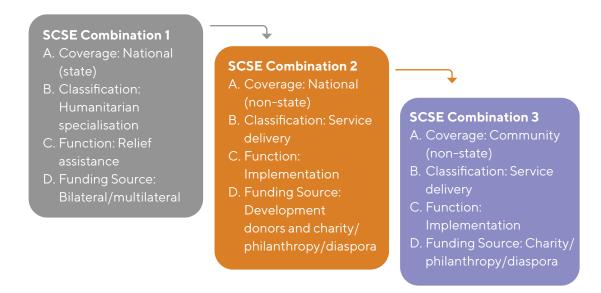
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[10] This concept note uses humanitarian assistance as a real world example, which can be applied or modified to development projects.

and financial resources to deal with the catastrophe. The international humanitarian community, meanwhile, largely ignored these domestic first responders, while the government did the same. Had the international community not been the conventional 'go-to' for the state, the flood response could have looked like this:

Figure 3: Pakistan flood response: An alternative ecosystem approach

Furthering the theoretical example could see an approach to flood relief and recovery shaped along the following lines:[11]

SCSE Combination 1
A. Coverage: National (state)
B. Classification: Humanitarian specialisation
C. Function: Relief assistance
D. Funding Source: Bilateral/multilateral

SCSE Combination 2
A. Coverage: National (non-state)
B. Classification: Service delivery
C. Function: Implementation
D. Funding Source: Development donors and charity/philanthropy/diaspora

SCSE Combination 3
A. Coverage: Community (non-state)
B. Classification: Service delivery
C. Function: Implementation
D. Funding Source: Charity/philanthropy/diaspora

In this scenario, the domestic environment would have focused its efforts on supporting its own available mechanisms, from public to private, and drawn its strength from external support to strengthen and add to these mechanisms. Indeed, the scale of the disaster was far too immense even for the government to address it urgently and adequately. But the entire premise, that it was only the 'international' community that could provide Pakistan

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[11] These are just a few combinations. As discussed in Section 4, there can be multiple combinations based on the players involved.

with the resources and expertise required, was a flawed, Eurocentric one. Instead, bilateral country-to-country support from neighbouring countries such as the UAE and Türkiye was far more immediate, and would have been the ideal partners to prioritise rescue and relief efforts within our model ecosystem. Every other SCSE, be it a national government, an organisation, a charity, etc. would have contributed based on the needs outlined by the government in specific areas/locations.
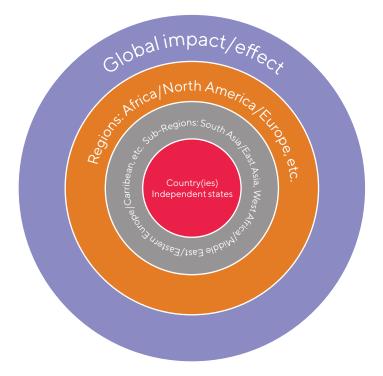
What this example shows is that there is an intense and unhealthy, and in this case life-threatening, dependency on the traditional aid and 'North'/'South' power system. Countries have been conditioned that 'aid' can only come from a rich source based in the so-called 'Global North'. Our ecosystem dilutes this power to say that aid can and should come from anywhere in the world that is willing to assist, instead of wherever considers itself to be the 'global lead' in the area.

It is important to note that this example is one of a climate related humanitarian disaster. The case of conflict related disasters, such as those in Afghanistan, Palestine and Yemen would present a very different picture. These examples illustrate the major tension of the 'humanitarian imperative'—the internationally-endorsed need to provide assistance to those in need and need alone. It also demonstrates the challenge to implementing this ecosystem when the state is party to a conflict that is creating 'humanitarian' need and suffering. In these cases, people's lives are at risk because domestic support is unwilling and hostile and external support is one of the more immediate ways to provide some relief. In the Pakistan floods case, it is an issue of ignoring existing domestic capacity instead of supporting and strengthening it for greater and more accurate scale. In the latter cases, it is about addressing a need where all domestic capacity has been suppressed and destroyed.

This further illustrates this ecosystem's emphasis on contextualising situations based on political, social and geographical contexts, rather than assuming that every humanitarian situation requires the same approach.

6. Moving forward

This concept note is a very rough outline of an idea that views countries as the very core of change. As Figure 4 illustrates, global impact must emanate from independent states outwards to their immediate neighbours, further out to their geographic regions and then finally a global scale. Change must radiate outwards from a core, not inwards towards it.

Figure 4: The Radiating Core of Global Impact

In order for this to happen, the ecosystem proposes some very radical shifts in how countries collaborate with each other (as shown in Figure 5). Not only would terminology have to change, but political relations would have to change too. While the old (current) system continues to manifest the same power structures by not challenging geopolitical relations between countries and regions, this new ecosystem makes that its central purpose.

Figure 5: Key shifts of the ecosystem

From	To
'Global North'/'Global South'	Regional
International	National
Donor funding	Variable funding
Eurocentric	Context-specific
Project-led	Nation-led

This is not a perfect system—there is still a stunning amount of wealth, social and political inequality in many of the new forms of funding this ecosystem advocates and diaspora contributions, philanthropy, private family foundations are all still unevenly distributed across the world and cannot be relied upon completely. That is why domestic resources must be strengthened as a priority. Broadening the funding base outside of traditional foreign aid is an equal priority to be able to encourage country and regional collaboration.

But by far the biggest challenge in realising this ecosystem is the buy-in of the so-called 'Global South'. Many countries in this problematic category require the political will to assume charge of their own development and must be willing to wean themselves off the traditional modalities of aid. They also need to be willing to strengthen and encourage more domestic forms of wealth creation via uniform taxation, business regulation and trade, among other options. Finally, they need to have a transparent and safe environment for non-state entities to function, both domestically and across borders. Given the weak political and financial environments of many countries, none of this can be achieved overnight. But if at least one country has a cross-section of entities willing to take these risks, it may bode well for others. The challenge is who will be willing to step up first.

Given the many obstacles and resistance that this ecosystem could create, testing the validity of this concept among those it speaks about is extremely important. This includes, but is not limited to, conferring with (in order of importance and priority):

1. National governments of the so-called 'Global South'.
2. Civil society organisations—both independent and coalition-based groups—in the so-called 'Global South'.
3. Multilateral and bilateral donors in the so-called 'Global North'
4. Philanthropic and charitable donors in both the so-called 'Global North' and 'Global South'.

I hope that some of these entities might be willing to take on this concept and its ideas within their respective structures and see if and how it could work, and examine its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. But for now, **this concept will at least add a tangible option to the more abstract discussions on global development and humanitarianism currently in the mainstream**. It is imperative to move the discussion from the macro to the micro level—and this proposed ecosystem is designed to encourage that shift.

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