

Talking points and reference materials:

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Decolonising aid

Fundamentally, decolonizing aid is a call for a fundamental shift in power and resources in the international aid system

It is based on the idea that the current system is part of a colonial construct that operates on Western terms and from Western points of view, perpetuating power imbalances between the global North and global South.

Decolonising aid means decision-making is in the hands of the people directly impacted by aid and development programs

The processes of decolonization is understanding that colonization is more than just a physical project – it has cultural and psychological components which determine whose knowledge is privileged.

Decolonization involves seeking restorative justice through cultural, psychological and economic freedom.

Decolonization is the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies regarding the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches, moving away from the 'white gaze'.

The four aspects that we need to pay particular attention to and work on consciously are listed below:

Relationships: Interrogate consciousness and capabilities

This is about attitudes, behavior and mindset which leads to the way you relate to people.

We are all part of the systems we are trying to shift – question your own perspective and assumptions, your biases and privileges because of your identity and power that comes with it.

- Interrogate assumptions, develop political awareness
- Start with yourself
- Get comfortable with feeling uncomfortable
- Create space for collective reflection
- Ask people

Below are some things that you have to pay attention to:

- 01 Judging: includes making assumptions and having pre-existing perceptions about someone's ability or capacity based on their ethnicity, or where in the world they are from. It also covers making biased judgements when, for example, designing a programme or measuring success.
- 02 Universalizing is where someone with "structural power" over another group (for example white people over BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) people,

or people from the global north or head office over the Global South or local staff members, local/national organisations) uses this power to treat or regard everyone in the group as the same, without regard to individual differences. It also means imposing a particular standard/criterion over a group, with the assumption that this will have the same outcome for all members of the group.

- 03 Controlling is when someone with “structural power” over a group uses this power to set conditions and limits that are not necessarily mutually agreed, or even for the benefit of the second group. It’s also about influencing outcomes in favour of the more powerful group, either by direct control or by using “carrots and sticks” (incentives and punishments).
- 04 Imposition. A top-down approach; to set or establish something onto stakeholders with little input from them or giving them little choice on the matter; to make an individual or organisation do something without their consultation, or even if that is not what they prefer.
- 05 Exclusion. To directly or indirectly prevent an individual or organisation from participating in or accessing something, such as decision-making, funding, or information.
- 06 Devaluation. To see an individual or organisation as “lesser than” in terms of importance and capacity, and which translates into people’s (and organisation’s) financial value.
- 07 Alienation. To sever, not recognise, or not value an individual’s or an organisation’s ties to their own context or community. It is seen through a “fly-in-fly-out” approach, and in doing something that is removed from the context.
- Start Network Framework pp. 12-13

Participation and accountability

Aid sector is focused on risk and compliance management and distrust rather than trust. We need to create inclusive cultures. It takes time to build trust. We use a lot of jargon which the internationals have created. Check your use of jargon and other social codes - and call out exclusionary practices

- Make hidden power visible,
- Take the time and space needed to grow trust
- Challenge and disrupt exclusionary culture
- Pay attention to the culture within your organisation
- Contribute to culture of co-operative civil society

Policy and visibility: Rethink policies and governance

Don’t just provide a seat at the table, support people to give their best. Put power-awareness at the heart of governance.

- Rethink policies, accountability and governance processes
- Decision making
- Power analysis
- Go beyond providing a seat

Resources:

Share resources fairly Invest in overcoming barriers to participation

Always pay people properly for their time and expertise

- Language and translation
- Re-distribute access to money, technology, jobs and social networks
- Think of cost of participation
- Invest in generating and sharing knowledge for change
- Support funders to adopt participatory approaches

Organisational structures and functions: what you need to pay attention to:

Diagram How structural racism shows up in the sector



[Time to decolonise aid](#) – Diagram How structural racism shows up in the sector - page 33

Reading materials

[Localisation, racism and decolonisation: Hollow talk or real look in the mirror? | Humanitarian Practice Network](#)

[Whose-aid-Findings-of-a-dialogue-series-on-the-decolonisation-of-aid.pdf](#)

[Anti-racism and decolonising framework - final](#)

[Anti-Racist and Decolonial Framework | Start Network](#)

GMI Insight 17: [From Eco-System to Self. Systems change in the international relief industry. Part 3: Mindsets, attitudes, behaviours.](#) The third brief in a series of three, providing a comprehensive perspective (November 2020)

GMI Insight 16: [From Eco-System to Self. Systems change in the international relief industry. Part 2: Operationalising localisation.](#) The second brief in a series of three, providing a comprehensive perspective

GMI Insight 15: [From Eco-System to Self. Systems change in the international relief industry. Part 1: Why, why now and for what purpose?](#) The first brief in a series of three, providing a comprehensive perspective

Expanding your understanding of power. [English](#) / [French](#) / [Spanish](#)

Anatomy of Power. An invitation for reflection on your organisation's use of power. [English](#) / [French](#) / [Spanish](#)