

23 Co-Constructed Definitions:

# AQOCI's International Solidarity Glossary

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**aqoci**

Association québécoise  
des organismes de  
coopération internationale



# AQOCI's International Solidarity Glossary

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## Introduction

International cooperation and solidarity have changed a great deal over the years, and so have the terms used to describe our relationships. We refer to multiple concepts that define our actions and our solidarity and partnership relationships. Many of them need to be updated and deepened to foster a common understanding between the stakeholders in our sector.

In 2021, the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI) decided to develop an International Solidarity Glossary from a decolonizing of knowledge perspective. This vast co-creation project required engaging in a dialogue with its members and several international partners.

The process took more than two years to complete. It involved the active participation of a working committee, the important contributions of a consultant and the essential participation of some forty international solidarity stakeholders from Quebec, Africa, and Latin America.

This glossary aims to equip international cooperation and solidarity organizations (ICOs) and individuals working in the field with a common understanding of several key concepts in our sector. Its contents can be used for global citizenship education, advocacy, communications, research, and other activities.

We are proud to present this first version of our glossary, which will be enriched over the years by regular contributions of ICOs and their partners.

**Note:** This version presents the 23 definitions that were developed as a co-construction by various partners and members of AQOCI. Furthermore, the translation of these definitions, by virtue of its diversity of understanding and linguistics, presented the translators with a challenge of co-construction. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their dedication. To consult the complete version of the glossary (available only in French), please go to our web site: [www.aqoci.qc.ca/lexique/](http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/lexique/)

## Why is it Important to have a Renewed International Solidarity Glossary?

For AQOCI, it's important that the language we use reflects our values and convictions. We can't put an end to inequalities if we don't tackle the root causes and systems that exacerbate these injustices. Some words carry with them a sense of colonialism or structures of domination that we do not wish to reproduce in international cooperation and solidarity. For AQOCI, this glossary has been built from a feminist, anti-racist and intersectional perspective.

A renewed international solidarity glossary helps us to develop a shared understanding of the challenges facing humanity, to decolonize our understanding of the world and to project a vision of another possible world.



## The AQOCI Glossary Development Process

The idea of producing an International Solidarity Glossary for AQOCI arose from a proposal adopted by member organizations at the 2018 Special General Assembly. This led to its inclusion in the Association's 2018–2023 Strategic Plan.

This vast and important project was coordinated by AQOCI's Board of Directors and two forums: the *Table de concertation jeunesse en solidarité internationale (TCJSI)* (The International Solidarity Youth Committee) and the Communications Working Group. It's worth noting that it was these forums that formulated the initial proposal.

In 2020, a working committee made up of representatives from these three bodies was formed to begin the process. A consultant was soon hired to help us draw up a first version of the glossary. This was presented to members at the Special General Assembly in February 2021. During the exchanges sparked by this presentation, it became clear that we needed to broaden the consultation process and integrate a decolonization and knowledge-sharing perspective by establishing a dialogue with ICOs and international partners. This proposal was adopted by the membership in March 2021.

The working committee then drew up an action plan that included the organizing of various co-construction sessions with the participation of AQOCI members and partners from Africa and Latin America. The committee also prepared a preliminary list of terms to be defined. A total of five virtual co-construction sessions with simultaneous French-Spanish interpretation were organized between December 2021 and April 2023. Sixteen AQOCI members and 19 partner organizations from Africa and Latin America contributed, for a total of 46 people.

## A co-construction process to create a genuine dialogue with international solidarity actors

At its simplest, co-construction can be summed up as building together. Co-construction is a process that brings together a plurality of actors in the development and implementation of a project or action, with transformative goals (Communagir, 2017). Indeed, this redefinition work first required the recognition of the different knowledge brought together in our co-construction sessions. We found that the diversity of perspectives enabled us to dig deeper into the meaning of words, to look at them from different angles and to confront them based on multiple realities and experiences.

The people involved in this process demonstrated openness, creativity, and compromise. In the course of the discussions, we realized that language and choice of words are essential elements in adopting a decolonial approach. Certain notions, such as the terms “development” and “sustainable development”, for example, generated numerous questions and reflections, with different understandings depending on the organizations, experiences and countries or regions of origin. This collaborative analysis was at the heart of our co-construction approach. It enabled us to gradually build a common understanding around the 23 definitions discussed.

In the end, the co-construction process proved to be as important as the result.

## A Constantly Evolving Glossary

This glossary is intended to facilitate clear communication between AQOCI member ICOs and other actors in international solidarity. It is not a prescriptive or binding document. We hope that the definitions presented will serve as a point of reference and stimulate further and more nuanced discussion of the words that characterize international solidarity and cooperation. We recognize that this is an evolving project, this glossary will surely need to be updated to reflect the changing perspectives of our sector and our societies.

It's worth noting that some of AQOCI's committees, such as the *Comité québécois femmes et développement (CQFD)* (Quebec Women and Development Committee) and the "Genre en pratique" (Gender in practice) community of practice, have begun a process of questioning the "gender and development" strategy. Their work will bring new definitions of gender, empowerment, intersectionality and the gendered division of labour, among others. We must remain receptive and responsive to new ways of seeing and constructing the world. This glossary is just one step in a broader process of decolonizing our sector.

If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact us at: [aqoci@aqoci.qc.ca](mailto:aqoci@aqoci.qc.ca)

## Legends



Definitions from the **co-construction** process



Concepts we **don't recommend** using



### In practice

This section presents some ways to reflect on the manner in which certain terms can translate concretely into the practice of international cooperation organizations (ICOs) and of individuals who work in the area of international cooperation and solidarity.

Within various definitions you will find links which will allow you to go into more depth on the term or issue in question.

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## Beneficiaries

The term beneficiaries refers to individuals, groups or organizations who are expected to benefit from a project or program, whether directly or indirectly. Although commonly used in the field of international cooperation and solidarity, this term should be avoided, as it assumes that the beneficiaries will necessarily derive an advantage/benefit from the project/program. The adjective “expected” can be added to make it clear that this benefit is not guaranteed but hoped for. Furthermore, this term implies that the people or organizations receiving the benefit(s) are passive recipients of the aid. The expression “concerned population” is an appropriate option. In the humanitarian field, the expression “people affected by crises” is often used.

(Ho, 2015)





## Colonialism

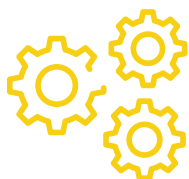
Colonization refers to the subjugation, invasion and physical occupation of the territory of one people by another, in order to extract resources, establish colonies and transform the cultural practices and lifestyles of the colonized peoples. Colonialism, on the other hand, is the ideology by which the practice of colonization is legitimized by colonial forces. Colonialism is a system of thought enabling colonizers to justify the exploitation and domination of colonized peoples based on alleged moral, cultural, racial and economic superiority. Unlike the practice of colonization, which is almost a thing of the past, colonialism is still relevant today, particularly when it comes to imposing a binding external agenda aimed at destroying cultural values or social structures, reproducing “racial” hierarchies through practice and discourse, or delegitimizing a community’s knowledge.

There are various forms of colonialism, but all involve some form of domination, control or influence over a population through violence or manipulation. In fact, “internal colonialism” occurs when, within a single state, one group is subordinated and exploited by another dominant group from a different culture, resulting in significant socio-economic and structural inequalities between these groups (for example, the laws that established “native indigenous reserves” in Canada, or apartheid in South Africa).

### ***In practice***

International cooperation organizations (ICOs) must commit to deconstructing the clichés and myths inherited from the ideology of colonialism, which contribute to the image of the “Good Samaritans” of the Global North who come to “civilize” the “underdeveloped” populations of the Global South. This fight against colonialism must also be waged in support of Indigenous peoples’ initiatives to combat the oppression and marginalization they continue to experience in Quebec and Canada.

(Pidoux, 2019; Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie (PASC), 2012; Osterhammel, 2010)



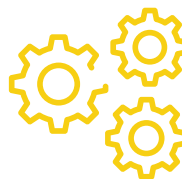


## Consultation

Consultation is, and should be, a form of knowledge exchange and sharing that enables organizations and individuals to make common sense together. In this sense, consultation becomes an essential tool in any partnership that aims to be inclusive. Consultation can also be understood as a two-way communication structure enabling community members to ask questions, express concerns, expectations and opinions, or comment on an issue (e.g.: a project, program, policy, need, etc.). The right to be consulted when one is directly concerned by the subject of the consultation is an inherent and fundamental right, in keeping with the democratic principle of respect for the self-determination of peoples and individuals.

### *In practice*

In many cases, whether in the field of international cooperation and solidarity or in other sectors, consultation can be instrumentalized by the people and organizations behind it. In this regard, the consultation process can be compromised when there are significant power imbalances between the parties involved, and when it is not truly inclusive. Thus, consultation does not always mean that actions and decisions will be modified in line with the information gathered through consultation. In this sense, consultation differs from the partnership approach, where the inclusion of partners' opinions in decision-making is mandatory and proves decisive in guaranteeing the collaboration and participation of the parties involved, who are all considered equal, even if their roles and responsibilities in the partnership relationship may differ.







## Countries and Territories of the Global South, Globalized South, the South

The term “Global South” is increasingly used in international cooperation and solidarity circles, but there is no consensus on its definition, nor is there a list to identify which territories and nations belong to it. Although most of them are in the southern hemisphere, countries in the “Global South” can be found in both the geographical south and the geographical north. These countries are grouped together in this category because their gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and their human development index (HDI) are lower. In contrast, the term “Global North” refers to countries with high GDP and HDI. However, with this definition, many consider that the Global South becomes a mere synonym for the terms “developing countries” or “underdeveloped countries”, which are considered obsolete. In fact, this way of categorizing nations is based on descriptive socio-economic indicators that fail to highlight the impact of globalization and colonization on relations of exploitation and oppression between the Global North and the Global South.

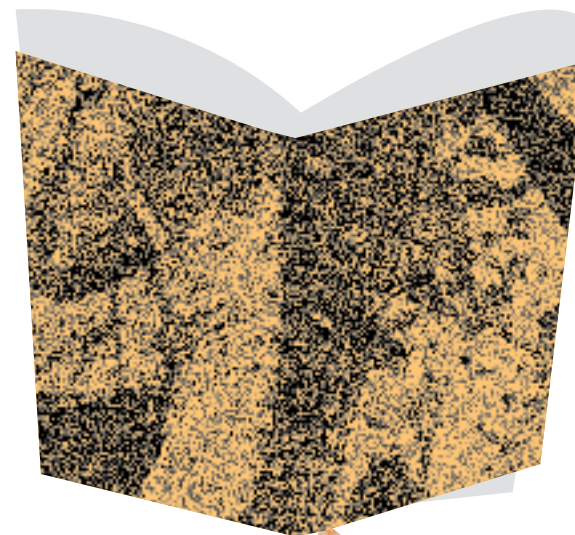
For those wishing to make international power imbalances visible, the expressions “Global South” and “Globalized South” describe a position occupied by certain states, but also by certain nations that are not delimited by state borders (e.g., indigenous peoples). These spaces are marked by major political, economic, and social issues, and have generally been historically colonized. As for the countries and territories of the Global North, they occupy an advantageous position in the world order and the global capitalist system. Thus, this is not a purely geographical dichotomy, but a positioning of global power relations marked by profound inequalities between the Global South and the Global North. Under the category of “Global South”, we find a multitude of spaces which are culturally diverse, but that share similar socio-economic, geopolitical and historical conditions, making such nomenclature useful.

From an analytical point of view, these expressions allow us to go beyond a state-centric vision of North/South relations, since inequalities within state borders are taken into account.

Moreover, the plural expression “the Souths” is increasingly used to highlight the diversity of situations around the world. There are socio-economic Souths in the geographical north, and socio-economic Norths in the geographical south. For example, although Canada is generally considered to be part of the global North, Canada’s Indigenous peoples can be considered to be part of the South because of their economic, social and political situation, which places them at a severe disadvantage compared to the rest of the country.

(Dados et Connell, 2012; Projet accompagnement Québec Guatemala (PAQG), 2016; Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie (PASC), 2012; Clarke, 2018)

At present, the expressions “Global South”, “Globalized South” or “the South” are considered the most neutral in the world of international cooperation and solidarity. However, for some, the use of these expressions remains stigmatizing since the Global South is considered to be in a position of inferiority in relation to the Global North.





## Decolonization

Decolonization can be defined as a form of active resistance against the colonial powers and a shift of power towards political, economic, cultural, and psychological independence for colonized peoples. Decolonization must be seen as a step towards a goal that has not yet been achieved. Indeed, decolonization goes beyond the historical period in which the emancipation of colonial territories from the metropolis led to the formal independence of formerly colonized countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. Many of these nations continue to suffer the consequences that flow directly from the relationships of dependence and exploitation established during colonization.

Decolonization also concerns the Indigenous peoples of North America, who have been reduced to ethnocultural minorities and are still suffering the devastating effects of colonialism, and whose lands are still colonized. Decolonization is therefore a process of reappropriation and self-determination led by marginalized and oppressed peoples and cannot be achieved without the support of former colonizers. The primary objective is to dismantle the systems, institutions, attitudes, beliefs, mentalities, norms, and processes that stem indirectly or directly from colonial domination, and which underpin current systems of domination, such as systemic racism and patriarchy.

Decolonization is also a set of ideas and experiences that challenge colonialism and neo-colonialism. Theories and manifestations of decolonization value the diversity of knowledge, especially traditional and ancestral knowledge. Given the diversity of colonized groups and peoples around the world, decolonization frameworks and resistance strategies vary considerably from place to place, depending on the specific historical relationship between powerholders and colonized populations.

### ***In practice***

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Beyond the issues of representativeness, inclusion and anti-racism, which are crucial to supporting decolonization processes, ICOs must actively evaluate their ways of working in different contexts both in the Global North and the Global south. This reflection must be accompanied by significant efforts to put an end to the injustices perpetuated by colonialism and neo-colonialism. It also means adopting new communication strategies to put forward the experience and knowledge of our partners in the Global South, whether through awareness campaigns, training courses or donation drives. To this end, we need to review the words and images used by the ICOs to ensure that the messages conveyed do not undermine people's dignity, that they emphasize their agency and amplify their voice.

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(Endres; 2012; Ritskes, 2012; Tuck et Yang, 2012)



## Development

The term development is the subject of much debate, reflecting the subjective nature of the concept, whose definition varies according to different schools of thought. As a result, there is no official consensus on the meaning of the term development, nor on the means to achieve it or the criteria for assessing it. However, in its most widespread conceptualization, development corresponds to a long-term, transitive, and measurable process whose ultimate goal is to improve living conditions. The anthropocentric nature of this dominant notion of development suggests that it is the improvement of human living conditions that is prioritized over other forms of life (plant, animal, etc.). Moreover, it is mainly the countries of the global South that are seen as needing to develop to catch up with the level of development achieved by the countries of the global North. Among the main driving forces behind this vision of development are the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

This approach to development is increasingly challenged due to its origins in a Western paradigm based on the universal reproduction of capitalist and patriarchal systems, which prioritize the modernization of societies without considering the diversity of social,

local and territorial realities. In such a context, interventions are carried out in the name of development to bring about a change from a state considered unsatisfactory (underdeveloped) to a satisfactory (developed) state. These interventions fail to take into account the relations of dependence and exploitation between states that characterize the global system and are at the root of underdevelopment of many nations. What's more, these development interventions are carried out at the expense of maintaining ecosystem balance and harmony. In fact, they have rarely really improved the living conditions of the populations for whom the development projects/programs were intended. In some cases, the opposite has even been true. It is therefore because of all the problematic aspects of this dominant conceptualization approach to development that ICOs are increasingly abandoning the use of the term "development" and instead using the terms international solidarity "or international cooperation" to refer to their practices.

(Cliche, 2014; Demers, 2006; Estrada-Villalta et Adams, 2018)





## Donor

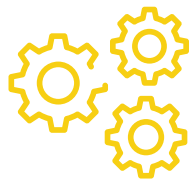
The term “donors” refers to natural or legal persons, public or private, who provide financial or technical support for the implementation of international cooperation, solidarity or development initiatives (e.g., the World Bank or Global Affairs Canada). These initiatives can be projects or programs, research-related activities, conferences or working groups. In contrast to the roles of those who can be described as partners by virtue of their involvement in the various stages of project/program implementation, the role of donors is essentially limited to the allocation of financial and technical resources. For example, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a donor that funds research-related activities.

### ***In practice***

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The term “donors” is less and less used in international cooperation and solidarity circles, as it refers to a vision of development considered obsolete and paternalistic. Seeking to decolonize the language of international cooperation and solidarity, the expression “financial partners” is increasingly used, and seems to be the one on which there is consensus. That said, the expression “donors” remains popular in the language of institutional players such as states and multilateral organizations.

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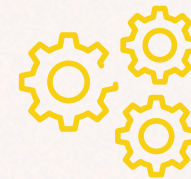
## Extractivism

Extractivism is an economic system supported by state policies and based on the massive exploitation of often unprocessed natural resources, such as hydrocarbons, minerals, wood, plants and water, as well as products from agriculture, fishing and livestock farming. This mode of accumulation goes beyond the vital extraction needs of human beings, and primarily serves the interests of local and transnational elites. The natural goods that are extracted are mostly non-renewable and are mainly destined for export. Extractivism is seen as a mode of development based on the violent and unlimited appropriation and exploitation of nature, without any obligation to protect it. Its earliest manifestations can be found in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific since the days of colonization. That said, extractivism is now practiced the world over, including in Quebec and Canada. Extractivism has often been advocated as a means of integrating weaker economies into the global capitalist system. Laws and policies have been put in place to facilitate and protect extractivist companies. The term “neo-extractivism” is used to describe a more contemporary model of massive exploitation of natural resources, sometimes used by national companies to finance social reforms. Neo-extractivism was mainly implemented by certain progressive Latin American governments at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although the logic behind neo-extractivism appears at first glance to be less predatory than that of extractivism, the resulting practices are just as environmentally and socially destructive.

### *In practice*

Although some argue that extractivism has enabled the economic development of certain states, this model is often associated with colonial and neo-colonial practices of plunder, exploitation and land dispossession. Most extractivist companies are foreign entities, and their activities generate very little benefit on a national scale. In fact, many of the largest extractive companies are Canadian, with operations in Canada and the Global South. Extractivist practices contribute to maintaining many countries in a situation of dependence on those who industrially transform extracted raw materials into manufactured goods and resell them at great profit. What’s more, extractivist practices lead to massive and irreversible destruction of the environment, at the expense of the populations living in these territories. As a result, extractivism is at the root of numerous social conflicts and major human rights violations. Those who actively fight against extractivist practices are strongly repressed and criminalized.

(Gudynas, 2013; Acosta, 2015; Tremblay-Pepin et Hébert, 2013)





## Inclusion

In the field of international cooperation and solidarity, inclusion means a process of co-construction in which everyone plays an active part. Particular attention must be paid to the participation of people or groups traditionally excluded from decision-making processes and forums. Inclusion is a process that implies that all parties are included on an equitable basis, from the earliest stages of collaboration.

### *In practice*

In many cases, inclusion is seen as a simple question of quantitative representation of the diversity of actors involved in a process. For example, during a consultation process carried out by ICOs, people belonging to various “social categories” may be invited to participate (women, young people, people with disabilities, representatives of various religious, cultural, or ethnic communities, etc.). But for inclusion to be real, it must necessarily go beyond the quantitative aspect. For example, this means going beyond mechanisms such as the imposition of quotas to encourage the participation of groups otherwise excluded from the process. To guarantee truly inclusive participation, the process must be open to all those who wish to take part, and above all, to those who are directly affected by the purpose of the process. Their participation must be committed and informed, and it must be accompanied by a sense of belonging and ownership, as well as full access to opportunities for all those involved.



## International Cooperation

Although there are many examples of international cooperation between countries and organizations in the Global South, the term “international cooperation” is mainly used by organizations and donor states in the Global North that grant international development aid to one or more partners in the Global South. In its most conventional sense, international cooperation refers to collaborative initiatives between two or more entities (state and organizational) from different countries. This is done with the aim of achieving a common goal in line with their economic, commercial, social, environmental, political, technical, and cultural interests. The fields of international cooperation are diverse, and can include humanitarian aid, official development assistance, development projects and programs run by international bodies and international cooperation organizations (ICOs), as well as technical assistance provided to states, the private sector, and communities. According to the prevailing notion of international cooperation, countries/organizations in the Global South are often considered to be the sole recipients of cooperation initiatives. This reflects an outdated vision of “international development” that is much criticized by civil society in Quebec and elsewhere.

### ***In practice***

Several ICOs are increasingly describing their activities as both international cooperation and international solidarity to distance themselves from conventional approaches that associate international cooperation with “traditional” North-South development initiatives. Although international solidarity is a form of international cooperation, it is a form of mutual aid based more on the establishment of egalitarian relationships between partners, and on the principles of equity, self-determination, reciprocity, and social justice.

(UNDP, 2021; PwC—French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, 2018)





## International Solidarity

International solidarity refers to all the actions of different actors, both state and non-state, which take into account inequalities and injustices at various levels in order to combat them together, in an attempt to redress the power imbalances between states and peoples. International solidarity is therefore a collaborative relationship based on reciprocity and an eminently political commitment. It is not limited to the activities traditionally associated with official development assistance or international cooperation. It includes initiatives in support of struggles that address the root causes of poverty, oppression and exploitation, and that are led by and for marginalized populations both within and beyond our borders.

### ***In practice***

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Given the deep-rooted social inequalities and power imbalances inherent in any relationship of solidarity between the Global North and the Global South, international solidarity remains an ideal to be attained. To move towards a truly equitable and reciprocal relationship, it is vital that the ICOs of the Global North commit themselves to listening more closely to their partners in the Global South, and to making the most of their knowledge and expertise. In addition, the initiatives led by the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA) can be considered international solidarity. The CNCA and its members do more than simply denounce human rights abuses and environmental destruction by Canadian companies abroad. They stand in solidarity with the communities affected by these companies, fighting for corporate accountability and actively lobbying for policy and legislative reforms to ensure that Canada's commitments to human rights and environmental protection are fully respected marginalized and dehumanized by racism." (Projet d'accompagnement Québec-Guatemala, 2016, p.6).



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(Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie [PASC], 2012; Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability [CNCA], n.d.)



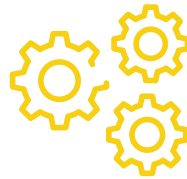
## Local Development

In the field of international cooperation and solidarity, local development refers to a development process that aims to improve people's living conditions, through the local search for solutions to the social, economic, environmental, and political problems of communities and territories. This approach to development emphasizes the full participation of local stakeholders (public authorities, the voluntary sector, and local communities) in the pursuit of objectives focused on the well-being of local populations. The latter must be involved right from the conceptualization phase of local development projects and programs. In principle, power is given to local communities to strengthen their autonomy and reduce their dependence on foreign partners.

### ***In practice***

To prevent local development initiatives from failing, it is essential to ensure a real redistribution of power and resources to local communities. However, many people point to the major challenges this represents. On the one hand, it turns out that the organizations that hold the resources needed to support local communities continue to control decision-making, directly or indirectly, thereby limiting people's opportunities for self-determination and independence. On the other hand, by granting more power and resources to local communities, there is always a risk of reinforcing the influence of local elites and thus reproducing social hierarchies within which certain groups are marginalized. As a result, some of the specific needs and concerns of these groups may not be taken into account by such initiatives.

(Veltmeyer, 2015)



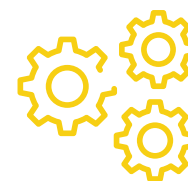


## Local Partner

In the field of international cooperation and solidarity in Quebec, the term local partner is used to designate an organization from another country with which a Quebec-based ICO collaborates. What distinguishes a “local partner” from a “partner” is that the former is physically present in the country or region where the initiative forming the basis of the partnership takes shape. Local partners can be non-governmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, universities, professional associations, private companies, etc.

### *In practice*

It is common practice to use the expressions “partners from the South” or “partners from developing countries” to refer to partners in the Global South. Since there is generally no similar expression when referring to foreign partners located in countries of the Global North, and they are simply referred to as “partners”, this introduces a stigmatizing distinction between partners based in the Global South and those based in the Global North. In the interests of fairness to these partners from all horizons, and to put them all on an equal footing, it is preferable not to use the expressions “partners from the South” or “partners from developing countries”. Instead, it is preferable to clearly identify the country of origin of the partner’s organization or body (for example: a partner from Togo).





## Localization

Although there is no consensus on what “localization” means in practice, the principle of aid localization is part of a desire to think and offer aid that is not controlled by foreign organizations, and is more likely to be delivered by local organizations. Localization is therefore often understood as the process that enables development that is truly local, i.e. by and for the local communities concerned. In principle, this approach seeks to recognize the legitimacy of local players as not only the most competent to deliver aid on the ground, but also as those with the knowledge required to implement projects and programs. What’s more, a significant proportion of funding should go directly to local organizations, with as few intermediaries as possible.

The localization of aid means that local needs and priorities are better taken into account, since the people concerned are more directly involved in the decision-making and aid coordination processes. That’s why proponents of this approach see it as a way of making aid more effective.

(Coordination Sud, 2019; Green, 2022; Matthews, 2022)

### ***In practice***

Despite the growing popularity of localization in the field of international aid, and the fact that such an approach represents a step in the right direction, its implementation is nonetheless the subject of much criticism. It seems that, in practice, a real transfer of power is rarely achieved by foreign organizations claiming to be involved in localization. According to several critics, notably from decolonial approaches, if localization fails to initiate real changes in the way aid is administered, it is precisely because it does not call into question the traditional structure of aid. This maintains states and organizations in the Global South in a situation of dependence on financial partners, their partners and their counterparts, mainly located in the Global North. Moreover, localization may be a disguised way of maintaining the legitimacy of organizations in the Global North within the current international aid architecture.





## Neocolonialism

Neocolonialism emerged in the post-colonial era as an indirect and informal form of political, economic, cultural, social, scientific, and ideological domination, enabling former colonial powers to maintain relations of control and real dependence with their now-independent former colonies by covert or hidden means. It's a continuation of colonial exploitation in another form, one that doesn't require direct control by force, as in the case of colonialism. The absence of formal territorial and political ties between former colonial powers and their former colonies is the main difference between neocolonialism and colonialism. "This makes the detection of neo-colonial practices much more difficult, especially as they can take many forms, be they commercial, economic or cultural".

(Pidoux, 2019)



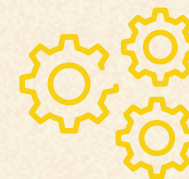
The term neocolonialism can be applied to certain relationships between France, Great Britain, Portugal and other European powers and their former colonies on the African continent. However, when it comes to the relations between the Canadian and Quebec states and Indigenous peoples, it is more appropriate to speak of colonialism than neocolonialism, since their lands are still occupied. Despite these distinctions between colonialism and neo-colonialism, the effects of these two systems of domination are very similar to the peoples who continue to suffer the consequences of colonization.

On the other hand, certain practices of multinationals, various corporate sector entities and countries that are not necessarily former colonial powers can also be described as neo-colonial. This happens when these practices are based on a rationale of exploitation and domination of countries in the Global South and maintain relationships of dependence. For example, transnational mining companies operating in Latin America are often accused of neocolonialism, since they have a stranglehold on important resources that they exploit and export on a massive scale. They enrich themselves abundantly while contributing to the deterioration of the environment and trampling on the rights of the peoples living in these territories. International organizations can also be accused of neocolonialism through interventionist practices and the imposition of values considered universal.

### ***In practice***

To avoid reproducing neo-colonial practices, ICOs must ensure that the people and communities for whom the various projects and programs are intended are at the forefront of decision-making that affects them. ICOs must also engage in a constant process of reflection that questions the effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism in the different contexts of intervention. These considerations are essential to ensure that projects and programs are culturally appropriate, commensurate with the needs expressed by the people concerned, and compatible with respect for life in all its forms.

(Pidoux, 2019)





## Oppression

Oppression refers to the systematic and structural subjugation of one social group by another more powerful one, for the latter's social, economic, or political benefit. Because we belong to multiple distinct social groups, it is possible to experience oppression both as an individual and within a social group to which we belong. The processes of devaluation and subordination that result from the oppression of certain groups by others are based on social hierarchies that are historically rooted in colonialism and imperialism, among other things. The term “system of oppression” refers to the combination of prejudice and institutional power that creates discriminatory and unjust processes against certain groups, from which others (often referred to as dominant groups) benefit. Examples of these oppressive systems are racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism and so on. They enable dominant groups to exert control over others by limiting their self-determination, their rights, their freedoms, their opportunities to choose their way of life, their access to basic services such as healthcare, education, employment and housing. Thus, an oppressed person can experience negative physical, economic, political, mental, cultural and spiritual impacts. Oppression manifests itself through the often invisible and unconscious actions of members of dominant groups. This is done in particular through the exercise of their privileges, through the control of spaces of power and by virtue of norms and customs considered to be legitimate.

(Dismantling Racism Works, 2016; Pizaña, 2017; Thomasa et Green, 2007; Fondation canadienne des relations raciales, 2015)



## Partnership

In the field of international cooperation and solidarity, a partnership is a form of cooperation between two or more individuals or public or private organizations who work closely together to carry out a project or program. This is achieved by pooling material, intellectual, human, and financial resources. In its most formal sense, establishing a partnership is a way of formalizing the relationship between the partners, since it involves a shared responsibility that goes beyond mere consultation. The partnership relationship is governed by a legally binding contract between the various parties involved. This agreement specifies the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder regarding the objectives of the partnership. From a more informal point of view, it is also possible to speak of a partnership without a contractual relationship between the partners. Some ICOs maintain that they are in partnership with communities or organizations when there is a mutually beneficial form of accompaniment and support aimed at achieving common objectives.

(OQLF - Partenariat, 2010b)

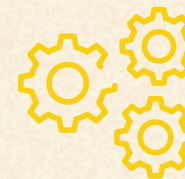


## Concerned Population

A concerned population refers to a group of people or a segment of the population potentially affected (directly or indirectly) by international cooperation and solidarity projects and programs. The impact of these projects and programs on the concerned populations can be both positive and negative. In so doing, it is essential that the concerned populations be consulted. Several distinct populations may be affected by the same project or program. These can be defined based on certain criteria such as age, income level, place of residence, etc.

### *In practice*

The related expressions “target population” and “beneficiaries” are to be avoided, as they conjure up the simplistic idea that populations are passive in the process of implementing international cooperation and solidarity projects and programs.





## Privilege

Privilege differs from advantage in that it designates a preferential status, which can be likened to an informal right enjoyed by a specific group to the detriment of another. Privileges are not acquired, innate or deserved. They are perpetuated by modes of social organization forming a system that is put in place by those who benefit most from privileges and who are in positions of power. Thus, privileges are granted by society to people belonging to dominant groups, whether they wish it or not, as well as to people who are not limited by physical or mental handicaps. Most of the time, privileged people enjoy these advantages and the opportunities they bring without even realizing it, since privilege often operates invisibly at personal, interpersonal, cultural, institutional, and structural levels.

It's important to note that while some people enjoy unearned advantages, others suffer undeserved disadvantages due to being members of certain groups and to the context in which they find themselves. On the other hand, to say that a person has privileges because of his or her race or gender does not mean that

he or she will not encounter obstacles in life. Rather, it means that the obstacles encountered by that person will not be related to his or her gender or skin colour. In other words, privilege can generate both favouritism and exclusion. Thus, “a white woman benefits from privileges based on the colour of her skin, but can also suffer sexism and be disadvantaged as a woman, a worker, a lesbian or a person living with functional limitations [or with a precarious migratory status]”. (Ligue des droits et libertés, 2017)

In Quebec, for example, we can recognize that privilege is held by people who belong to the following dominant social groups (non-exhaustive list): white, able-bodied, heterosexual, male, from economically well-off backgrounds and with formal migratory status. People can also be geographically and technologically privileged. For example, living in a country that is not at war is a privilege. Having access to a good Internet connection and owning a cell phone are also privileges.

### ***In practice***

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To be able to recognize our privileges, we first need to think about what we take for granted and what others may not (for example, being able to criticize our country's government without fear of reprisal). We also need to think about where our privileges come from, and how they can be used to combat discrimination at various levels and rebalance social relations. The recognition of privileges must necessarily go hand in hand with the responsibilities that flow from them, in order to establish relations that are genuinely more equitable and reciprocal between ICOs and their partners. Moreover, "it is by paying attention to the ways in which privilege manifests itself in our lives, by naming it and making it visible, that it is possible to open up spaces of truth and critical reflection in order to achieve a fairer sharing of the social, economic and political spaces usurped from people and communities marginalized and dehumanized by racism." (Projet d'accompagnement Québec-Guatemala, 2016, p.6).

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(Kebabza, 2006; Colours of Resistance Archive, s.d.; Ligue des droits et libertés, 2017; Projet d'accompagnement Québec-Guatemala (PAQG), 2016; Saad, 2020)





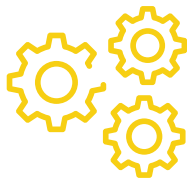
## South-South Cooperation

The term “South-South cooperation” refers to a form of international cooperation between states, organizations, and communities in the Global South.

It is often seen in opposition to “traditional” North-South cooperation.

### **In practice**

Having a separate term for cooperation between countries in the Global South, rather than referring to it as international cooperation in the same way as North-South cooperation, is problematic. It is therefore always preferable to speak of international cooperation when at least two states are involved. In cases where this applies, we can also speak of regional cooperation.



## Sustainable Development

Faced with the excesses of the capitalist and neoliberal development model promoted during the '60s and '70s by the major powers of the global North, the consequences of which were felt mainly by the states of the global South, the sustainable development approach took hold at the end of the '80s. It became the new development paradigm at the heart of the United Nations's vision, and continues to prevail to this day (see, for example, the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]). Considered a catch-all phrase, the relevance and desirability of this way of doing and thinking about development is increasingly being called into question.

According to its most common definition, to be considered “sustainable”, development must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In essence, this model continues to promote economic growth, but recognizes that it must be achieved with respect for the environment and human needs. Most of the time, priority is given to short-term economic growth objectives, with social and environmental objectives taking a back seat. As a result, wealth is still not shared more equitably, and the predatory exploitation of nature continues without regard for the consequences for the environment and communities. As a result, sustainable development has been widely criticized as simply a renewal of the same, not only archaic, but doomed-to-fail, capitalist development model (see definition of development). This model is far from sustainable, since it pursues contradictory objectives and promotes infinite growth based on the exploitation of resources which are finite and for the most part nonrenewable.

(World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987; Latouche, 2003; SUCO, 2023; Gudynas, 2011; Vanhulst and Beling, 2013; OQLF—Développement durable, 2013 b)

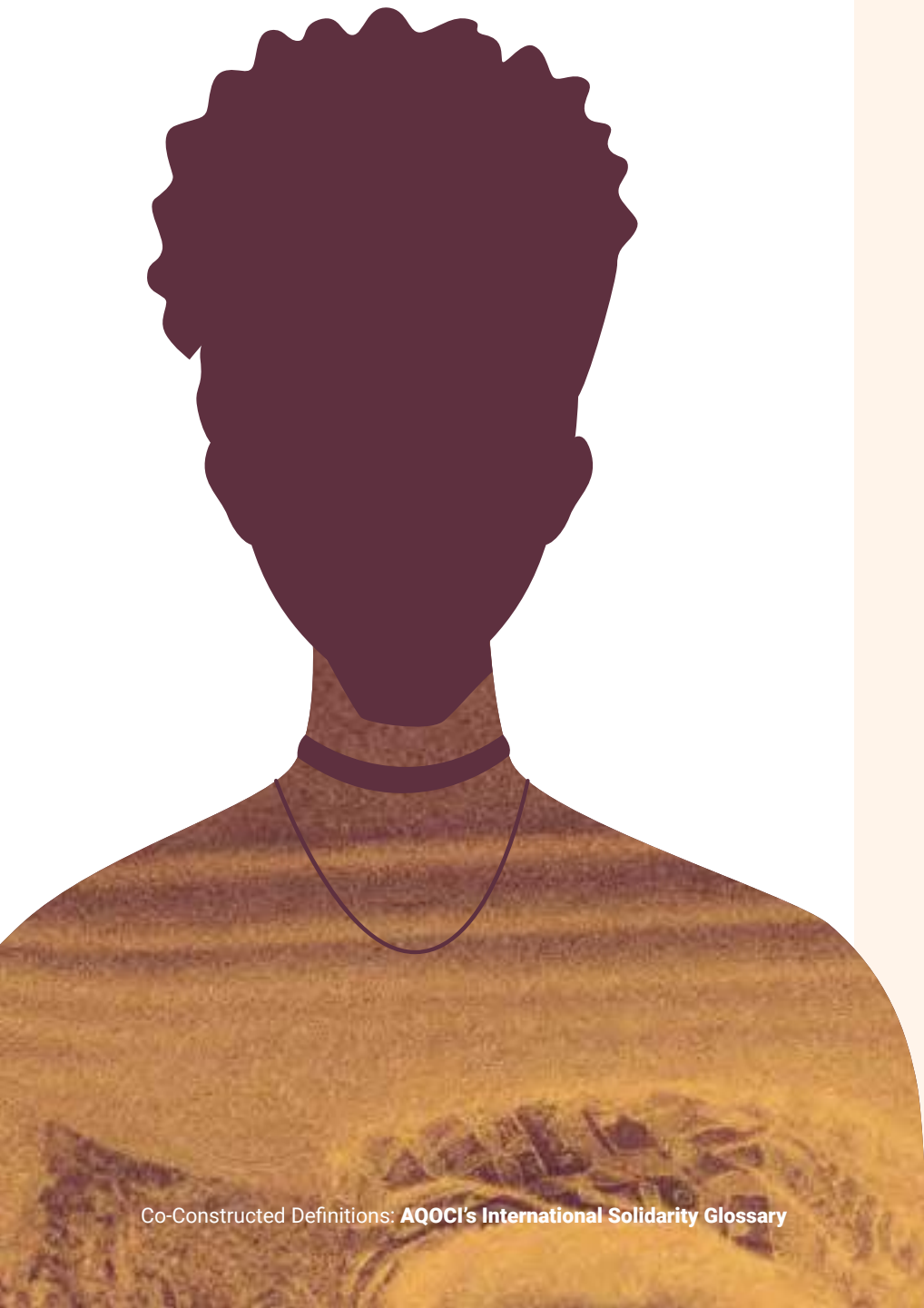
There are alternative visions of sustainable development that come closer to its basic principles. For example, some promote development that is both sustainable and viable for all. To speak of “long-lasting development” (*soutenabilité* in French) rather than sustainability emphasizes a form of development that must be able to be supported by the environment in perpetuity. The addition of the word “viable” reflects the imperatives of quality of life and equity that must be at the heart of all development initiatives. Another alternative to sustainable development is the “buen vivir” model. (or *sumak kawsay* in Quechua), which has emerged in Latin America (particularly in Bolivia and Ecuador) and is gaining in popularity. The “buen vivir” is a political project that breaks with the extractivist capitalist logic of progress and modernity. Instead, it emphasizes the mutually dependent relationship between humanity and the environment. The “buen vivir” model is based on a cooperative logic capable of combining the interests of nations, the global community and nature. To achieve “*buen vivir*”, international cooperation and solidarity policies and initiatives must value indigenous ancestral knowledge and be based on pre-capitalist conceptions of nature founded on sustainability and reciprocity.



## Systemic Racism

Systemic racism is a form of oppression that has its roots in colonialism, slavery and racist theories dating back to the 19th century. It corresponds to an intersection of oppressions experienced particularly by Indigenous and racialized people. The “systemic” dimension of this form of racism indicates that it is embedded in the organization of society, the state, and even international relations, and that it is perpetuated over time. This means that, for example, the structures of society (institutions, laws, rules, norms, beliefs, and policies) confer advantages to some groups and oppress others because of the racial identity attributed to them. Systemic racism can take insidious and subtle forms, the seriousness of which should not be underestimated. In Quebec, it has a significant impact on the economic and social marginalization of racialized and Indigenous people in the fields of health, education, work, justice, and the media in particular. For example, the over-representation of Indigenous people in the Canadian prison system and the perpetuation of inequalities in terms of access to basic services on “Indigenous reserves” are manifestations of systemic racism. Systemic racism is also present in civil society organizations and in international cooperation and solidarity. One of its most obvious manifestations is the posture of the “white saviour complex” which inferiorizes partners in the Global South and maintains the power of partners in the Global North.

(Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec, 2019; Amnistie internationale, 2021; Coopération Canada, 2021; Houde-Sauvé, 2020; Loppie, Reading et de Leeuw, 2020)



## White Saviour Complex<sup>1</sup>

The “white” saviour complex stemming from colonialist societies is a posture or narrative adopted by people with Western privileges who consider themselves, consciously or unconsciously, superior in ability and intelligence. They feel they have a moral duty to save non-white people from their alleged inferiority and powerlessness. This expression refers to the phenomenon usually characterized by people living in countries of the Global North, white or non-white, who are often well-intentioned and claim to come to save non-white people from poverty and “underdevelopment”, irrespective of the latter’s needs and will.

Those who adopt a saviour complex narrative pay very little attention to the historical and cultural context of the countries they visit, since the primary objective is to reproduce a development model that is identical to the one adopted by societies in the Global North. This kind of miserabilist aid reinforces the paternalistic stereotype that people in the Global South cannot emancipate themselves, and that they necessarily need outside help to “develop”. This so-called “help” provided by “white” saviours is problematic, as it contributes to reproducing forms of patriarchal, colonial and racist domination that belittles the populations of the Global South.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “white saviour complex” was introduced by Nigerian-American author Teju Cole in his 2012 essay “The White-Savior Industrial Complex”. The term “white” is put in quotation marks as this concept can also apply to non-white people living in the Global North.

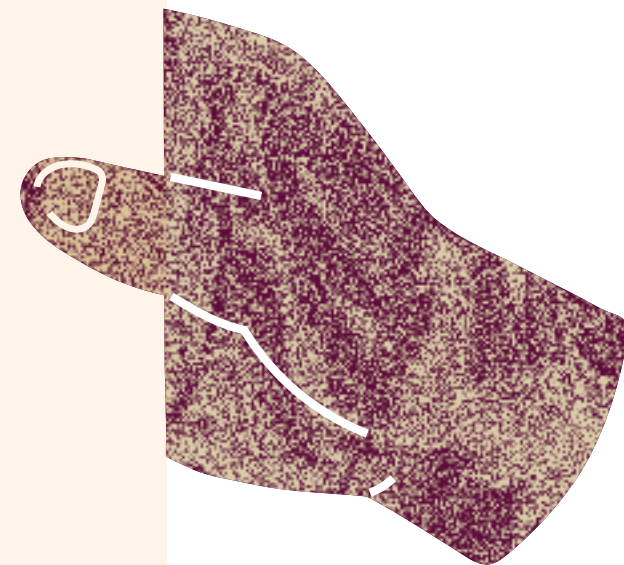
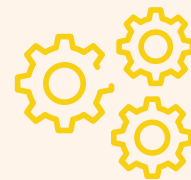


Although the consequences of the “white saviour” complex are most visible in the fields of international humanitarianism, cooperation and solidarity, the scope of this concept is much broader, as it can have repercussions at the level of national and international politics. The example of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in the wake of the September 11th attacks is a good illustration of this phenomenon, since this intervention was justified, among other things, by the principle of responsibility to “liberate” Afghan women. In this way, the United States and many other players in the international community positioned themselves as the saviours of these women and the Afghan people, claiming to hold the key to solving their problems. We now know that these foreign interventions in Afghanistan have had disastrous consequences for the Afghan people.

### ***In practice***

Breaking with the “white saviour” posture necessarily means respecting the initiatives and knowledge that come from the communities in the Global South with which international cooperation organizations (ICOs) collaborate. The ICOs must also stop promoting the idea that the populations of the Global South are dependent on the help of the “saviours” of the Global North, because they don’t have the manpower workforce or skills to deal with the issues that concern them. In fact, if some states in the Global South require external assistance, this is often due to a lack of resources, or a lack of power over them, given several factors such as corruption or constraints imposed by donors and foreign partners. With particular regard to volunteers who work with partners in the Global South, it is essential that they receive appropriate training. This is vital if they are to avoid adopting “saviour” narratives and continuing to convey stereotypes that contribute to the otherness of people in the Global South. This training is part of the ICOs’ duty of care towards their partners in the Global South.

(Cole, 2012; Coopération Canada, 2021; Saad, 2020)

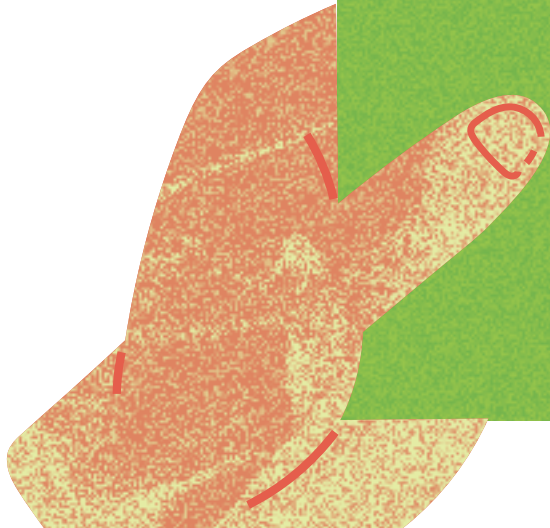


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