

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT COOPERATION CANADA

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COOPERATION FUTURES*

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1. Executive Summary

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and other global development cooperation actors often face constrained capacity and limited resources, hindering their ability to engage in strategic foresight initiatives. As a result, they frequently adopt a reactive approach, struggling to anticipate and prepare for the rapid and complex changes reshaping the global landscape. In today's interconnected world, characterized by accelerating crises, technological disruptions and shifting geopolitical tensions, proactive planning has become more essential than ever.

The Reimagining Next Generation Global Development Cooperation Futures initiative (Futures Initiative) aimed to address this critical gap by equipping CSOs and other cooperation actors with strategic foresight tools and methodologies. The project sought to enhance their capacity to anticipate, adapt and prepare for a range of possible futures, fostering the development of resilient and proactive strategies that enable these actors to navigate an increasingly uncertain landscape and contribute effectively to a more sustainable, just and cooperative global community.

As Cooperation Canada's inaugural strategic foresight initiative, this project adopted an experimental and learning-focused approach to explore how strategic foresight tools could be effectively utilized by CSOs. Over 24 months, the project tested ten distinct tools and methods, each tailored to specific phases of the research process. These tools facilitated the mapping of inquiry parameters, the analysis and prioritization of emerging trends and the collaborative development of three plausible future scenarios for global cooperation in the post-2030 horizon.

Engaging 356 international development cooperation actors across 17 data collection points—including surveys, focus group discussions, regional dialogues and strategic foresight workshops—the project identified 15 high-priority trends, including three high-risk, high-uncertainty trends and drivers of change. These findings served as the foundation for developing three future scenarios: Multipolar State-Led Cooperation, Multistakeholder Cooperation and Transactional Cooperation. Each scenario offers insights into what global development cooperation might look like over the next decade.

Key outputs generated from the Futures Initiative include a global landscape analysis of the international cooperation sector, regional perspectives report of signals of change and visions of the future in five regions, as well as a scenario report connecting the trends, scenarios and their implications.

Major outcomes of the project include better awareness of strategic foresight among Canadian and global CSOs, fostering interest in future-oriented thinking. This initiative successfully engaged a broad network of civil society and development actors, inspiring them to collaboratively co-

create scenarios and embrace innovative approaches to future planning. As the global landscape continues to evolve, the insights and tools developed through the Futures Initiative will empower these actors to proactively address the challenges and opportunities ahead.

2. The Research Problem

In recent years, limited progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, coupled with major interconnected crises and global shocks, have further underscored the shared vulnerabilities of our global society. International cooperation is needed more than ever, but its current architecture does not match the pace, scale and complexity of the current challenges, choking our collective problem-solving abilities. Most actors from government and non-government circles in Canada and abroad acknowledge that tackling global development challenges demands collective reimagining. However, few are equipped to shift beyond current thinking and practice to imagine more expansive alternatives or possibilities on a medium to longer-term time horizon.

It thus made sense for the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Cooperation Canada to partner on a project that demonstrates and promotes the use of strategic foresight tools and methodologies to help reimagine next generation of global development cooperation futures. With IDRC's support, Cooperation Canada launched this project in November 2022, during its annual conference, incidentally, called the International Cooperation Futures Festival. For IDRC, the current project fits in a series of strategic foresight initiatives undertaken by various departments across the Centre. For Cooperation Canada, the project complements ongoing work on development effectiveness and power asymmetries in international cooperation. It also aligns with the corporate mandate to strengthen the contribution of Canada's global development and humanitarian assistance sector to a fairer, safer, and more sustainable world. Throughout the 24-month project period, a series of interactive exercises were organized to meet the objectives described in the next section.

3. Project Objectives

The main goal of this project was to help international and Canadian stakeholders develop three plausible future scenarios in global development cooperation in innovative and surprising ways and consider current day governance, funding and policy implications domestically and internationally for reaching a preferred future. Meeting this primary goal would support the secondary goal of equipping CSOs with foresight tools and helping them to be more prepared to respond to challenges and strategic surprises in the future.

Primary Objective	Secondary Objective(s)
Use strategic foresight tools and methodologies to develop a better understanding of three plausible futures for global development cooperation and consider the implications domestically and internationally.	<p>Raise awareness of civil society actors engaged in global development cooperation about the range of strategic foresight tools that can be used to imagine these new plausible futures.</p> <p>Assess the utility of the different strategic foresight processes from a civil society perspective.</p> <p>Determine how the outputs of strategic foresight can be best positioned for use by global and national CSOs working in different contexts.</p>

3.1. About the Primary Objective

At the end of the project, we fully achieved our primary objective: developing three plausible scenarios for the future of global development cooperation. This goal was met through a collaborative process, allowing participants to derive potential scenario storylines from the extensive data compiled. The resulting scenarios reflect the collective insights and considerations of a wide range of stakeholders.

3.2. About the Secondary Objectives

For the first secondary objective, we successfully raised awareness of strategic foresight among a wide range of development actors. In addition to engaging over 350 stakeholders through a structured data collection process, Cooperation Canada further expanded the project’s outreach through several key engagement events. In each event, Cooperation Canada’s Research team presented key findings from the Futures Initiative to audiences ranging from 10 to over 350, broadening the project’s visibility and reaching a diversity of development practitioners in Canada and abroad. Participation numbers are approximate in some cases, as Cooperation Canada did not organize these events (except for the International Cooperation Futures forum) and precise attendance data was not consistently available. Nonetheless, these forums allowed us to bring the principles of strategic foresight to new audiences, fostering a broader awareness of its utility in addressing complex global development challenges.

Secondary objectives 2 and 3 were also effectively met. We engaged in ongoing discussions with the strategic foresight consultant regarding the utility and suitability of the tools employed throughout the project. This allowed us to gain insights into which tools best fit civil society contexts and how they could be tailored to future projects.

One area where our initial expectations proved overly ambitious was the attempt to implement and teach the strategic foresight tools simultaneously. Although each workshop included a “Strategic Foresight 101” session to establish foundational understanding, effectively teaching

the tools required more time and hands-on experience than initially anticipated. Moreover, the workshops did not consistently involve the same participants; only about 11% of the 356 individuals in the data collection phase attended multiple sessions. Since this was the first encounter with strategic foresight for most attendees, we prioritized accessibility over technical depth to avoid overwhelming participants.

Given the project’s limited timeframe, we concentrated on developing our team’s understanding of the tools and applying them effectively. We anticipate that continued post-project engagement will provide opportunities to share these tools and insights in greater depth.

4. Methodological Approach

This project employed strategic foresight as its core methodology, integrating a diverse range of research approaches and tools designed to anticipate and explore potential future scenarios. Strategic foresight, inherently iterative, provided a flexible framework to develop domain stories and conduct a comprehensive environmental scan across social, technological, economic, environmental, political spheres (STEEP-V) relevant to global development cooperation. Each phase of this process, from identifying trends to deriving high-level insights, contributed to the development of three plausible scenarios. The chart below illustrates an overview of the methodological approach, with further details on specific data collection methods outlined below.



4.1. Expert Advisory Committee

The project was structured to leverage strategic foresight methodologies, involving diverse stakeholders and expert guidance to shape three plausible scenarios for the future of global development cooperation. To accomplish this, we convened an Expert Advisory Committee comprised of Canadian and global experts representing government, academia, private sector and civil society. Throughout the project, touchpoints with the Expert Advisory Committee enabled peer review of methods and findings, ensuring continuous alignment with strategic foresight principles. Regular feedback from the committee allowed us to refine our approach and maintain consistency with our overarching methodology.

4.2. Strategic Foresight Consultant

Additionally, a strategic foresight consultant supported our team by identifying the most suitable foresight methods and facilitating workshops. This partnership was instrumental in adapting foresight tools to the specific needs of our participants, many of whom were engaging with strategic foresight for the first time. This collaborative design enabled us to develop scenarios that reflect collective insights and support broader understanding of foresight within the development sector.

4.3. Research Approaches

Several distinct research methods were outlined to support the foresight process, including a desk review, surveys, focus groups and workshops. These methods provided a broad spectrum of qualitative and quantitative data to enrich scenario-building.

While interviews were initially included in the proposed methodology, Cooperation Canada's Research team opted for group discussions, as they allowed participants to build on one another's ideas, fostering a collaborative atmosphere aligned with our objective of bringing diverse actors together. This method proved particularly effective for generating collective insights, enabling participants to engage more fully and dynamically than in one-on-one settings.

The strategic foresight approach unfolded in two phases: Phase One focused on global and regional horizon scanning and Phase Two engaged stakeholders in scenario-building workshops, from prioritizing trends to co-creating and exploring transformative scenarios and their impact for post-2030.

5. Project Implementation and Management

The project's timeline spanned several key milestones, each designed to optimize resource use while maximizing stakeholder engagement, inclusivity and the quality of foresight outputs.

5.1. Project Governance

At the proposal stage, the project planned to establish two governance bodies: an Expert Advisory Committee and a Core Group (a subset of the committee). The Advisory Committee, comprising Canadian and global experts from government, academia, the private sector and civil society, was tasked with guiding strategic foresight inputs and outputs, participant engagement and activity sequencing. The Core Group was intended to focus on scenario development in later stages.

Both groups were successfully formed with 16 members, 11 of whom were women, and 50% representation from the Global South, including experts from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Two youth foresight fellows were also included to ensure diverse perspectives.

As the project progressed, the two groups were merged to streamline engagement and improve efficiency due to scheduling challenges. This consolidation maximized expert contributions during the foresight-intensive phase. The governance bodies met six times, playing a pivotal role in shaping the project's direction and outcomes.

5.2. Cooperation Canada's Implementation Decisions

5.2.1. Separating the Environmental Scan from the Strategic Foresight Process

Recognizing that the international development sector has often grappled with a notable lack of foresight, and the resulting low demand and supply of foresight experts with expertise in development cooperation, we anticipated a difficulty in finding a strategic foresight partner capable of producing a qualitative environmental scan report to inform the development of the scenarios. This assumption was the pull factor to our decision to contract two teams of consultants, each tasked with the part of the process they were most familiar with. Our concerns proved valid as we decided to extend the deadline for the submission of proposals twice due to a lower-than-expected level of interest in the initial request.

5.2.2. Reconciling the Environmental Scan and Strategic Foresight Methodologies

One of the risks associated with our decision to have two different teams conduct the environmental scan and the foresight exercises was the possibility that we would end up with diverging methodologies and a report that would be impractical for the development of the scenarios. To mitigate this risk, we set to have the two teams work collaboratively to identify a common ground and ensure that the two methodologies were complementary and mutually reinforcing. Several meetings were organized between the research team, the environmental

scan team and the foresight team to create a unified framework that met the objectives of the project.

In the end, the research team (composed of Cooperation Canada’s Research and Program Officer and Policy Lead) was tasked with soliciting insights from Canadian and global stakeholders to help define the parameters of the project. This was successfully done during the project’s inception workshop. The Foresight team then converted insights collected during the inception workshop into a preliminary domain map used to guide the desk review and subsequent environmental scan report. Once completed, the environmental scan team assessed the feasibility of the study based on the scope of the domains and begun their investigations into the identified thematic.

5.2.3. The Environmental Scan Framework

We used a multifaceted approach to conducting the environmental scan. It combined a desk review summary, focus group discussions and regional dialogues to comprehensively assess the changing landscape of international development cooperation.

The entire process prioritized historically marginalized perspectives (through not only representation but modalities of work) particularly as they relate to gender, race, sexuality, (dis)ability, nationality and other co-constitutive categories of exclusion. The approach also considered institutional time and resource-bound limitations for the environmental scan component of this project but also the priority of co-construction and stakeholder engagement.

Global Desk Review	Focus Group Discussions	Regional Dialogues
Analysis of existing literature, reports, and data on global development cooperation with particular emphasis on emerging trends and opportunities.	Participatory discussions with diverse stakeholders to gather insights.	Participatory conversations with groups of development actors to capture global and regional geographic level stakeholder worldviews, knowledge, experience to understand driving inhibitors of system change.
Foundational understanding of historical trends, current and emerging challenges, and potential future scenarios.	Engage representatives from various backgrounds and capture nuanced perspectives and local insights.	Validate existing domains, identify gaps in research, create ownership over the outcome of the project and develop strategic partnerships globally.

Summary of Environmental Scan Process

Desk review summary: A desk review analysis was conducted based on the analysis of the literature on global cooperation. The secondary data analysis aimed to highlight preliminary signals to track and emerging trends based on national and global strategic documents, and recent data on international development cooperation trends. This step followed systems-level multi-scalar (global, regional, Canadian) and multipolar dimensions (including multilateral,

national government, donor agencies, North/South CSOs, philanthropic organizations, including Canada's domestic non-profit sector).

Focus group discussions: Two focus group discussions were organized with stakeholders pre-identified in earlier phases and further informed by the analysis produced during the secondary data analysis. Consultants facilitated the discussions, and integrated the insight collected but also collectively constructed through this process into the draft environmental scan report. Focus group discussions were held virtually, organized at different times of the day to address the constraint of time zones, and ensure the participation individuals whose perspectives and lived experiences have traditionally been marginalized.

Regional dialogues: As our team delved deeper into the intricacies of the subject at end, we recognized the necessity for supplementary research activities in other regions and the potential that these could have in generating valuable insights on emerging trends and challenges in development cooperation. Global South perspectives were lacking despite efforts at geographic inclusion in our advisory committee and inception workshop. The need for targeted regional conversations hence emerged.

The rationale for the regional dialogues was to ensure the engagement of Global South stakeholders, namely representatives from civil society organizations in five regions to facilitate in-depth discussions that allowed for the validation of existing domains based on regional nuances, challenges, and future aspirations for the sector. It allowed us to bring in intra-personal observational knowledge, that is knowledge stemming from participants' own observations of change on the ground, their perceptions of the future of development influenced by events and trends at the local/regional level. The regional dialogues were carried out for Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa regions between September and October 2023.

5.2.4. The Strategic Foresight Process

Strategic foresight is a systematic and future-oriented approach that organizations employ to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to emerging trends, challenges and opportunities. The process usually involves a structured exploration of potential future scenarios by identifying key drivers of change, uncertainties and critical factors influencing the organization's trajectory. It often begins with environmental scanning, where a comprehensive analysis of social, technological, economic, environmental, and political trends is conducted. Through collaborative workshops, brainstorming sessions and expert consultations, organizations envision plausible futures and assess their implications. Scenario-building techniques help create narratives around different future states. These scenarios are then rigorously analysed, considering their feasibility and impact. The insights derived from strategic foresight aim to guide decision-makers in

developing robust strategies, policies and action plans that position the organization to navigate uncertainty, capitalize on emerging opportunities and effectively address challenges in a rapidly evolving landscape.

The strategic foresight methodology proposed by the foresight partner consisted of two phases. Phase One was integrated into the Environmental Scan process, except for the horizon scan, which was regarded as the foresight analysis within the environmental scan. Notably, some use "environmental scan" and "horizon scan" interchangeably, viewing them as a single process.

Cooperation Canada differentiated between the two, as our environmental scan team was not required to have strategic foresight expertise. Consequently, the team's output provided an inventory of current activities in global development cooperation rather than a forward-looking analysis. The foresight partner then used this report to systematically assess the maturity of emerging issues and trends, forecasting their potential impact on the sector's future.

In this project, horizon scanning entailed identifying emerging issues, weak signals of change, early indicators and disruptive events from the evolving landscape of global cooperation for development. This process ran from October 2023 to January 2024, assessing the maturity and potential impact of trends and emerging issues identified in the environmental scan.

Phase Two consisted of strategic conversations held through three global workshops to engage stakeholders in scenario development:

Research Insights/Prioritization Workshop

This workshop submitted all trends and emerging issues identified during horizon scanning to a group of stakeholders to pinpoint those most relevant to international cooperation. Participants also selected top datasets, discussed their significance, identified short-term challenges and obstacles, impacts and longer-term implications in the post-2030 era. Additionally, the session aimed to uncover knowledge gaps and expand the knowledge base.

Scenarios Creation Workshop

This interactive, experiential workshop employed foresight and strategic thinking methods to map anticipated changes and disruptions. The foresight partner led Canadian and global stakeholders in co-creating the three transformative scenarios for global cooperation. Participants identified interdependencies, patterns, influences and connections among emerging issues, while insights on change over time, tensions, conflicts and opportunities were documented.

Scenario Exploration/Implication Workshop

In this final workshop, participants explored three plausible scenarios for the future of global development cooperation. The session allowed discussions on potential implications and the identification of strategic opportunities for preparation, mitigation and adaptation. Participants also discussed necessary strategic directions and goals to reorganize structures, rules and information flows of cooperation actors to align with a preferred vision for the future.

Use of Strategic Foresight Tools

Strategic foresight tools were integrated at various phases to guide scenario development and facilitate deep insights into future global cooperation trends. In the initial phases, a domain mapping exercise was used to frame the project’s domains and determine the inclusion and exclusion criteria, setting the foundation for analyzing the global cooperation landscape. This framing was expanded through the Horizon Scanning and Radar Mapping, enabling a systematic exploration of trends and identifying signals of change within each domain.

In the data collection and classification phase, the Foresight Diamond and Three Horizons Approach facilitated a structured categorization of information by organizing insights according to their temporal impact and uncertainty, while the Impact and Uncertainty Matrix highlighted trends with high relevance to the project’s focus. The Molitor Model of Change and System Archetypal Patterns then enabled deeper analysis, helping map complex interdependencies and revealing recurring patterns influencing the future of development cooperation. During scenario development, tools like the Futures Cone and System Archetypal Patterns were essential for envisioning multiple plausible futures, drawing attention to potential disruptions and transformations. The table below summarizes the utility of each tool for specific project phases.

Tools	Project Phase
Alternate images of the future	Trends analysis
Domain and narrative framing	Preliminary scoping
Foresight diamond	Data collection & classification
Futures cone	Scenario development
Horizon scanning	Trends analysis
Impact and uncertainty matrix	Trends analysis
Molitor model of change	Trends analysis
Radar mapping	Trends analysis
System archetypal patterns	Scenario development
Three horizons approach	Data collection & classification

While all tools proved to be useful, the Four Alternate Images of the Future and System Archetypal Patterns played a crucial role in managing and prioritizing the extensive data collected throughout the project. By applying these frameworks, the project team was able to sift through numerous trends, organizing them according to potential futures and systemic patterns that

frequently appear in complex systems. This filtering process helped in identifying key trends and uncertainties with the most significant implications for the future of global development cooperation, thus streamlining the pathway towards scenario development.

Jim Dator's Four Generic Growth Phases (Continuation, Transformation, Limits and Discipline, and Decline and Collapse) have proven useful in offering insights into how the global cooperation ecosystem might evolve and respond to complex global challenges. Cooperation Canada’s Research team re-interpreted this tool to understand trends growth patterns and trajectories over the course of the next decade.

INTERPRETATION OF TREND GROWTH PHASES
<p>Continuation: Trend expected to maintain existing trajectory without significant disruption. Impact on global cooperation likely to remain the same.</p>
<p>Limits and discipline: Trend expected to pose significant constraints, requiring more disciplined and efficient management of resources. Impact on global cooperation likely to be significant as the system reaches its limits.</p>
<p>Decline and collapse: Trend expected to lead to a breakdown of the system if escalation continues. Impact on global cooperation likely to be devastating.</p>
<p>Transformation: Trend expected to disrupt as new actors, models, technologies and movements emerge. High potential to alter the global cooperation system.</p>
<p>This framework is an adaptation of <i>Jim Dator’s Four Generic Alternate Images of the Future</i>, reinterpreted to apply to the growth patterns of trends within the context of global development cooperation.</p>

5.2.5. Key Activities and Timelines

The below project’s activities were successfully completed within the agreed project timelines

Project Activities	Timelines	Status
Hiring & Staffing		
1 Research & Program Officer	December 2022	Complete
2 Environmental Scan Consultant(s)	April 2023	Complete
3 Strategic Foresight Consultant(s)	April 2023	Complete
Formation Governance Bodies		
4 Strategic Advisory Committee	February 2023	Complete
5 Core Advisory Group	March 2023	Complete
Preliminary Engagement and Data Collection		
6 Inception Workshop	April 2023	Complete
7 Domains/Narrative frames development	April 2023	Complete
8 Desk Review Summary	June - July 2023	Complete
Primary Data Collection		

9	Focus Group Discussion #1	July 2023	Complete
10	Focus Group Discussion #1	July 2023	Complete
11	Regional Dialogue #1 – Latin America	September 2023	Complete
12	Regional Dialogue #2 – The Caribbean	September 2023	Complete
13	Regional Dialogue #3 – The Middle East and North Africa	September 2023	Complete
14	Regional Dialogue #4 – Asia	October 2023	Complete
15	Regional Dialogue #5 – Africa	October 2023	Complete
16	Research Prioritization Workshop	December 2023	Complete
17	Research Prioritization - Rapid Scoring Survey #1	January 2024	Complete
18	Research Prioritization - Rapid Scoring Survey #2	January 2024	Complete
19	Scenario Creation Workshop	March 2024	Complete
20	Scenario Implication Workshop #1	June 2024	Complete
21	Scenario Implication Workshop #2	June 2024	Complete
22	Scenario Implication Workshop #3	June 2024	Complete
Project Updates & Governance Meetings			
23	Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC) Inaugural Meeting	March 2023	Complete
24	Core Advisory Group Meeting #1	July 2023	Complete
25	Strategic Advisory Committee Meeting #2	October 2023	Complete
26	Humanitarian Response Network Workshop Follow-up	November 2023	Complete
27	Strategic Advisory Committee Meeting #3	January 2024	Complete
28	Strategic Advisory Committee Meeting #4	April 2024	Complete
29	Final Strategic Advisory Committee Meeting #5	September 2024	Complete
30	Project Closing Moment	September 2024	Complete

Canadian and Global Engagement

The project has engaged a total of 356 Canadian and global stakeholders representing civil society organizations, academia, private sector organizations, with various levels of understanding of strategic foresight in our data collection process.

Data Collection Point	Participation
Inception workshop	52
Humanitarian Response Network workshop	20
Focus group discussions (x2)	11
Regional dialogues (x5)	119
Strategic advisory committee	16
Research prioritization workshop	22
Research prioritization surveys (x2)	32
Scenario creation workshop	40
Scenario implications workshops (x3)	44
Total	356

Lessons Learned from Project Implementation and Management

Key insights emerged regarding the implementation and management of project activities, revealing several practices essential to the project's success. First, the integration of a diverse *Expert Advisory Committee* and streamlined governance structure proved invaluable, allowing for consistent, high-quality input across project phases and ensuring representation from a wide range of geographical and sectoral backgrounds. The initial plan to establish two separate groups—the Advisory Committee and a Core Group—was revised to form a single consolidated body. This decision facilitated scheduling, increased engagement and maximized expert contributions during critical phases.

Additionally, the phased approach to data collection and analysis, which included structured workshops and regional dialogues, allowed for iterative learning and adaptation. This flexibility helped the project respond to emerging insights and feedback, while maintaining momentum and stakeholder alignment. The partnership with an external *Strategic Foresight Consultant* was instrumental in tailoring foresight tools and methodologies to our unique project needs and objectives. This collaboration ensured a cohesive approach to implementing foresight methodologies and provided targeted expertise during scenario development and trend prioritization.

Another important insight gained in the project implementation process was the value of initiating data interpretation frameworks for scenario development far earlier in the project timeline, ideally preceding formal data collection phases. This realization arose after the initial draft of scenarios was reviewed, where we observed the absence of several key signals of change, while other, less critical trends had been prioritized. As a result, the scenarios did not fully capture the scope and complexity of our research findings, prompting deeper examination of the criteria and processes for filtering and interpreting data.

This experience highlighted the need for clear trend inclusion criteria from the outset—criteria prioritizing trends based on their potential sectoral impact, frequency and level of associated uncertainty. We questioned what defines a trend's path and magnitude: *Is it a trend's perceived potential to influence the sector's trajectory? Or is it more about its consistency across data points?* Establishing these parameters earlier would have supported a transparent and well-balanced filtering process, ensuring scenarios that accurately reflect high-impact and uncertain trends alike.

This learning led to the creation of a scenario criteria document, later validated by the strategic foresight consultant, which guided the refinement and rewriting of scenarios to meet established standards of relevance, actionability, consistency and differentiation among others.

In retrospect, Assumption Mapping at the beginning of the project would have been highly beneficial for managing data interpretation effectively. Had we conducted Assumption Mapping, we could have better aligned our selection criteria with strategic foresight goals from the start, ensuring consistency across data points and enabling an easier filtering process.

6. Gender Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Based on IDRC's Gender Progress Markers, Cooperation Canada adopted a gender-transformative approach across the project, ensuring Gender, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (GDEI) considerations were reflected in four primary areas: 1) participants, 2) process and methodology, 3) products and 4) team composition.

6.1. Participants

The project upheld GDEI principles in all participant engagement, including within governance bodies, civil society workshops and in moments of engagement with global and Canadian stakeholders. To support Global South partners, per diems were provided for regional dialogues and honoraria were designated for Global South members of the Strategic Advisory Committee.

6.2. Process and Methodology

The strategic foresight methodologies were designed to be inclusive, utilizing virtual engagement, focus groups, workshops and surveys to ensure broad accessibility. To accommodate participant needs, sessions were scheduled at various times to facilitate participation in the Asia-Pacific and other regions.

Meetings with the Expert Advisory Group and the core project group took place virtually, enabling participation across time zones and locations. In-person engagements were held in coordination with existing events, such as the Humanitarian Response Network's Triannual Meeting and the FORUS General Assembly in Botswana. For accessibility, simultaneous interpretation was provided in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

Cooperation Canada's procurement process included diversity, equity and inclusion evaluation criteria, which informed the selection of the lead consultant and regional foresight partners.

6.3. Products

GDEI was embedded in all project outputs, such as the domain map, environmental scan, and weak signals analysis, each of which considered social, cultural, political, economic and other factors. Outputs were made available in French and English and employed gender-neutral and non-colonial language. Monitoring activities also provided sex- and location-disaggregated

perspectives. Research outputs incorporated diversity, gender equality and inclusion, recognizing that these trends were likely to impact the scenarios developed.

6.4. Team Composition

All staff hired for the project carried the responsibility of promoting a culture of anti-racism, inclusion, equity, and feminist principles, both within the organization and in their external work with Cooperation Canada. These considerations were integral to our hiring decisions, especially given the project's focus on engaging diverse, multicultural stakeholders from Canada and abroad.

The project did not pose significant ethical risks, but due to the diverse, international stakeholder base, the project team actively checked for comfort levels regarding the publication of research findings. No data was shared publicly without prior consultation and consent. Recordings were only made with participant consent and where consent was not granted, workshops were not recorded. Any relevant publications were anonymized to respect participant privacy.

7. Project Outputs and Dissemination

7.1. Project Outputs

Throughout the project, we made strategic adjustments to streamline outputs for clarity and impact. While nearly all planned outputs were delivered, some were merged or adapted to enhance cohesion. For instance, rather than publishing a standalone implications brief, we incorporated the implications directly within the final research report, following each scenario to provide immediate context and insight. This approach fostered a more cohesive narrative by linking trends and scenarios with their potential impacts.

We also shifted from simple readout summaries to more in-depth substance blogs, as we found that the latter offered greater value and engagement for our audience. This pivot enabled us to explore findings with more depth and relevance than traditional readouts could provide. Additionally, due to time and capacity constraints, some synthesized outputs, like social media content, were scaled back in favour of producing focused publications aligned with project priorities.

In lieu of a separate final reflection report on the tools, methods and foresight process, Cooperation Canada will make this comprehensive technical report publicly available. This decision avoids redundancy, positioning the technical report itself as a reflective document on the project's strategic foresight methods, tools and insights gained.

Assumption Mapping: A Lesson Learned

During the project’s initial stages, we anticipated that the Domain Mapping exercise would yield sufficient data to extract core assumptions about the sector. However, we later realized that this approach didn’t fully capture the foundational assumptions required to shape scenarios effectively. It became clear, particularly at the scenario development phase, that a dedicated Assumption Mapping exercise early in the project would have provided essential insights for prioritizing data and identifying trends.

Although formal assumption mapping was not completed as planned, we integrated assumption capture during the Implications Workshop, where participants’ perspectives on underlying sector assumptions were documented and included in the final report. This experience highlighted the value of early-stage assumption mapping to better structure data filtering and strengthen the scenario-building process.

7.2. Dissemination

Key project outputs and learnings were disseminated through workshops, advisory meetings and internal and external events, allowing stakeholders to engage meaningfully in scenario discussions and explore the implications drawn from our research.

Outputs are outlined below according to the three key areas of work under the initiative:

Project Outputs	
Output	Status
Strategic Foresight Process	
Inception workshop*	Completed
Assumptions	Integrated into other elements
Domain map	Completed
Environmental scan (on the social, technological, economic, environmental, political and values dimensions of global development cooperation), including weak signals (potential or looming change)	Completed
Research report with three future scenarios developed through the strategic foresight process (worst plausible, best plausible and transformative future)	Completed
Synthesized, engaging outputs for promotion and explanation (e.g., social media posts, narratives with fictional characters, infographics, etc.)	Completed
Three workshops*	Completed
Two implications-oriented workshops (one global and one Canadian) *	Completed
Briefing note on implications of plausible futures for CSOs, prepared from inputs from the two dissemination/implications-oriented workshops	Integrated in final research report
Networks & Partnerships	
Expert Advisory and core groups established with regularly scheduled meetings*	Completed
One (1) meeting with global decision-makers	Completed

Learning & Reflections	
Strategic foresight 101: Session to orient global CSOs to the strategic foresight process	Completed
Two learning and reflection reports	Completed
Four synthesized reflection blogs/briefs	Completed

Written Outputs

Several written outputs were published, each designed to document and disseminate our findings comprehensively and accessibly. These included four major reports capturing in-depth research insights and nine additional pieces—blogs and readouts—that provided timely updates, reflections and synthesized findings for a broader audience.

Written Outputs	Timeline	Audience	Status
Reports			
The Post 2030 Landscape: Plausible Scenarios for Global Cooperation (Scenario Report)	October 2024	External	Published
Global landscape analysis of the international cooperation sector (Environmental scan)	February 2024	External	Published
Regional perspectives report on signs of change and visions of the future (Regional dialogues report)	August 2024	External	Published
2023 Reflection Report (midterm reflection report)	February 2024	External	Published
Blogs & Readouts			
The Future of Global Development: how social entrepreneurs are leading the way (interview blog)	September 2024	External	Published
Reflecting on the past year navigating Cooperation Canada’s First Strategic Foresight Project (reflection blog)	February 2024	External	Published
Navigating Emerging Trends in International Cooperation: Strategies for Civil Society Organizations (blog)	February 2024	External	Published
Strategic Foresight in International Cooperation: Six Reasons You and Your Organization Should Embrace It (blog)	February 2024	External	Published
Meeting of the Core Advisory Group (readout)	July 2023	External	Published
Workshop Reflections on The Future(s) of Humanitarian and Development Work (reflection blog)	July 2023	External	Published
Inception Workshop of the Global Cooperation Futures Initiative (readout)	May 2023	External	Published
Inaugural Meeting of the Global Cooperation Futures Initiative’s Strategic Advisory Committee (readout)	March 2023	External	Published
Celebrating World Futures Day for the first time	December 2022	External	Published

Open Access

All externally oriented outputs have been made available online. Consultants' works are licensed under the International Creative Commons license CC BY-NC 4.0 (Attribution – Non-commercial). Outputs are published on the Cooperation Canada website (which is publicly available) and promoted through social media and newsletters.

8. Project Outcomes

8.1. Learning

The project had a deliberate learning orientation. Two primary objectives were established to facilitate this focus: first, to evaluate the effectiveness of various strategic foresight processes from the perspective of civil society; and second, to determine how the outputs of strategic foresight can be optimally positioned for use by both global and national CSOs operating in diverse contexts. Evidence indicates that these objectives resonated with numerous stakeholders in Canada and beyond.

In Canada, several CSOs expressed interest in introductory sessions on strategic foresight, particularly from organizations entering their strategic planning phases and seeking to integrate insights from the Futures Initiative. Additionally, some organizations aimed to enhance their capacity for strategic foresight and future preparedness.

The Research Team was invited to present key findings and conduct strategic foresight workshops at significant events in Canada and internationally, engaging audiences that included researchers, CSOs, provincial cooperation councils and global networks. Noteworthy presentations took place at the FORUS General Assembly, which gathered over 100 leaders from global CSO coalitions as well as at our own Futures Forum, which attracted 350 participants from various sectors.

By actively engaging with these audiences early and consistently, we ensured that project insights reached a broad array of stakeholders long before the project's conclusion, promoting ongoing dialogue about the strategic foresight process. The table below highlights key engagement and dissemination events where our Research team shared findings and facilitated knowledge exchange.

<i>Event/Moment</i>	<i>Organizer</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Location</i>
<i>2024 CAIDP Annual Conference</i>	Canadian Association of International Development Professionals	February 21, 2024	Ottawa, Canada
<i>The Americas Regional Forum on Democracy</i>	Global Democracy Coalition in partnership with the Latin American & Caribbean Network for Democracy (REDLAD)	March 11-14, 2024	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
<i>FORUS 2024 General Assembly</i>	FORUS	May 13-17, 2024	Gaborone, Botswana
<i>ICN Meeting</i>	Ontario Council for International Cooperation	July 09, 2024	Virtual, Canada
<i>ACGC Annual General Meeting</i>	Alberta Council on International Cooperation	September 20, 2024	Edmonton, Canada
<i>International Cooperation Futures Forum</i>	Cooperation Canada	October 8, 2024	Ottawa, Canada
<i>Global Leadership Team Meeting</i>	World University Services of Canada	October 21, 2024	Ottawa, Canada

8.2. Co-Creation of Knowledge Through Global Engagement

Throughout the project, from the inception workshop to our final regional dialogue, we actively engaged with nine existing networks, including two based in Canada and others spanning Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa. Building strong informal networks and partnerships with stakeholders in Canada and globally was essential to our approach, as these connections played a critical role in shaping the future scenarios. By fostering inclusivity and embracing diversity, we gathered comprehensive insights that resonated with audiences beyond Canadian borders, ensuring that multiple perspectives informed our findings.

Looking ahead, this co-creation process has the potential to foster lasting partnerships, driving forward the practice of strategic foresight in addressing complex global issues. Ultimately, our global engagement efforts exemplified the power of collaboration in shaping a more informed and resilient future. Cooperation Canada hopes to continue monitoring stakeholders’ experiences with the strategic foresight process and views on the utility and likely use of strategic foresight tools.

9. Overall Assessment & Recommendations

The project successfully advanced the understanding and application of strategic foresight within the context of global development cooperation. Through a deliberate learning orientation and robust engagement strategies, we cultivated a rich network of stakeholders across Canada and internationally. This approach not only fostered inclusivity and diversity but also facilitated the co-creation of knowledge, resulting in actionable insights that resonated with participants from various sectors.

Support Early Assumption Mapping Initiatives: Encourage future projects to prioritize assumption mapping at the outset of the strategic foresight process. Funding for this foundational exercise can enhance data filtering and improve scenario development.

Facilitate the Creation of a Community of Practice: Consider funding initiatives aimed at establishing a community of practice around strategic foresight in international development. This network can provide ongoing opportunities for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and collaboration among stakeholders.

Recommended Next Steps for the Futures Initiative or Similar Projects:

- Continuing to refine and build the transformative vision and identify pathways for change and new roles to achieve the vision. Consider areas of potential conflict, systemic racial injustice, power dynamics and imbalances and barriers to inclusion that need to be confronted and released to allow for the vision to move forward.
- Consider the positioning of international cooperation actors within the transformative vision.
- Scenario exploration focusing on specific system challenges and allowing for a deeper exploration of the complex system and interdependencies and cascading consequences. This may include social-environmental scenarios and/or people-centered scenarios.
- Anticipatory governance/ongoing scanning and monitoring of the eight escalation archetypes and six fixes-that-fail archetypes or any other trend that requires closer attention.

10. Appendices

Appendix A: Scenario Development Criteria

	Criteria	Description
1.	Scope	The scope identified in the domain mapping exercise is respected and the time horizon is explicitly stated. A clear and explicit link between research and scenarios is made.
2.	Traceability	Describes how the future scenarios were constructed based on the identified drivers, trends, and uncertainties. Outlines the process of defining scenario narratives, storylines, or pathways that describe alternative future states, including their key characteristics, events, and implications.
3.	Differentiation	Scenarios are structurally different, rather than variations of the same overall theme.
4.	Consistency	All elements within each scenario are consistent to ensure that there are no contradictions.
5.	Relevance	Scenarios contribute relevant, evidence-based insights into plausible futures for the targeted audience.
6.	Novelty & Transformation	At least one of the scenarios to present a fresh perspective and challenge conventional wisdom about the future. It invites decision-makers to open up their perspectives and inform better decisions.
7.	Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity & Sustainability	Scenarios are framed with high consideration for equity, diversity, inclusion and sustainability. They consider a diverse set of actors, geographies, schools of thought, and approaches. They also recognize the interconnectedness of political, social, economic, and ecological systems.
8.	Actionability	Scenarios are anticipatory and adaptable to complexity, uncertainty, and future disruptions. They identify potential risks, uncertainties and unintended consequences and would help decision-makers prepare for potential risks.

Appendix B: Strategic Foresight Terminology

Term	Definition
Contextual Environment	Space where change happens that will have effects on the transactional environment but lies beyond its direct reach (e.g. climate change and impacts).
Transactional Environment	Space of day-to-day patterns of interaction for <u>humanitarian/development</u> actors. Actors have significant influence to change things through their own actions
Trend	a general tendency or direction of a development or change over time. It can be called a megatrend if it occurs at global or large scale. A trend may be strong or weak, increasing, decreasing or stable. There is no guarantee that a trend observed in the past will continue in the future ² .
Emerging Issues	Issues that have not been influential or important in the past, but that <u>might be influential</u> in the future. Note: emerging issues are new without a history to understand future influence.
Weak Signals	Fragments of information that suggest <u>potential shifts that may be significant</u> in the future. Can affect operations, strategy, or competitive landscape. Significant pattern that may first appear as background noise.
Disruption (Deep Uncertainty)	Situations that have the <u>potential to quickly escalate</u> into something with an extreme impact.
Emerging Narratives (Global Cooperation Futures)	A story of future cooperation narratives or an account of a series of events (context, opportunities to collaborate, adapt/transform process, systems/structures).
Vision	to re-imagine and generate new future possibilities of global cooperation across international actors and open up a potential space and pathways for new actions and behaviors.

Appendix C: Initial Methodology and Strategic Process to Guide Environmental Scan and Horizon Scanning Activities

GOAL

- To organize a structured process to anticipate and better prepare for change for the development sector.
- Capture collective intelligence and generate insights to provide the ability to anticipate, prepare and overcome challenges of the future.
- Data to inform plausible strategic (exploratory) scenarios-to develop high level insights, and inform plausible (normative) scenarios of global development cooperation futures.

OBJECTIVES / OUTPUTS

- Perform an e-scan to deepen our understanding of the changing landscape within the proposed 7 domain stories of change (narrative frames) for the global development sector.
- Organize and analyze data as a baseline to understand the ecosystem and macroenvironment within the 7 domain stories. Short-list the top driver/trends and emerging issues.
- E-scan to provide research base for handover for horizon scanning analysis:
 - development of radar maps to understand the different perspectives and lens.
 - integrated with other research activities (interviews, survey, focus groups); and will advance workshop activities: prioritization exercise and scenario development.

PROCESS

1. Ecosystem Perspective to Understand the Macro-environment:
 - identify important global level cross-cutting drivers/trends within the contextual environment that are putting pressure and having an effect broadly on the development sector's transactional environment; and
 - identify 3-5 drivers/trends³ with a basic trend analysis for each of the 7 domains stories.
2. Research, Analysis and Synthesis:
 - outline basic system dynamics to understand systemic interconnectivity e.g. causes influencing the driver/trend, effects of driver/trend on development sector broadly or development organizations; including North-South and South-South cooperation
 - identify the following if uncovered within the e-scanning process:
 - regional/geographic variations.
 - new emerging issues linked to drivers/trends within the domain stories.
 - areas of conflict, systemic racial injustice, power dynamics and imbalances, racial bias in governance structures, include North-South and South-South cooperation lens; and

- barriers to inclusion, this includes women, 2SLGBTQI+, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and/or persons from historically disadvantaged countries.
- document the level of evidence of research/scanning sources documenting change of driver/trend; and tag using basic coding to identify: STEEP+V category and domain story.

INTEGRATION & ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Interviews, Surveys & Focus Group – Regional Level

To capture regional level stakeholder perspectives/worldview, knowledge and experience to understand systemic complexity and drivers/inhibitors of system change (transactional and organizational environment) this is expected to uncover additional details within the proposed 7 Domain Stories of Change:

- regional/geographic variations: current challenges, risks and vulnerabilities and areas of critical uncertainty.
- new emerging issues within the domain stories.
- system conflicts, potential for disruption, power dynamics and imbalances within the domain stories.
- systemic racial injustice and racially biased and harmful narratives.
- racial bias in governance structures and systems that impact agency and self determination, include North-South and South-South cooperation lens; and
- barriers to inclusion, this includes women, 2SLGBTQI+, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and/or persons from historically disadvantaged countries.

Summary of foresight methodologies for horizon scanning

- STEEPLE+V Framework: to understand and map macro-environmental trends based on social, technology, environmental, economic, political, legislative, ethical and value dimensions.
- Molitor Model of Change: S-Curve analysis to understand and code patterns of change by stage/zone:
 - Stage 1: framing issues (innovation zone and foresight zone).
 - Stage 2: advancing issues (reactive zone).
 - Stage 3: resolving issues (new normal).
- Emerging Issues Analysis: to identify issues that have not been influential or important in the past, but that might be influential in the future. Emerging issues are new without a history to understand future influence.

Appendix D: Regional Dialogues Methodology & Logic Model

Intent of Dialogue	Conversation Aim	Output
Research orientation; capture regional /geographic level stakeholder perspectives and recruit local regional collaborators.	<p>To identify trends that influence how different groups experience/do cooperation across geographies, political, social and economic contexts, identify emerging issues.</p> <p>Re-imagine future vision of global cooperation (pull to the future) <i>and/or</i> stimulate dialogue on transformative narratives, perspectives, identity and actions needed to shape the future direction.</p>	To capture different perspectives and lens; short-list common trends and emerging issues to advance into regional focus groups.

Components	System trends (horizon 1)	Signals of change (horizon 2)	Transformation (horizon 3)
Activity	<p>Q: What trends are creating pressure on your work and day-to-day operations?</p> <p>Q: How are you responding to those pressures? Any new approaches?</p> <p>Q: What challenges are you experiencing?</p>	<p>Q: In your day-to day work, what new emerging issues are you noticing that may be influential in the future?</p> <p>Q: Are you noticing any potential shifts or weak signal of change that may be significant in the future? (may appear as background noise)</p> <p>Q: Based on your experience, do you foresee situations that have the <u>potential to quickly</u></p>	<p>Q: What is your ideal vision of cooperation in the future? (think about how we intentionally change to shape the future, what are we striving for? What are we committed to?)</p> <p>Q: What does this ideal future look like? What are key words? [write a newspaper headline for this new model for cooperation futures]</p>

		escalate into something and disrupt with an extreme impact?	Q: What initial steps are needed to get there? What challenges do we need to overcome? – time permitting.
Outputs	Participants write down individually (1-2 ideas); then assemble in a group to discuss and prioritize their top 3-5.		
Outcomes	To understand key trends impacting humanitarian/ development interactions with the transactional environment.	To understand new signals of change: emerging issues that may be influential in the future, weak signals that suggest <u>potential shifts that may be significant</u> in the future, and situations that have the <u>potential to quickly escalate</u> with extreme impact.	The pull to the future can assist to stimulate discussion to re-imagine the aspirational vision of the future of global cooperation across international actors. To understand the goal/intent of the reimagined future to support system transformation.
	Consider principles of localization and decolonization and opportunities to address system conflicts, racial injustice, power dynamics and imbalances.		

Regional Dialogues: Global Partnerships		
Region	Partners	Consultation Date
Africa	The Nigeria Network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NNNGO) The Network of NGOs in Central Africa; Réseau des Plate-formes des ONG de l'Afrique Centrale (REPONGAC)	October 12, 2023
Asia	The Asia Development Alliance (ADA)	October 5, 2023
Caribbean	Fondation Espoir	September 25, 2023
Latin America	The Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy (REDLAD)	September 07, 2023
Middle East and North Africa	The Arab NGO Network (ANND)	September 26, 2023

Appendix E: Domains to Guide Research

At the Inception Workshop on April 27th, 2023, participants were asked the following two questions below in regard to the changing environment within the development landscape:

- Q1: What are key areas that are changing and evolving, and important for our collective future?
- Q2: What new and emerging issues are you observing that can be potentially disruptive to the International Cooperation sector?

Data was captured and organized into broader categories and themes; key words were also extracted. This inductive approach was used to theoretically propose the initial domains for consideration to direct the environmental scanning activity to be performed by a separate research team.

The following table below outlines the seven domain stories (narrative frames) that were recommended as a starting point to understand the landscape for the global development sector. Please refer to Appendix A for complete details on the data captured from the Inception Workshop.

CATEGORY	NARRATIVE FRAME / THEME
Political	Governance for collective action
Values	Power dynamics: social equity, fairness, human rights
Social	Emerging communities: inclusive leadership, resilience
Geo-politics	Instability, insecurity & conflict: consequences /impacts
Environment	Climate crisis: evolving, impacts & gender equality
Economic	Funding & donor landscape: shifts, power dynamics, localization
Technology	Technology landscape: new opportunities & challenges

Table 1 - Domain Stories / Narrative Frames

Appendix F: Publications

- Mang-Benza, C. (2022, December 5). *Celebrating World Futures Day for the First Time!*. Cooperation Canada. <https://cooperation.ca/celebrating-world-futures-day-for-the-first-time/>
- Mang-Benza, C., & Ouédraogo, A. (2024, February 28). *Global Landscape Analysis of the International Cooperation Sector*. Cooperation Canada. <https://cooperation.ca/launch-of-the-global-landscape-analysis-of-the-international-cooperation-sector/>
- Ouédraogo, A. (2024, February 28). *2023 Reflection Report (Midterm Reflection Report)*. Cooperation Canada. <https://cooperation.ca/futures-initiative-reflection-report-2023/>
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- Ouédraogo, A. (2023, May 2). *Inception Workshop of the Global Cooperation Futures Initiative*. Cooperation Canada. <https://cooperation.ca/inception-workshop-of-the-global-cooperation-futures-initiative/>
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