

Fingo trend cards

Global development trends and signals of change in turbulent times

Today, our world is uncertain, volatile, complex, nonlinear, and utterly incomprehensible. Therefore Fingo has scanned the horizon and gathered the most important signals of change that have an impact on global civil society and its drive towards sustainable development.

The trends here represent the Finnish perspective. Simultaneously, we wish to remind you that it is important to regularly update your knowledge on these phenomena because of the fast pace of change. We at Fingo hope that these trend cards can guide and support our members and their partners in better understanding what the future might hold.

A paradigm shift is taking place

THE LONGTERM impacts of the war in Ukraine remain unknown, yet the implications to development cooperation and its funding, geographical focus and paradigms are inevitable. The global division of values is unambiguous.

The interlinkages of development cooperation, humanitarian aid and reconstruction work are increasing due to multi-layered wicked problems. Geopolitical uncertainty in Europe may give new boost to peace and security as a key global development topic.

Development cooperation is facing increasing demands for decolonisation and anti-racism. Although the structural problems have been known for a long time, it was not until the major pressure exerted by Black Lives Matter that words were translated into actions. Instead of defending current paradigms and operating models, actors should take part in generating change in their sector and hear their partners' messages more closely. Issues of power, language and staff diversity help to challenge current paradigms and make progress in change.

→ *Global development is viewed through several new lenses*



PHOTO: ISTOCK / DENKUAIEV

Development cooperation is diversifying

DEVELOPMENT cooperation is undergoing a transformation. Old dichotomies are being challenged. Enterprises, free movements and individual megadonors have emerged alongside traditional donors and organisations. Traditional flows of funds are reallocated as poor countries rise to middle-income status. Enterprise cooperation becomes commonplace and objectives converge. CSOs adopt private-sector approaches, explore various forms of cooperation and new technologies, increase their range of fundraising methods and modify their activities.

Funds are also channelled directly to grassroots actors. The localisation phenomenon is already affecting financing practices in countries such as the United States.

The volume of public finance is a constant topic of discussion, with the effectiveness requirement also increasing at the same time. On the other hand, it is large actors that have efficient reporting mechanisms. Crises that receive a lot of attention raise the profile of CSOs and increase donations.

→ *New funding sources and approaches are taking root*



PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTOS

The environmental crisis is changing everything

THE URGENT climate change actions needed to solve the climate crisis and the related debate are gaining space everywhere, including in traditional media. We have reached a broader understanding of the environmental crisis, pollution, the energy crisis and fossil fuel dependency, the rapid loss of biodiversity, chemicalisation and their enormous impacts on issues such as food production. We understand that our relationship with nature must change fundamentally. The change is already taking place, and our window of opportunity for solutions is closing. Impacts do not only occur outside Finland. Instead, they are interlinked at the local as well as global levels. We can no longer outsource environmental crises to somewhere else like we used to. We must also start talking about adaptation measures, as the impacts of the crisis are unavoidable.

The climate crisis requires that development CSOs gain new competences, rearrange their resources and have the capacity for flexibility and change in response to the uncertain operating environment. Development issues, human rights and inequality are closely interlinked with the comprehensive degradation of the environment.

→ *The environmental crisis is a crisis of humanity*

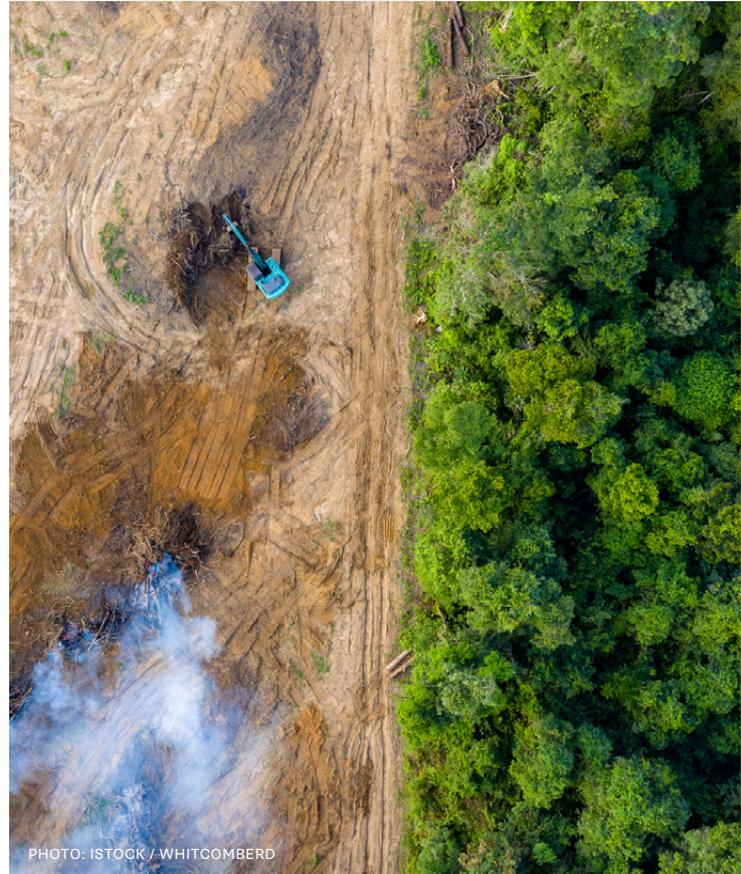


PHOTO: ISTOCK / WHITCOMBERD

Civic activism is assuming new forms

PEOPLE'S frustration with the slow pace of societal change and, on the other hand, their access to channels for networking and information sharing provided by social media have transformed active citizenship. Many large demonstrations and events have been organised by informal networks and working groups. Microactivism in contexts such as social media is also replacing traditional CSO activism. Anyone can be an opinion leader.

There is heated debate on what kind of action is justified in advocacy for change. For example, Extinction Rebellion is challenging the norms of activism in many people's eyes. Phenomena move fast, which is why traditional CSO activism is not always quick enough to respond to them. People feel the need to take personal action, and the role of the CSO is not viewed in the same way as it used to. The war in Ukraine has increased people's willingness to help in Europe, and channelling this into long-term engagement is a current issue right now.

→ *Direct and fast-moving action is challenging traditional CSO activism*



PHOTO: UNSPLASH / ZINKO HEIN

Diverse leadership is becoming more common

MORE faces and voices are being seen and heard in the various sectors of society. Young people, women, sexual and gender minorities, racialised people and people with disabilities around the world are more and more often taking on visible leadership in situations where previous generations were incapable of responding to burning issues.

In Finland, the discrimination faced by the Sámi and addressing this discrimination are topics of policy debate. The first Member of Parliament with a Somali background was elected to the Finnish Parliament in 2021. All over the world, marginalised people are taking out their frustration and fighting against structural discrimination. Social media makes it easier for them to become organised, which enables new kinds of engagement.

→ *Diverse voices, backgrounds and stories
are creating space for change*



PHOTO: FINGO / HANNA VAITTINEN

Technology is everywhere

FAITH in technological solutions to socioeconomic problems and their neutrality still remains strong. Technological innovations and digitalisation provide plenty of new opportunities for the eradication of disparities and solutions for issues such as environmental crises. The digitalisation of everything is a megatrend of our time.

However, technology serves above all those who already have access to it and, correspondingly, weakens the position of those who do not. The digital divide results in many being left behind in issues such as education. Artificial intelligence (AI) automates processes that are based on current structures that create inequalities. If discriminatory data is entered into data-based AI, AI also becomes discriminatory. Increasing data collection and surveillance of citizens may potentially have an adverse effect on the status of groups such as sexual minorities. Civil rights have been restricted and surveillance increased under the pretext of COVID-19 in particular. The boundaries of the freedom of the individual have emerged as a topic of debate in a new way. Tensions have risen particularly in countries where the situation had already been difficult.

→ *Technology may both facilitate progress in sustainable development and intensify structural inequality*

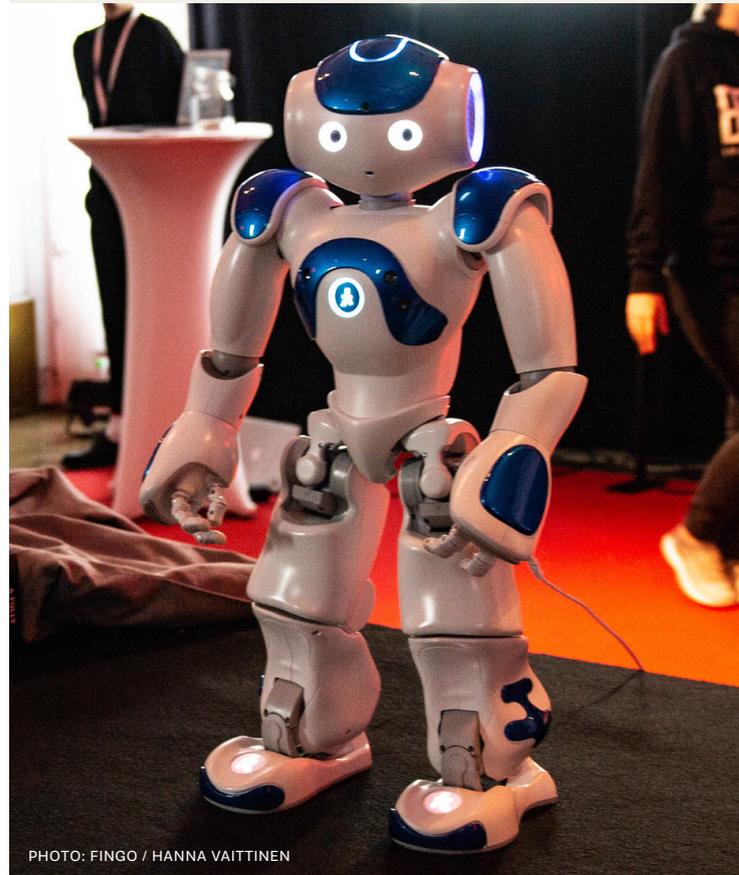


PHOTO: FINGO / HANNA VAITTINEN

Disinformation is becoming systematised

FAKE news, conspiracy theories and questioning of science are rampant. Phenomena such as anti-vaxxing and denialism of the pandemic as a Western product have gained ground. Misinformation about coronavirus vaccines and health recommendations spreads fast on the internet. These messages transcend national borders. Fake news and propaganda are produced systematically and also in a centrally propagated manner to serve geopolitical purposes. They are also a method of warfare. Freedom of speech is called for, but many forget their own responsibility for what they say. Increasing hate speech is a threat to democracy, as fear excludes people from public debate. The role of information operations in feeding conflicts has become accentuated.

Phenomena and messages are simplified into black-and-white issues promoting confrontation and illiteracy. This is why, to fight disinformation, CSOs need new capabilities, clear messages and demonstration of effectiveness.

→ *The power of stories is enormous, and fighting fake news requires new skills for CSOs too*



Democracy, human rights and the rule of law are being questioned

THE RISE of conservative parties to power has strengthened movements opposing women's rights, abortion and contraception around the world. The questioning of human rights does not only apply to refugees or sexual rights: there is a great deal of volatile movement and increasing divergence of perspectives, and various types of attacks can be seen. It all comes down to the battle of distinct worldviews and values.

Citizens of rich and poor countries alike are more prepared than before to allow their civil rights to be narrowed down in order to gain something they want in exchange. For many countries, debt bondage to China means reductions in their own power of decision. In rich countries, people vote authoritarian leaders into power to protect their own standard of living. The COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination policy visibly demonstrated how global inequality is generated.

→ *An era of major value based questions*



PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTOS

The gap is growing larger

THE TREND towards increased inequality has been significant in recent years. This is facilitated by multiple overlapping crises. Climate justice must be guaranteed so that the price of the measures, or the absence of measures, will not accumulate on those who are the most vulnerable. During the pandemic alone, we have been put back by more than 20 years on the Sustainable Development Goals. The root causes of problems are largely similar around the world, starting from the predominant economic system.

In addition to the North-South divide, inequalities within countries have also exploded. Human life expectancy, which can be regarded as one of the most important indicators of wellbeing, has declined in many countries – for example, to a significant extent in the United States. Mental health problems, fear of the future and climate anxiety are affecting the minds of young people in particular. Having to deal with multiple existential crises at the same time challenges our understanding and our faith in the future but may also create new manifestations of solidarity and expose silenced structural problems.

→ *Achieving sustainable development requires major measures to reverse inequalities*

