

Draft Concept Note

Southern Voice Conference 2025: Reimagining the Global Development Architecture

27-28th October, Transamérica Prime International Plaza, São Paulo, Brazil.

Co-hosts: [Plataforma CIPÓ](#) & [The Institute of Applied Economic Research \(IPEA\)](#)

Partner: [São Paulo Municipal Secretariat of International Relations \(SMRI\)](#)

Introduction

In October 27-28 2025, Southern Voice will host its biennial conference in São Paulo, Brazil, convening leaders from across its network of 71 think tanks from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The conference brings Global South think tanks and Southern Voice partners together to translate research and evidence into transformative influence on international development, using the knowledge we produce to actively reimagine the global development architecture.

The current global landscape is marked by volatility, fragmentation, and contested narratives. Traditional power structures have long been characterised by asymmetry and exclusion, with dynamics of mistrust and inequity that have persisted for decades. Today, these flaws are increasingly exposed: multilateral frameworks face declining legitimacy, development assistance is declining, and cracks in the system are visible everywhere.

With the pressing need to rethink the global development architecture, and five years remaining until the 2030 SDG deadline, this event comes at a pivotal moment. Early discussions are already underway about what should follow the current agenda, and there is a clear opportunity — and responsibility — to ensure that the future of global development is shaped by diverse experiences, grounded in research and realities from the Global South.

Approach: Southern-Led, Evidence-Driven, Action-Oriented

This conference embodies a fundamental approach to international development discourse. It is Southern-led, Southern-driven, and Southern-majority—a space where Global South perspectives are not merely included but are central to every discussion. We harness the insights and expertise of Southern institutions to shape global discourse, drawing from cross-country experiences as we navigate uncertainty together.

The conference is designed to move from analysis to action, from diagnosis to design. The sessions focus decisively on what we collectively want to build, consolidating agendas and proposing solutions to the problems that exist in prevailing development models. Through strategically designed plenary sessions and targeted parallel sessions, participants will engage in high-level dialogue that transforms research evidence into concrete influence strategies.

Programme Structure

The conference spans two days (27-28 October 2025). Every element is designed to generate actionable outcomes that will influence development policy and practice globally.

Main Plenary Sessions

Four plenaries will convene all attendees to collectively reflect, through the conference, on priorities, vision, and implementation:

1. Southern Priorities for Development Leadership - This session will aim to identify some of the challenges that we want to focus on as a network, in the coming years. The session will involve an overview of the global political landscape, at the United Nations level and beyond. Building on this, we will discuss together **priority issues and opportunities for influence and action** over the next years for the global development landscape to better reflect the priorities and realities of countries of the Global South.

2. Southern Perspectives, Global Influence: Rethinking Our Role - This session offers a space to **critically examine the individual and collective roles of Southern think tanks** in the effort to reshape global development. This collaborative reflection aims to inspire new perspectives and strategies for driving meaningful change on a global scale. It will explore what it means to lead as a Southern collective in reimagining the development architecture amid declining trust in international systems and narrowing civic spaces.

3. Towards the Post-2030 Agenda: Shaping the Development Architecture - This plenary will focus on the future of the global development architecture beyond 2030. Less than five years from 2030, with most of the SDGs still far off track, this session will focus on **key elements of a vision for a development architecture** that will support further progress in the post-2030 period. It is about defining *where we influence* by ensuring that Southern perspectives shape the future of global development.

4. Collective Action: From Ideas to Implementation - This session will take stock of some of the conference's main insights, relating to what we should influence, and how we should influence it. It will aim to distill these conclusions into a **tangible set of steps** that the Southern Voice network and its partners can take in the coming years to advance our shared objectives. This closing discussion is about defining how we act — moving from vision and ideas to tangible influence and impact.

Parallel Sessions: Deep Engagement on Critical Issues

Four thematic tracks of three sessions each, offer deeper exploration of shared interests and emerging opportunities:

Track 1: Key Thematic Areas

- **A Global South Agenda on Climate: From Priorities to Action** - This session aims to bridge Southern priorities on climate with tangible policy impact by strategically reflecting on the Global South Agenda on Climate and collectively transforming key priorities into actionable policy recommendations for global stakeholders.
- **Financial Resilience through Strong, Inclusive Economies** - This session aims to discuss inefficiencies in the current financial system, focusing on identifying overlaps, underfunded areas, and strategies for more effective resource utilization, while advocating for increased financing.
- **Bridging Divides: Collaborative Approaches to Combating Inequality** - This session aims to discuss intersectionalities of gender, economic, and racial inequality, exploring how to mainstream solutions into development agendas through narrative development, bridge-building, and strategic action.

Track 2: Transforming the Development Agenda and Architecture

- **Examining the Future of International Development Cooperation:** This session will examine development cooperation, including traditional aid and innovative partnerships, to reimagine the international development architecture for more equitable and effective global outcomes.
- **Leveraging South-South Partnerships for a Sustainable Future** - This session will explore the crucial role of partnerships within the Global South as a means to advance development, focusing on collaborative efforts in knowledge and policy to foster sustainable and impactful solutions.
- **An Agenda for the Global South: Integrating Lessons for an Improved Post-2030 Framework** - This session aims to examine key lessons from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their implementation to develop recommendations for a just, effective, and resilient post-2030 development agenda, grounded in Global

South perspectives.

Track 3: Equity in Research, Evidence Use, and Innovation

- **Innovative Approaches to Success for Think Tanks** - This session explores how Global South think tanks can innovate in research, operations, and fundraising, towards enhancing overall effectiveness and resilience.
- **ACT4Equity: Action for Equity in Research for Development** - This session aims to advance equity in research for development through a Southern-led vision and action-oriented framework, fostering equitable partnerships and systemic change.
- **From Evidence to Action: Strategies & Enablers** - This session aims to introduce key learnings from Southern Voice's Challenge Fund project's Evidence to Action (E2A) journeys and facilitate a dialogue on participants' experiences, reflecting on the implications for funding.

Track 4: Regional Meetings: This track will focus on regional cooperation across various topics of the 3 Southern Voice regions - Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Additional Programme Elements

- **Public Event:** "Empowering the Global South: Shaping the Future of Development in a Shifting World" - An open panel discussion followed by a cocktail reception.
- **Townhall:** A forum for members and partners to reflect on conference discussions and shape the network's strategic direction.

Conference Agenda

Date	Time	Activity
Monday, 27 October 2025		
08:00–09:00	Registration	Check-in
09:00–09:15	Welcome Address	—
09:15–10:30	Southern Priorities for Development Leadership	Plenary
10:30–11:00	Networking Activity	Guided Networking
11:00–11:30	Coffee Break	—
11:30–12:45	Parallel Breakout Sessions - Track 1: Key Thematic Areas	Breakouts (x3)
12:45–14:00	Lunch	—
14:00–15:15	Towards the Post-2030 Agenda: Shaping the Development Architecture	Plenary

15:15- 15:45	Coffee Break	—
15:45- 17:00	Parallel Breakout Sessions - Track 2: Transforming the Development Agenda and Architecture	Breakouts (x3)
17:00–17:15	Break	—
17:15–18:30	Public Event – Empowering the Global South: Shaping the Future of Development in a Shifting World	Plenary
18:30–20:00	Cocktail Event	Networking
Tuesday, 28 October 2025		
08:00–09:00	Welcome & Registration	Check-in
09:00–09:15	Introduction to Day 2	—
09:15–10:30	Southern Perspectives, Global Influence: Rethinking Our Role	Plenary
10:30–11:00	Coffee Break	—
11:00–12:15	Parallel Breakout Sessions - Track 3: Equity in Research, Evidence Use, and Innovation	Breakouts (x3)
12:15–13:15	Regional Meetings: Track 4	Regional Sessions
13:15–14:30	Lunch	—
14:30–15:45	Collective Action: From Ideas to Implementation	Plenary
15:45–16:15	Coffee Break	—
16:15–17:30	Closing Town Hall	Plenary
17:30-20:00	Cultural Activity	Available Activities