

Reimagining Development:

A Call to Cocreate Our Future
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Summary

Against the backdrop of donor retrenchment, climate crises, and geopolitical shifts, African leaders are charting a new course to reshape global health development. Anchored by the 2025 Accra Health Sovereignty Summit and the Africa-led Accra Compact, learn how African countries are advancing locally led, cocreated models grounded in sovereignty, accountability, and inclusion. Civil society, youth, financing innovators, and governments are building practical pathways to resilient systems. Africa is moving from dependency to leadership – and partners are invited to walk alongside, cocreating solutions.

The time to reimagine development in Africa is now. As pandemics, climate change, and other sweeping changes converge, Africa's development future demands fresh imagination and leadership. This reimagining must move beyond top-down prescriptions and become an Africa-led transformation, cocreated and rooted in local agency, accountability, and inclusion. Development innovation demands a collective voice, shared purpose, and practical pathways that deepen self-reliance while keeping international solidarity in its rightful supporting role ([World Economic Forum](#)).



From Patients to Architects: Setting the Stage for Change

The Africa Health Sovereignty Summit in Accra, held in August 2025, marked a catalytic moment for the continent. Heads of state and health leaders called for a redesign of global health governance so African countries can move from being “patients” of the system to architects of their own health future.

Building on this momentum, the Africa-led Accra Compact (also known as the SUSTAIN Initiative) emerged as a roadmap owned by the continent. What sets it apart from past declarations is its explicit design as a pan-African framework: pairing high-level political endorsement, including an Africa-wide Presidential Task Force, with practical mechanisms to strengthen national ownership of health systems, mobilize domestic resources, attract private capital, and reset global partnerships. The goal is clear: enable African countries to expand financing sovereignty while maintaining conventional external support where it adds value. This is not simply aspirational language, but a governance and finance compact designed to realign incentives and instruments in service of Africa's health sovereignty.



Shrinking Aid Budgets Make Reimagining Urgent

The policy window for reform has been widened by sudden donor retrenchment. Recent donor contractions and changes in bilateral budgets demonstrate that aid volatility is no longer a hypothetical risk. It is abrupt and severe. This turbulence should not lead to retreat, but rather underscore the urgency of doubling down on domestic resource mobilization, diversifying financing sources (private, philanthropic, pooled regional instruments), and building resilient institutions that are less vulnerable to single-source shocks.

Put simply: Shrinking aid budgets underline the case for faster, more concrete shifts in how development is financed and governed ([Financial Times](#)).

Together with Global Health Visions, RTA & Associates has shaped five bold strategies that reimagine development and chart a path toward more effective impact.



1. Centering Civil Society and the Right to Be Heard

Reimagined development must place civil society at the center as watchdog, codesigner, service partner, and bridge to citizens. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are vital for accountability, evidence-based decision-making, local mobilization, and translating policy into practice. Yet too often they report being sidelined in the major global financing fora. Strengthening civic energy, CSO capacity, and meaningful entry points in policy design and oversight are not optional add-ons, but foundational to lasting transformation ([CIVICUS Global Alliance](#), [Reuters](#)).



2. Youth as Strategic Actors in Development

Africa's growing young population is not only a demographic fact; it is a strategic asset. But only if policies and platforms intentionally include young people in decision-making, entrepreneurship, and civic life. Any reimagined development agenda that overlooks youth voices and agency risks missing its greatest multiplier. We must design participation pathways, inclusive employment strategies, and cocreation platforms that enable youth to shape solutions – from digital public goods to community health and sustainable jobs ([United Nations Population Fund](#)).



3. Communicating for Reach, Trust, and Resilience

Communication strategies matter. Digital and social channels are powerful for rapid reach, engagement, and scaling local voices – but they are double-edged. Heavy reliance on social media increases exposure to misinformation and disinformation, and algorithms can easily amplify polarizing or false content. At the same time, social media does not reach everyone (especially offline communities, older adults, and those with limited connectivity). Effective communication therefore requires a blended approach: use social platforms to amplify authentic local voices, and invest in community radio, road shows for hard-to-reach communities, trusted local media, SMS (i.e., text messaging), town halls, and intermediaries that can verify and translate messages for everyday people. A robust communication strategy must also integrate counter-disinformation measures, strengthen media literacy, and prioritize locally trusted channels ([African Business](#), [Africa Center](#)).



4. Coproducing Knowledge for Local Resilience

Knowledge coproduction – where community knowledge, policy analysis, and academic research are integrated – offers solutions that are both actionable and culturally relevant. This requires funding

longer-term participatory research, backing community-led monitoring, and building platforms where multiple epistemologies (scientific, indigenous, practitioner) are treated as complementary rather than hierarchical. Only in this way can truly resilient and context-appropriate programs take root.



5. Feminist Philanthropy and Community Financing

Reimagining financing also means recognizing the many everyday forms of giving – from women's mutual aid to diaspora remittances and local philanthropic networks. Initiatives such as Adɔye, Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment, showcase how women's philanthropy weaves dignity, agency, and local priorities into funding ecosystems. Scaling and adapting these practices (match funds, revolving funds, community trusts, remittance linked instruments) can diversify resources and anchor them in social solidarity (cpsi.co.za).



Where Change is Already Underway

Several African countries and policy experiments offer tangible, action-oriented lessons:

- Ghana, which hosted the Health Sovereignty Summit and is advancing the Accra/SUSTAIN frameworks and pushing a visible political process to recast health finance and governance (presidency.gov.gh, [Ghanaian Times](https://www.ghanatimes.org)).
- Rwanda has sustained investment in digital public infrastructure, health systems strengthening, and domestic revenue mobilization to underpin services and innovation – a long-standing example of an intentional development pathway ([TIME](https://www.time.com)).
- Morocco has explicitly rethought its development model with structural reforms and new industrial plans that tie investment, infrastructure, and social priorities together. Policymakers provide useful lessons on strategy design and state capacity to implement long-term shift ([IMF eLibrary](https://www.imf.org)).

These models are imperfect, but they illustrate that serious national conversations and policy designs are in progress - with lessons to adapt.



Putting Ideas into Practice: Guardrails for Change

Translating these ideas into actionable steps means:

- Negotiating compacts that link political commitment with measurable financing roadmaps and transparency mechanisms (as the Accra approach seeks to do) ([Center For Global Development](https://www.cgdev.org)).
- Funding civil society and youth participation explicitly, so cocreation is properly resourced rather than treated as optional ([CIVICUS Global Alliance](https://www.civicus.org), [United Nations Population Fund](https://www.un.org)).
- Designing blended, predictable financing tools that reduce reliance on single donors and buffer against abrupt cuts ([Financial Times](https://www.ft.com)).
- Pairing modern digital communications with local community-level outreach and active counter-disinformation countermeasures ([African Business](https://www.africanbusiness.com), [Africa Center](https://www.africacenter.org)).



Toward a Shared Reimagined Future

Development is not only a technical exercise; it is a political and social process involving power, voice, and shared purpose. Sovereignty without inclusion is hollow, and finance without accountability is fragile. If we are to “reimagine” development, we must do it together – governments, civil society, youth, philanthropists, the private sector, and the communities that will live with the results.

This is the ethos we will carry into our September 30th webinar on Reimagining Development: a space for reflecting, sharing, and cocreation with policymakers, practitioners, funders, and community leaders. The goal is to generate practical ideas, policy strategies, and actionable steps to foster resilient and locally-led development.

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