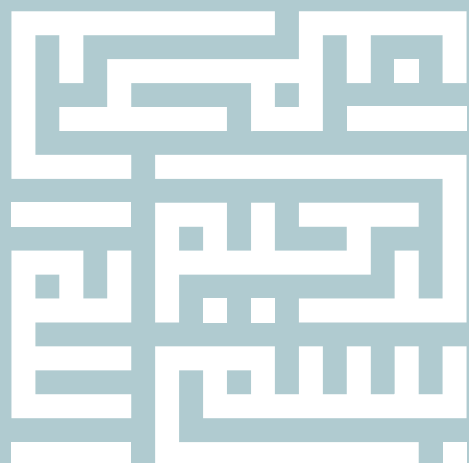


THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

The Kingdom of **Saudi**
Arabia's Transition

From Aid to
Integrated Solutions





The Evolving Development Paradigm

ADVANCING INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The global development landscape is undergoing a fundamental shift. Traditional, top-down donor models are increasingly insufficient to address the complex, interconnected challenges facing the Global South, particularly the widening SDG investment gap. To achieve sustainable economic resilience, the international community must pivot toward integrated development solutions grounded in mutual benefit and peer-to-peer knowledge transfer.

This evolution requires robust frameworks like South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation, which prioritize the sovereignty and specific demands of developing nations. The 70-year trajectory of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia delineates the operational architecture required to transition from discretionary aid to strategic partnership. The Kingdom's model offers a definitive guide on executing modern global development, combining scalable financing with horizontal respect for national sovereignty.

Evolution of Institutional Frameworks for South-South Cooperation



Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA, 1978) - First UN framework for South-South Cooperation.

BAPA+40 (2019) - Reaffirmed the role of South-South cooperation in achieving the SDGs.

Nairobi Outcome Document (2009): of the High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

Intergovernmental Review of the Implementation of BAPA+40 (2027): Intergovernmental Review of the implementation of the Buenos Aires Outcome Document of the second High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation.

A Legacy of Action

DISTILLING SEVEN DECADES OF INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Saudi Arabia's seven decades of global engagement have generated a highly specialized body of institutional knowledge that has transformed the Kingdom from voluntary provider of development financing into voluntary provider of integrated development solutions. Central to this evolution is the principle of sovereignty of demand: Saudi cooperation delivers the greatest impact when projects are strictly aligned with partner governments' own national visions and priorities.

Experience across humanitarian and development initiatives has also created opportunities for stronger humanitarian-development linkages in fragile and crisis-affected settings. By linking King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre's (KSrelief) immediate life-saving interventions with the Saudi Fund for Development's (SFD) longer-term development finance for infrastructure and basic services investments, the Kingdom helps ensure that short-term relief builds a direct foundation for long-term economic self-reliance and reduced aid dependency for its partner nations in the Global South.

Historical Trajectory

FROM SOLIDARITY TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (1950-2026)

Saudi Arabia's engagement in South-South Cooperation is characterized by a 70-year evolution of institutionalized solidarity, maturing into a partnership-driven approach that preceded the rise of many formal multilateral frameworks. Since the 1950s, the Kingdom has consistently maintained levels of development financing that frequently exceed traditional OECD-DAC

"A model rooted in solidarity, mutual benefit and respect for national sovereignty."

1950s

Saudi Arabia begins supporting developing countries through bilateral assistance.

1974

Creation of the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), one of the oldest development finance institutions in the Global South.

2015

Foundation of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre's (KSrelief).

2016

Launch of Vision 2030, linking international development with economic diversification and global partnerships.

performance, reaching a historic global peak in 2014 with USD 14.5 billion in ODA, representing 1.9% of the Kingdom's GNI. The Kingdom's cumulative commitment exceeding USD 141 billion across 173 countries demonstrates how a nation from the Global South can act as a primary economic anchor for other developing economies.

By evolving from the discretionary support of the 1950s into the highly structured, project-based financing framework institutionalized by the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) in 1974, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) established an operational blueprint for South-South cooperation based on the principles of solidarity, mutual benefit and respect for national sovereignty.

Under the strategic framework of Vision 2030, launched in 2016, Saudi Arabia further systematized its international engagement, expanding SFD's sectoral reach to over 100 countries across infrastructure, energy, water and education, while investing in triangular cooperation platforms with UN agencies and multilateral partners.

SFD's role in South-South and triangular cooperation is also increasingly reflected in its institutional partnerships. SFD and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) signed an Memorandum of Understanding covering joint financing, policy coordination, capacity development and exchange of expertise to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation under the "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Global Expertise" initiative.

This trajectory shows that KSA is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between traditional donor models and demand-driven approaches responsive to the needs of the Global South. In doing so, it offers an advanced model of South-South Cooperation – one that combines scalable development financing with peer-to-peer respect for sovereignty and can be adapted by other provider nations. This historical trajectory is not merely a record of past performance; it also provides a practical blueprint for development actors seeking to integrate scale, sovereignty and sustainability.

"Knowledge, capacity and expertise are becoming as important as financing."



+ 141 billion

Saudi Arabia's cumulative development commitment across 173 countries.



KSrelief implement projects to address water-related challenges across the global south.

Institutional Foundations

DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN DELIVERY PILLARS: SFD AND KSRELIEF

The Kingdom advances its commitment to global solidarity through the complementary strengths of the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), its principal development finance institution, and King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief), its humanitarian assistance arm. Through its interventions, KSrelief promotes the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus by linking emergency response with long-term recovery and sustainable development.

Since its establishment in 1974, SFD has built a strong development finance track record across partner countries, utilizing its technical expertise to oversee more than 800 critical infrastructure projects that support economic growth. Working in concert, KSrelief delivers rapid, high-impact humanitarian assistance that transitions into long-term recovery and development when paired with SFD's infrastructure investments. This dual-pillar approach ensures that the Kingdom's resources provide both immediate support and lasting foundations for partner nations to achieve their development ambitions.



Examples of Saudi Arabia's Global Water Assistance Efforts.



800+

Critical infrastructure projects
financed by Saudi Fund for
Development (SFD).



152

projects implemented by KSrelief
worth over \$400 million to
enhance global water security.

Saudi Arabia as Knowledge and Technical Excellence Pillar

A hallmark of the Saudi Model is the active participation of a wide range of its entities as providers of world-leading expertise. Under the strategic umbrella of Vision 2030, entities such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA), and the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) have become global centers of excellence for innovation. The Kingdom does not merely provide development financing; it also transfers methodologies that have enabled demonstrable efficiencies in various sectors. Through this knowledge-sharing model, the Kingdom enables its partners to adopt cutting-edge Saudi solutions.

Multi-country Sectoral Platforms

EXAMPLES OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION INITIATIVES

Multi country South-South Cooperation platforms enable KSA to aggregate the needs and capacities of multiple developing nations into single cooperative frameworks, multiplying the developmental reach and impact of Kingdom's resources across entire regions and thematic communities. These initiatives position KSA as convener, platform provider and, knowledge hub and capacity builder, rather than a mere donor, with Saudi ministries, public institutions, and private sector, sharing integrated packages of finance, technology and implementation know-how.

Saudi institutions contributing technical expertise and innovation, includes the following:



FROM DONOR TO PLATFORM PROVIDER



Partnerships

Finance



Expertise

Technology



Global impact

CYBERSECURITY CAPACITY BUILDING UN - KSA SCALED GLOBAL INITIATIVE

Announced in October 2025 at the Global Cybersecurity Forum in Riyadh, the UN-KSA Global Initiative for Capacity Building in Cyberspace addresses a worldwide shortage of 2.8 million cybersecurity professionals. Implementation is led by KSA's National Cybersecurity Authority, Saudi Information Technology Company (SITE), and the Global Cybersecurity Forum, in partnership with UN agencies (UNDP, UN Office on Disarmament Affairs, UNODC, UNICRI, UNIDIR) and INTERPOL. The initiative delivers expert-led workshops, training programs, international simulations, and cyber drills targeting policy practitioners, law enforcement, and cyber diplomats globally, particularly in developing countries. UN Secretary-General António Guterres recognized KSA's leadership in ensuring cyberspace serves the common good through inclusive skill-building.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A PUBLIC GOOD FOR THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Saudi Arabia has emerged as a leading provider of knowledge and institutional expertise in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), extending beyond financial support to the transfer of nationally developed AI architectures, governance frameworks, and applied digital solutions adaptable across countries of the Global South. In this context, the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) plays a central role in advancing international cooperation and positioning AI as a driver of inclusive and sustainable development through initiatives focused on capacity building, technical cooperation, knowledge exchange, and responsible AI governance.

Through SDAIA, the Kingdom established the International Centre for Artificial Intelligence Research and Ethics (ICAIRE) in Riyadh under the auspices of UNESCO, as the region's first international center dedicated to AI research



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Nations announce the Global Initiative for Capacity Building in Cyberspace at the Global Cybersecurity Forum Annual Meeting, Riyadh, October 2025.

2.8M Global shortage of cybersecurity professional addressed by the UN-KSA Global Initiative for Capacity Building in Cyberspace.



Saudi Arabia, UNESCO and ICAIRE sign a trilateral agreement in Riyadh, officially designating ICAIRE as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre dedicated to AI research and ethics, September 2024.

and ethics. ICAIRE supports international cooperation in responsible AI through research, policy development, awareness initiatives, and global capacity-building programs. Among its flagship initiatives is “Elevate,” launched in partnership with leading technology companies, including Google and Microsoft, to strengthen women’s participation in the digital economy through advanced AI and digital skills training. The initiative aims to train 25,000 women globally and has already reached more than 6,000 participants from over 60 countries, particularly across the Global South.

Saudi Arabia further continues to strengthen its role as a global convener through the Global AI Summit (GAIN), which has become a leading international platform for shaping the future of artificial intelligence and advancing dialogue on responsible AI development. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate the Kingdom’s growing role as both a provider of AI knowledge and a convener for international cooperation, advancing SDG-aligned digital transformation and inclusive technological development across the Global South.

FORWARD7 CLEAN COOKING - MULTI COUNTRY ENERGY ACCESS HUB

Launched in 2021 as part of the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI), Forward7 aims to provide cleaner cooking solutions, including Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), solar power, and biogas, to millions of people around the world.

This Initiative is dedicated to offering solutions to communities facing energy access challenges globally, many of whom face dire consequences due to traditional and hazardous cooking practices, such as the usage of coal and wood usage. These clean cooking solutions have the potential to save countless lives by mitigating the risks associated with these traditional practices.



Part of the Elevate initiative, which aims to train 25,000 women in artificial intelligence across more than 60 countries.



Forward7 Clean Cooking Award, launched by Saudi Arabia to accelerate access to clean and sustainable cooking solutions in underserved communities worldwide.

ACWA GLOBAL CLEAN ENERGY PORTFOLIO – CORPORATE TECHNICAL DIPLOMACY

Within the national energy ecosystem overseen by the Ministry of Energy and supported by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), Acwa operates as a corporate vehicle for voluntary South-South cooperation in clean energy and desalination. By 2024-2025, ACWA Power had signed around USD 10 billion in new clean energy agreements, adding to approximately USD 7 billion already deployed across African markets and a USD 1 billion facility with IFC for African projects on a voluntary basis.

Through projects such as the Redstone concentrated solar power plant in South Africa, the Kom Ombo solar photovoltaic (PV) project in Egypt and a pipeline of roughly 1,500 MW of wind capacity in Uzbekistan, Acwa channels Saudi capital and advanced technologies into grids across partner countries. The company, working closely with the Ministry of Energy, couples these investments with training academies and structured programmes for local engineers and technicians, sharing detailed design, operation and maintenance know-how for Concentrating Solar Power (CSP), Photovoltaic (PV) and desalination systems so that partner utilities internalize transferable technical standards and build their own sustainable capacity.

The Facilitated Scaling Model

KSA'S WATER PROGRAMMES IN AFRICA AND ASIA

The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) have established a multi country water security and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) portfolio that channels Saudi financing and technical expertise to



Improved waste management services are helping strengthen public health and living conditions for more than 185,000 people.

USD 10 billion

New clean energy agreements
signed by ACWA Power in
2024–2025.



SFD, UNDP Sign MoU to Support Water
Security in Africa.

fragile communities in Africa and Asia, notably in Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Mali and Ghana. In Sudan, this engagement is formalized through the KSrelief – UNDP programme on “Support and Empowerment in the Water and Sanitation Sector in Sudan”, which delivers rehabilitated water infrastructure and sanitation services to conflict-affected communities, exemplifying the Kingdom’s capacity to maintain sustained WASH programming in fragile and crisis-affected settings through UN-facilitated delivery channels. By 2023, KSA’s official development assistance reached USD 5.2 billion (0.51 percent of GNI), and KSrelief’s water and sanitation operations represent a significant share of this outward facing support.

Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) oversees the Saudi Program for Drilling of Wells and Rural Development in Africa, a Saudi grant-financed programme implemented through SFD to expand safe water access in rural communities, including borehole drilling, solar-powered pumping systems, and related water distribution infrastructure. This integrated modality is further institutionalized through the SFD-UNDP “Sustainable Access to Water for Rural Communities” project - a dedicated programmatic framework through which Saudi concessional finance and UNDP’s technical coordination capacity are jointly deployed to expand sustainable rural water access in drought-affected communities across the Global South.

KSrelief’s humanitarian WASH operations and SFD’s longer-term development water investments are designed to function as a complementary architecture: in Somalia, the SFD-UNDP water security project signed in February 2025 – a USD 2 million initiative constructing ten solar-powered boreholes for 120,000 drought-affected people, operates alongside KSrelief’s active humanitarian WASH interventions in the same country, concretely operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus through which immediate relief and longer-term development investment reinforce rather than substitute for each other.

Saudi engineers and WASH specialists work alongside local authorities and partners such as UNDP and UN Habitat to transfer know how on borehole siting,

“Immediate relief and long-term development investment reinforce rather than substitute for each other.”

0.51% of GNI dedicated to official development assistance in 2023.



Redstone concentrated solar thermal power (CSP) project is a 100MW integrated CSP plant being developed in South Africa.

solar pump sizing, water quality monitoring and community-based operation and maintenance, creating a practical South-South knowledge transfer cooperation mechanism where Saudi expertise underpins sustainable water access for clusters of partner nations. Saudi Arabia's domestic experience in water sector reform further strengthens this contribution, offering partner countries practical lessons in integrated water resources management, governance, innovation, and investment mobilization, particularly in arid and water-stressed settings.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT CATALYZING RENEWABLE ENERGY

Complementing corporate-scale clean energy investments, the KSrelief - UNDP "Empowering Yemeni Women Catalyzing Renewable Energy" project operationalizes the gender dimension of Saudi Arabia's energy cooperation in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Signed on the sidelines of the 79th United Nations General Assembly in New York, the USD 2.5 million initiative - funded by KSrelief and implemented by UNDP in partnership with the local For All Foundation - directly addresses the intersection of energy poverty, gender inequality, and humanitarian need in Yemen.

The project establishes 375 women-led micro-enterprises producing and marketing solar-powered household devices - including lanterns, stoves, and traditional ovens (Tanurs) - while providing 375 women in Hadramawt (Al-Qatn) and Lahj (Al-Qabbaytah) governorates with structured vocational training in solar energy applications, business management, and life skills. Combining KSrelief's humanitarian delivery mandate with UNDP's technical coordination and local civil society partnerships to generate sustainable livelihoods outcomes that extend well beyond the immediate humanitarian response - reinforcing the Kingdom's commitment to demand-driven, gender-responsive, and results-oriented development cooperation.



The Karakalpakstan 1500 MW Wind + BESS project is a greenfield Independent Power Project IPP that is developed by ACWA Power.

USD 2.5M KSrelief-funded initiative for women and renewable energy in Yemen.

375 women trained in solar energy and business in Yemen.



Women empower thousands of families through renewable energy, supported by KSrelief and UNDP.

EXAMPLES OF SAUDI ARABIA'S TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

Triangular Cooperation represents a distinct operational paradigm where KSA partners with a multilateral organization that provide technical coordination, international legitimacy, and global reach. In this model, multilateral institutions act as a facilitating partner, KSA as the pivotal partner providing expertise and resources, and the partner nations in the Global South are the beneficiary partners.

GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY - POLIO ERADICATION AND DISEASE CONTROL

KSA's USD 500 million pledge to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), announced in April 2024 and reaffirmed in February 2025, exemplifies triangular cooperation where KSA has been recognized for its critical political, social, technical and financial contributions.

The Kingdom funds the initiative through WHO (USD 300 million) and UNICEF (USD 200 million), which serve as facilitating partners managing vaccination campaigns across Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Gaza targeting wild poliovirus elimination and variant outbreaks.

The partnership enables annual vaccination of 370 million children while transferring technical expertise in mass vaccination delivery, cold chain management, disease surveillance, and health worker training to endemic countries.



H.E. Faisal Alibrahim, Minister of Economy and Planning participates in Bridging Gaps and Triangular Cooperation session at G20 Development Meeting.

USD 500 M+

contribution to global polio eradication efforts.



Saudi Arabia, represented by KSrelief, participates in marking World Polio Day to contribute to eradicate polio worldwide.

EDUCATION RECONSTRUCTION - YEMEN'S MULTI-SECTORAL TRANSFORMATION

Yemen's education reconstruction through SDRPY (Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen) represents a sophisticated triangular model. A December 2025 partnership agreement among KSA's Ministry of Education, UNESCO, and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) allocated USD 40 million, including USD 30 million from KSA for Yemen's education sector. The framework funds construction of 56 educational projects across 11 governorates - including 30 model schools, Yemen's first advanced forensic research laboratory, and medical/nursing faculties - while training 150 young women as rural teachers. UNESCO and GPE bring international standards, monitoring capacity, and co-financing that extend the developmental impact of Saudi resources and expertise.

MARITIME WORKFORCE: SCALING SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS GLOBAL SHORTAGE

The NextWave Seafarers Project, launched in February 2025, demonstrates innovation in triangular cooperation. KSA (through Bahri Shipping Line), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS) form a three-party partnership addressing a global seafarer shortage of 200,000 annually. The model provides 20 cadets from LDCs/SIDS with one-year onboard training aboard Bahri vessels, acquiring STCW (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping) certification aligned with international maritime standards. IMO provides technical oversight, global coordination, and certification validation, enabling the project's proof-of-concept design for replication by other countries and shipping companies.



Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SDRPY) implements projects to support local schools.

56 education projects across 11 governorates.

USD 40M allocated to Yemen's education sector.



IMO Secretary-General Mr. Arsenio Dominguez (right) welcomed the NextWave Seafarers pilot project and encouraged other countries to join.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT - FAO RECOGNITION

In 2024, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia received the Technical Recognition Award from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for “South-South and Triangular Cooperation.” The award honors the Sustainable Agricultural Rural Development Program (Saudi Reef), recognized as the world’s largest agricultural development initiative. Commended for its innovative projects and best practices that enhance food security and agri-food systems, the program reflects the Kingdom’s leadership in advancing the rural agricultural sector and its ability to build fruitful international partnerships.

Regional and Global Platforms

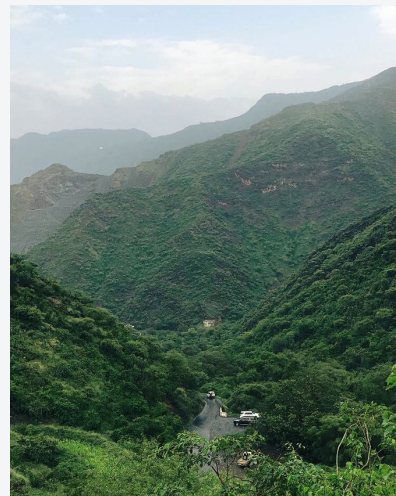
DCO, GWO, AND MGI AS MODELS FOR SYSTEMIC ENGAGEMENT

Beyond project-level triangular cooperation, the Kingdom hosts international organizations that coordinate international, regional and South-South cooperation across thematic domains. The Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), Global Water Organization (GWO), and Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) collectively represent a forward-looking architecture through which Saudi Arabia convenes peer nations, shares technical expertise, and coordinates collective action on digital transformation, water security, and climate resilience. These platforms position the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a systemic architect of multilateral cooperation frameworks grounded in Global South priorities.

Saudi Reef has empowered over 80,000 people nationwide, provided more than SAR 3 billion in direct aid across eight sectors, created over 70,000 jobs, planted more than 15 million seedlings, and supported the production of about 250 million kilograms of agricultural goods.

80,000+

people empowered through
Saudi Reef.



Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) is catalyzing a collaborative regional approach to combating climate change.



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