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Seminar Series

Global Development Challenges

5th February to
19th March 2026

9:00h - 17:00h

Iscte • Building III • AA3.29

Join the conversation on how power, inequality, decolonial thinking, and local action are reshaping global development in a rapidly changing world!

With the participation of:

Clara Carvalho | Miguel Vale de Almeida | Luís Bernardo | Ana Paula Fernandes
Sofia de Almeida | Thomas Muhr | Isabela Carvalho | Ana Luisa Silva | Susana Réfega



Seminar Series

Global Development Challenges

5th February 2026

15:00 - 17:00

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What is Power? Why it matters?



We are accustomed, as citizens, to think of "power" as something above us and distant from us: political power, economic power, great conflicts... Undoubtedly, these great structures and dynamics must always be taken into account and analyzed. But Power, as a dynamic of social relations and the structuring of the institutions in which we live, is much more dispersed, enveloping and plastic than those realities. In German, power is *macht* and that means that power is present in interpersonal, institutional and structural relationships and can be observed and analyzed in people's lives through what we call "agency", as well as through what we call "resistance". This seminar will pay attention to the "small acts of power" as well as the "small acts of resistance", using ethnographic examples that make everything more palpable.



Speaker

Miguel Vale de Almeida is Full Professor of Anthropology at ISCTE-Lisbon University Institute and Researcher at CRIA – Center for Research in Anthropology. With research in Portugal, Brazil, Spain, and Israel/Palestine, his work has focused on gender and sexuality, as well as on 'race' and ethnicity, and postcolonialism. He published several books, two of which in English: 'The Hegemonic Male', on masculinity, and 'An Earth-Colored Sea', on Portuguese colonialism and postcolonialism in Portuguese-speaking countries. As an LGBT rights' activist, he was a member of the Portuguese Parliament, instrumental in the passing of the equal marriage and gender identity laws.



Seminar Series

Global Development Challenges

12th February 2026

13:00 - 15:00

Iscte • Building III • AA3.29

Global Development and Business in the age of Breakdown



Where is global development going? What is business doing? These are key questions for an age of climate breakdown, economic upheaval and unsettled global economic relations, supply chains and production networks. In this seminar, I will discuss State-market-business relations as a key triangle in how we understand the birth and consolidation of neoliberal rule, its rise to hegemony and the current transformation under way. Global development has long neglected this triangle, but the intensification of corporate power over essential functions in the global economy merits a reassessment of where we are and where we might be going.



Speaker

Luís Pais Bernardo teaches at the School of Economics of the University of Coimbra and is a researcher at the Center for Studies on Africa and Development, ISEG Research. He is also head of Research and Innovation at EthosGov. His current interests include corporate power and global order, business and development cooperation, finance for development and infrastructure in geoeconomic competition. Some of his readings:

1. The Long, Slow Death of Global Development - American Affairs Journal
2. How asset managers came to own everything and you failed to notice - The Rhodes Center Podcast with Mark Blyth



Seminar Series Global Development Challenges

26th February 2026

11:00 - 13:00 | 14:00 - 16:00

Iscte • Building III • AA3.29

Empowering Women: Discussing the agendas of Gender and Development



This seminar examines the historical, theoretical, and political construction of the global Gender and Development (GAD) agenda, with particular attention to the role of the United Nations system. It focuses on how the international agendas on women - and gender - were built and how they determined development programs and projects. Drawing on decolonial perspectives, students will assess the limits of dominant empowerment discourses and consider what a decolonized and context-responsive UN gender agenda might entail.



Speaker

Clara Carvalho is an Associate Professor (with Habilitation) at Iscte-IUL, with a 30 years' experience of researching in African contexts on development policies including gender, education and health. She was president of AEGIS (European Association of African Studies) and director of the Centre of African Studies/ Centre of International Studies at ISCTE-IUL.

<https://ciencia.iscte-iul.pt/authors/clara-carvalho/cv>



Seminar Series

Global Development Challenges

5th March 2026

11:00 - 13:00

Iscte • Building III • AA3.29

Decolonising Global Development



This seminar critically introduces concepts, debates and practices around decolonising development. Within a historical approach, we will engage with meanings and representations of the 'global South', 'global development' and 'global coloniality' while exploring decolonising development through South-South cooperation and participatory action research.



Speaker

Thomas Muhr is Integrated Researcher at the Centre for International Studies (CEI-Iscte) and Invited Assistant Professor at the Iscte School of Social Sciences (ECSH). He is Principal Investigator on his project *#WillPortugalFall Behind? Portuguese Public Universities' Responses to the Global Challenge of Decolonising the Curriculum*, funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).



Seminar Series

Global Development Challenges

5th March 2026

14:00 - 16:00

Iscte • Building III • AA3.29

Social Entrepreneurship: Practice, Innovation and Sustainability



This seminar explores the field of social entrepreneurship through the analysis of how social entrepreneurs operate in practice, in contexts of social, economic, and/or institutional complexity across different regions of the world. It examines innovation as a central component of social enterprises and how social entrepreneurs address the challenges of building organizational models, achieving systemic impact, and sustaining solutions over time.



Speaker

Isabela Carvalho is the Director of Knowledge at Ashoka, a global organization that identifies and supports social entrepreneurs and changemakers worldwide. Over the past 15 years, Isabela has worked at the intersection of civil society, philanthropy, the private sector, and public policy, contributing to projects across the Americas, Europe, and Africa. She has collaborated with organizations such as the United Nations, WINGS – Worldwide Initiative for Grantmaker Support, and Yunus & Youth, working on topics including international development, democracy defense, human rights, youth empowerment, and the environment. Isabela holds a BA in Journalism (Brazil) and a MA in Communication and Social Impact (Spain). She currently splits her time between Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Washington, DC, USA.



Seminar Series Global Development Challenges

12th March 2026

11:00 - 13:00

Iscte • Building III • AA3.29

The localisation of aid: a new-old topic in international development



With strong links to the decolonisation agenda and long-standing debates about power hierarchies in international development, the localisation of aid is again at the center of the discussion in the post USAID world. We will explore the origins and evolution of the debate and discuss current threats and opportunities for civil society organisations.



Speaker

Ana Luísa Silva is a development studies researcher and visiting assistant professor at Iscte, in the Development Studies MA. She holds a PhD in Development Studies from the University of Lisbon, where her doctoral work explored the intersection of innovation, NGOs, and development cooperation. In 2021, she co-founded Oficina Global, a research-to-action initiative connecting civil society organisations with academia. As part of the ERC-funded AfDevLives project, her current research examines international aid to Mozambique's health sector, using donated vehicles as an entry point.



Speaker

Susana Réfega is a development practitioner and lecturer with over 20 years of experience in international development and civil society. She currently teaches as a visiting assistant professor at ISCTE, ISEG-UL, and Universidade Católica Portuguesa. She is a member of Oficina Global, a research-to-action initiative connecting civil society organisations with academia and holds a PhD in Cellular and Molecular Biology from Université Paris Descartes and a MA in Development, International Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid from the Faculty of Political Science at Sorbonne.



Seminar Series

Global Development Challenges

12th March 2026

15:00 - 17:00

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The Rising Paradigm Southern Providers



The global development architecture is undergoing a profound transformation as Southern providers—states and coalitions—emerge with distinct paradigms. Unlike the traditional Western aid model characterized by project-based finance, and donor–recipient hierarchies, Southern approaches emphasize mutual benefit, South–South solidarity, and non-interference in domestic policy. This seminar analyses how Southern providers are transforming development cooperation through distinctive institutional architectures, delivery models, and partnership frameworks.



Speaker

Ana Fernandes is special adviser at the Director's Office at the Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). She was President of the Development Cooperation, Language and Culture Agency- Camões IP in Portugal. More than 25 years of experience on development cooperation, having lived in 7 developing and emerging countries. She is an expert on development studies and international relations. She holds a MA in International Relations (University of Minho), a MA in Development Studies, African Studies (ISCTE – IUL), and a post-graduation in European studies (ISEG). Published two books on economic diplomacy and on development cooperation concepts, instruments and frameworks.