

The Change Alliance

A Global Learning Community on Multi-stakeholder Processes for Systemic Change

The Change Alliance in a Nutshell

The Change Alliance is an emerging global network of organizations and practitioners working to enhance the impact of multi-stakeholder processes for sustainability and good governance. It aims to link practitioners and leaders from business, government, NGOs, donors and research institutes to learn about, develop and strengthen capacity for achieving systemic change.

Responding to climate change; creating sustainable business models; tackling poverty; protecting the environment; overcoming conflicts; or coping with health and nutrition issues are all 'tough problems'. The Change Alliance is focused on how to tackle these tough problems and how to grasp the opportunities by integrating three recent developments.

One is looking at tough problems as challenges of coping with complexity, based on a systems understanding of our world. Our increasingly globalised economic, social and political systems and our natural environment are all highly complex. Problems have many interacting causes. Future consequences are hard to predict. Change is fast and taking action often leads to quite unexpected results. There are few 'simple' solutions.

The second development is rapid growth in the use of various forms of multi-stakeholder engagement through dialogues, round tables, new coalitions, social entrepreneurship and mechanisms for participatory governance. We can learn a lot from these new experiences.

Thirdly, new forms of communication and social networking, and increasingly widespread 'triple-bottom line' thinking offer many new opportunities for sustainable change, working with more and more like-minded people in all sectors.

Linking multi-stakeholder processes with systemic approaches and complexity thinking leads to change strategies that:

- are entrepreneurial and adaptive;
- create linkages and networks between different stakeholders;
- work with - rather than against - the complexity of human systems;
- facilitate creative learning and innovation;
- deal with issues of power and conflict;
- address goals of wealth and well being, environmental sustainability, social justice, and equity;
- are driven by ethical concerns about the future.

Examples discussed in the Change Alliance:

- Participatory budgeting in Brazil;
- Managing airport expansion in Germany;
- Rebuilding tribal relations in Kenya;
- Water governance in the Mekong River;
- Multi-stakeholder certification and assessment processes for food, forests, corporate impact and other issues;
- Reinventing community service delivery around Lake Victoria;
- Round tables on sustainable production;
- Promoting democratic political culture in the Caribbean;
- Regional policy change regarding informal cross-border trading in Southern Africa.

To realize the potential of initiatives based on such change strategies, there is need to further develop knowledge, capacity and political support. Developers, participants, and researchers of these initiatives are forming the **Change Alliance** to learn from one another and advance the field. We support:

- peer learning;
- deepening understanding;
- enhancing capacity;
- innovating and advancing systemic change practices;
- and promoting lessons learned.

More information:

info@changealliance.org

www.changealliance.org

<http://thechangealliance.ning.com>

Developments to date

The idea for the Change Alliance evolved from wide conversations between organisations who are engaged in multi-stakeholder learning and dialogue initiatives.

After initial networking and exploring the idea, a launch meeting for the Change Alliance was held in December 2009. Sixty people from around the world attended this event and it ended with a strong sense of enrichment and desire to continue and deepen the exchange and collaboration.

During 2010, the Alliance has been linking with organisations working on multi-stakeholder change processes in Africa. This culminated in the Inspiring Change Event, held in Nairobi in December. This led to a collaboration with the Southern Africa Trust, and a follow-up event in Johannesburg in April 2012.

In April 2011 a learning event on capacity challenges faced by NGOs in their partnerships with the private sector will take place, organized by the Change Alliance, in cooperation with PSO, ICCO and the Partnerships Resource Centre.



Members of the Change Alliance are exchanging experiences of their own work in complex multi-stakeholder settings. For example, three Dutch Change Alliance members engaged a learning trajectory on dealing with power dynamics in multi-stakeholder settings in 2012. Action research is going on with six NGOs featuring 12 cases in 9 countries, to support practice with critical reflection and action.

A website for the Alliance has been established (www.changealliance.org), and is linked to an online learning platform (<http://thechangealliance.ning.com>). Practitioners and leaders are connecting and discussing their strategies, methodologies and challenges.

Who is Engaging in the Alliance?

The Change Alliance has been initiated by a group of practitioners, policy makers, academics and NGO representatives who have been working on issues of multi-stakeholder collaboration, navigating complexity, and systemic change. Founding organizations include ICCO, Wageningen UR/CDI, SNV, IDS, PRIA, and the Generative Change Community¹. The Change

¹ Individuals who have been active to this point include:

Minu Hemmati is the author of the well known book 'Multi-stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability' and works independently on MSPs. She is also Chair of the Board of EcoAgriculture, and GenderCC - Women for Climate Justice.

Bettye Pruitt and *Philip Thomas* are involved in the Generative Change Community and the Society for Organizational Learning. They co-authored "Democratic Dialogue", published by UNDP, International IDEA et al. *Steve Waddell* is involved in several global networks (Networking Action, Global Action Networks) and recently published two books on systems change networks: 'Social Learning and Change' and 'Global Action Networks'.

Jim Woodhill has been active in the design, facilitation and evaluation of systemic change processes as director of the Centre for Development Innovation at Wageningen University & Research. He publishes regularly on multi-stakeholder processes and wrote several publications on institutional change, for example 'Chain Wide Learning for Inclusive Agri-food market development'.

Jethro Pettit works for the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and has published several articles on social change, learning and dialogue.

Hettie Walters is strategic advisor at ICCO (a Dutch NGO) and developed the programmatic approach in her organisation.

Jan Ubels is strategic advisor at SNV and co-edited 'Capacity Development in practice' (2010) and is head of the editorial committee of Capacity.org.

More information:

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Alliance concept has been actively discussed with a wide variety of organisations and individuals before and after the Launch Event in December 2009. Keen interest has been expressed along with a clear message that there is a need for such an initiative. Some 45 organizations from around the world involved in all aspects of sustainable development have expressed interested to engage with the Change Alliance, e.g. the Global Water Partnership, EcoAgriculture, IUCN, CDRA, the Forest Stewardship Council, Oxfam, ECDPM, IRC, Stockholm Environment Institute, GenderCC - Women for Climate Justice, Cordaid, AusAID, M-Power, World Water Forum, IDRC, and the Southern Africa Trust.

Emerging Ambitions

There is a **clear demand** for creating a forum for exchange of ideas, experiences and practices from those organisations the Change Alliance has engaged so far. Organisations want to draw on the Alliance in a practical way to improve their own work. They see the need for the Change Alliance to:

- 1) **Deepen understanding** of multi-stakeholder processes for systemic change;
- 2) **Build capacity** of organisations and individuals to support this;
- 3) Leverage **political support** and leadership to advocate the use of effective strategies;
- 4) **Advance effectiveness** of systemic change strategies.

A need for Professionalization

Professionalising the practice of designing, facilitating and evaluating these strategies is one of the most crucial ambitions of the Change Alliance. In order to do this, the core idea is to link concrete initiatives into the global learning network. The Change Alliance envisions development of:

- **Regional networks** in Africa, Asia and America. As a start, a kick-off Inspiring Change Event took place in Nairobi (Kenya) in December 2010, with representatives of organisations like the Global Water Partnership, IUCN, International Land Coalition, UN-FAO, SNV and some locally based organisations. For April 2012 a follow up Change Alliance event is being planned together with the Southern Africa Trust, and options are being explored for a similar event in Asia with PRIA (India). In Africa, the Change Alliance is preparing a network of practice supported by a hub, in partnership with the Southern Africa Trust.

- **Locally rooted Action Inquiry Initiatives** of on-going change processes, providing access to expertise and knowledge, financial support and a practitioner network. Through such inputs, the Alliance expects to strengthen and improve such initiatives and enable them to be developed, implemented and reflected upon with a depth and quality otherwise not possible.

- A **global learning platform** linking the Action Inquiry Initiatives to a wider group of practitioners, process experts, researchers and thought leaders. It will provide research, learning, knowledge management and capacity development functions that only become feasible and cost effective when supporting a wide network of partners.

"I am, personally very interested in getting a better understanding of alternative approaches to climate negotiations as one such multi-stakeholder process seeking to establish a new [form of] climate governance. We are currently locked in camps who behave more like a bunch of school kids on the play-ground than as parties to a really challenging common agenda ... A question I constantly ask myself in those circumstances is: to what extent do the current approaches of negotiation contribute to or stand in the way of a true multi-stakeholder process, and how could we create the enabling conditions that would make this process more efficient?"

E-mail to an Alliance member from a government official engaged in climate change negotiations.



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Championing and Developing the Change Alliance

All emerging networks require time to refine and explain ideas and build support, especially when resources are limited. ICCO and Wageningen UR - CDI have been providing seed funding to the Change Alliance, to initiate the network and establish the global learning platform. Those currently active in supporting the Change Alliance would like to see the network take a step further with the establishment of regional networks, action inquiry initiatives and global learning events. However, in order to do this there is a need for structural support, in the form of financial means and/or coordination and administration 'behind the scene'. This includes stimulating the network members and the establishment of actual sites for learning and reflection.

Given the interest that has been expressed, the founding members of the Change Alliance are now working to broaden the base of support. Conversations with a wider group of private sector actors, research institutes and private aid organisations are being held in order to strengthen the network. The aim is to increase the number of individuals and organisations participating, such as through the online platform. The conversations also aim to expand the Sponsorship Team of senior people that will support further development of the Change Alliance, see the work of the Alliance as closely aligned with their own interests and goals. The Team members will be people who can access resources (funding, funders, personal networks, opportunities, facilities). They will be individuals willing to provide advice and support crossing boundaries so the Change Alliance composition reflects its global, multi-stakeholder vision.

How can you engage?

As an individual you can join the Change Alliance through the web site. Anyone interested in learning and sharing about multi-stakeholder processes and system change is most welcome to become a member. By joining you will become part of network of others with similar interests, have access to an emerging set of resources and lessons learned, be able to participate in web-based discussions and webinars and you will be kept informed of upcoming events and progress of the Change Alliance.

If you would like your organisation to be a recognised partner of the Change Alliance please contact us at info@changealliance.org.

The Change Alliance is keen to link with a wide range of multi-stakeholder initiatives to help sharing and learning between them. If you are involved in such an initiative and would like to explore a linkage with the Change Alliance again contact us at info@changealliance.org.

And please, if you see some way that you or your organisation could provide support to help progress the ambitions of the Change Alliance please let us know.

More information: