

# The Change Alliance

## Launch Event – Summary of Findings

From 2-3 December 2009, over 60 development professionals, academics and development activist from all over the world gathered in Wageningen, the Netherlands, to launch The Change Alliance. This workshop brief summarizes the findings of the workshop: the expectations of the Alliance members, the learning agenda of the Alliance and proposed ways forward.

### Setting the stage

#### Opening and introductions

The Change Alliance launch event was officially opened by Hettie Walters (ICCO, and the chair woman of the foundation group of the Change Alliance) and Jim Woodhill (Wageningen UR - Centre for Development Innovation):

*"We are facing significant challenges like climate change, widespread poverty, limited access to water. How can we cope with these in more democratic and cooperative ways? There is an increasing interest for multi-stakeholder processes: bringing people together to cooperate effectively to address issues at hand. This increase raises some questions: How well do these processes work? Do they address deeper challenges? Do they truly and effectively inspire change?"*

In this light, the following objectives were set for the launch event of the Change Alliance:

1. Shape the future direction of alliance
2. Establish learning and action agenda: what are the big questions we face, which support do we need, what would enable us to become better?



3. Map actors, initiatives & concepts: define the boundaries of the initiative
4. Explore principles for engagement: define the core principles to move forward
5. Next steps: define what we need to do

- access to existing networks with legitimacy;
- practical experiences and cases to share and learn from;
- evidence that processes work to substantiate advocacy; and
- capacity development on process and facilitation skills.



### Expectations about the Change Alliance

Participants in particular think to gain from the alliance:

- a more united voice to advocate for the need for multi-actor engagement processes;
- confidence and inspiration from different approaches;
- a deeper understanding about the impact, costs, methodologies and underlying assumptions to the processes;
- access to expertise - matching practitioners and processes;
- learning from each other's successes and failures;
- a more professional and grounded approach to processes; and
- networking opportunities.

The contributions that participants and their organisations intend to make towards the Change Alliance included:

### Learning agenda for the Change Alliance

At the end of day 1, time was spent to explore a learning agenda for the Change Alliance. The following ideas emerged:

- *Facilitation*: What is the role, needed capacity for process facilitators?
- *Learning*: How does learning on social change take place? How do we document and share? Forums to lead thinking? Linking sectors? Dealing with ethics and confidentiality? Ownership of documentation?
- *Action*: How do we move from learning to a common movement (if at all)? How do we scale up?
- *Toolbox*: Development of a toolbox of methods, tools, technique to apply in practice
- *Governance*: Governance of the Change Alliance: internal politics, funding, identity etc.
- *Concepts*: complexity, emerging processes, power, dynamic environments, change during change
- *Mission*: Further effective change processes that honour transparency, accountability and participation in processes.
- *Process typologies*: What are preconditions and types of multi-actor engagement processes?



## Exploring the Identity

### Exploring the emerging issues and questions on change

During the second day of the event, a first attempt was made to converge the multitude of ideas and suggestions and to define the key issues around which the Change Alliance is to rally.

The gathering converged on the following notions of change.

Change is a continuous and complex process. Its direction is often determined by the power dynamics between the various stakeholders involved. Furthermore, change happens, regardless of our interventions. It is not a neutral phenomenon - the determination of its direction is value-laden.

Change can occur through multi-actor processes - a diverse range of learning, dialogue and innovation processes that complement formal governance mechanisms. Multi-actor processes bring citizens and stakeholders from government, civil society and business together to tackle difficult issues in ways that build trust and understanding and enable collective action. Good multi-stakeholder processes are open, creative, learning orientated and empowering. They offer spaces to go beyond formalised negotiation, adversarial politics and conventional advocacy.

### What is the Change Alliance?

Based on these notions around change, the workshop participants believed the Change Alliance ...

... is a gathering of professionals and organisations that are involved in supporting, enabling and/or facilitating multi-actor processes that aim at transformational societal change;

... aims at increasing the relevance and quality of the multi-actor change processes supported, enabled and facilitated by its members;

... is linked to the daily business of the engaged professionals and organisations and offers its members a practice-based (and sometimes theme-specific) learning environment;

... will cover an interrelated set of areas or domains that are all of direct interest to increasing the relevance and quality of practice in multi-actor engagement processes for societal change.

Underlying core values of the work of the Change Alliance evolve around participation, accountability, transparency, mindfulness and compassion, equity and equality, and sustainability.

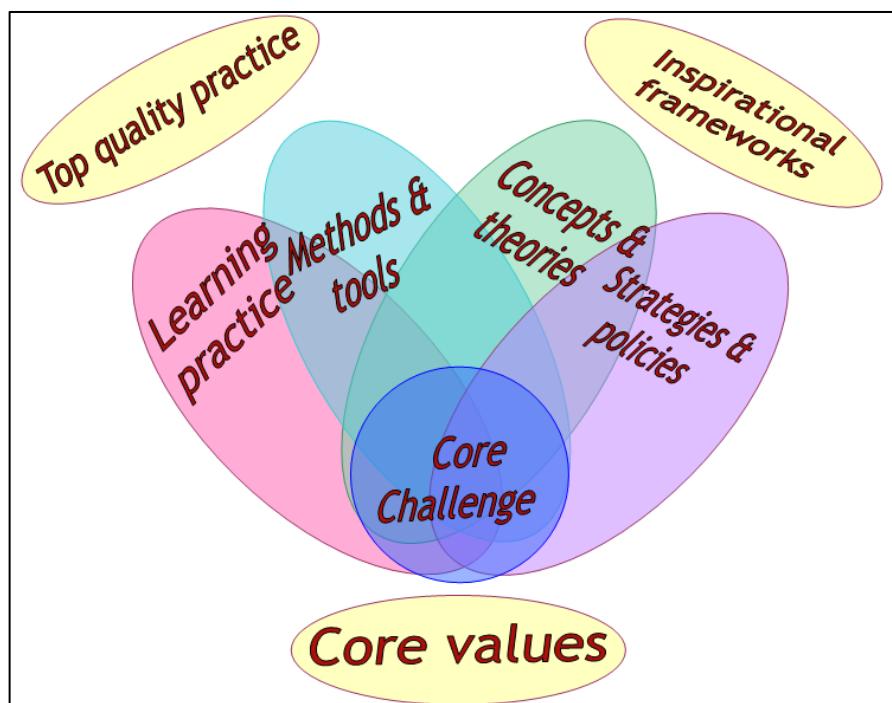
### Domains of interest and action

The core challenge for the Change Alliance is to improve the quality and relevance of enabling and facilitating multi-actor engagement for societal change in complex settings. The gathering converged to the following key domains of interest and action of the alliance.

- **Theories & concepts** - on theories of change (complexity approaches, civic driven change), on typologies of multi-actor processes and interventions, on underlying values and drivers (including for example rights and gender issues), on various roles in change processes, etc.;

- **Strategies & policies** - on creating enabling environments for social change and multi-actor processes therein, on policy frameworks for these, and on shaping and funding sound multi-actor change processes;
- **Methods and tools** - and instruments, techniques for quality interventions in multi-actor change processes, on contextualised applications of varied methods, on timing and phasing issues in change intervention, on valuing intuition, and on (up)scaling of successful approaches; and
- **Learning practice** - on improving practice through (double loop) (possibly theme/sector specific) learning processes, on organising peer to peer learning, on engaging in action inquiry initiatives, and on questions and answers for practitioners.

The Change Alliances wishes to share its findings and insights with universities as well as with other organisations involved in complex change processes - both from government as well as from public and private origins.



## Dilemmas

Some workshop participant tended to favour focussing on the art and quality of facilitating complex multi-actor change processes, whereas others prefer concentrating on the nature and direction of societal change. Some people see the Change Alliance as a learning community mainly benefiting its members, whereas others believe that the Change Alliance can truly add value when it serves as a platform for advocacy to the outside world and influences policymakers in creating favourable conditions for multi-actor change processes.

All workshop participants however are convinced that it will be the energy generated by the Change Alliance members that will determine the actual direction taken. At the end of the day, both visions represent different sides of the same coin, and are catered for within the broad frameworks sketched above.

## Forging ahead

### Agreements and way forward

In order to become more operational and practical a world café session was undertaken in the afternoon.

The various groups focused on the following issues and presented their findings to the plenary gathering:

1. Governance of the alliance
2. Practical organisation of work
3. Funding of the alliance and its activities
4. Communication inside and outside the alliance
5. The alliance's 'domains of engagement'
6. Organising learning
7. Professionalising the facilitation of change

- Create a virtual environment that invites and stimulates people to start organising and sharing their learning initiatives;
- Create a specific space for those that are particularly interested in getting their teeth into shaping and organising 2nd loop learning.
- Create a virtual environment for those that are particularly interested in the professionalization of the art of facilitation either through setting of standards and certification or through alternative, more dynamic ways to assure learning and quality.

## Agenda of action

The following agenda for action was established:

- The current 'foundational group' would continue as a core group to the alliance and will propose an organisational set-up and produce a first draft of a 'rule book' for discussion.
- The core group agreed to rapidly organise and launch a digital environment and to work out mechanisms for moderation and self-organisation.
- The core group agreed to elaborate and propose a layered membership fee structure and to continue its efforts to search funding, especially for the larger and externally oriented events.
- Produce a crisp two-pager about the Change Alliance.
- Organise a virtual discussion dealing with the dilemma's faced in identifying the 'domains of engagement' of the Change Alliance.



More information about this launch event and The Change Alliance: [www.changealliance.org](http://www.changealliance.org)

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