International
Civil Society Centre

A Culture of Change for Civil Society Organisations

Be the
Change

Thank You!

The International Civil Society Centre thanks all members of the Building an Organisational Culture of Change Working Group for their commitment and outstanding contributions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International civil society organisations (ICSOs) are increasingly confronted with disruptive change. Political, technological and planetary disruptions are threatening ICSOs' future existence. At the same time they entail exciting opportunities to deliver on ICSOs' mission. Our previous projects *Riding the Wave* (2013) and *Diversify, Adapt and Innovate* (2014) explored the sources of disruption and demonstrated that, in order to successfully navigate disruption and reap its opportunities, ICSOs have to transform themselves.

Such an in-depth transformation process requires not only changes in structures such as business models and policies but also in organisational cultures. Our 2015 project *Be the Change* explores the terms and conditions of culture change in our sector.

Over the coming decades, changes in the outside world will be fast, fundamental and continuous. To turn the entailed challenges into opportunities ICSOs need to develop an organisational culture that embraces change.

An organisational culture that embraces change should

- Aim for tangible impact towards their mission, striving for excellence.
- Support a platform for cooperation and learning that is open and hospitable to others.
- Accept uncertainty and risk as necessary aspects of transformation.
- Learn systematically from success and failure, appreciating curiosity, playfulness and disagreement.
- Foster participatory decision making using digital means – and respecting deadlines.
- Lay the groundwork for a partnership of equals, negotiating the terms of implementation, choosing influence over control.
- Promote shared accountability of all stakeholders in support of innovative and effective ways of advancing the mission.
- Demand that all cooperation is built on trust and control limited to a minimum.
- Groom servant leaders who leave ample space for experimentation, tolerate failure and foster learning.

In order to build a culture of change ICSOs should

- Define change as an ongoing process rather than as a short interval between long periods of stability.
- Identify the building blocks of the new organisational culture. Make sure the culture supports ongoing and transformational change.
- Develop a credible and convincing narrative about the desirability and benefits of the new culture.
- Rather than trying to replace the existing culture by a new one, identify positive and useful elements of the present culture, preserve and build on these.
- "Live and breathe" the new culture. Make sure your actions are well aligned with your messages.
- Lead by vision and build on hope. These are the obvious foundations of a culture of change in our sector – and much preferable to leading by sanctions and building on fear.
- Try to bring everybody on board the change process. Identify change-makers and develop a strategy to bring in, sideline or release dissenters.
- Stay for the long haul. Culture change can take years before it is deeply engrained in the organisation and persists without the constant support of change-makers.

INTRODUCTION

Members of the Building an Organisational Culture of Change Working Group at the Bellagio Centre.

We often analyse our organisations' shortcomings and identify changes which are required to make structures more efficient and policies more effective. We explain to our colleagues how the changes will improve the organisation's work; we set up a solid implementation plan and launch the change initiative – only to find that change does not happen or that change occurs but does not produce the desired effects. What has gone wrong?

Change has two major dimensions: the rational one of structures and policies and the emotional one of identity and culture. We often overlook the second dimension. This report aims at exploring the role of organisational culture in change processes, specifically for civil society organisations.

But why is change so important? International civil society organisations (ICSOs) have been highly successful over the last few decades: many have multiplied their incomes, developed valuable brands and secured increasing recognition from governments, business and citizens around the world. With national affiliates and local partners on all continents, they have extended their reach and mobilisation power. Why should they change?

In our 2013 report, we showed that ICSOs are facing a number of major disruptions which will lead to a fundamental transformation of our sector. Shrinking space for civil society activities increasingly hinders their work and can threaten the safety of their employees and partners. The internet directly connects donors in the Global North and recipients in the Global South and thus makes ICSOs' roles as intermediaries increasingly obsolete. And climate change and other planetary boundaries make it ever harder for ICSOs to achieve their missions. However, these developments also entail exciting opportunities for ICSOs to reinvent themselves and deliver even more important contributions than before:

- As political pressures on civil society worldwide increase ever more, citizens are standing up to defend their rights. This provides ICSOs with the opportunity to offer more effective support for civic action around the globe.

- The diminishing need for traditional intermediation allows ICSOs to overcome often paternalistic structures, policies, identity and culture and move towards more egalitarian and effective partnerships.

- And increasing pressures on our climate and other vital resources will boost the support for ICSOs' work towards securing a sustainable, just and equitable future for humanity.

But in order to successfully navigate disruption and turn potential threats into major opportunities, ICSOs urgently have to come up with new roles and business models. In this context, our 2014 report *Diversify, Adapt and Innovate* reviewed possible new business models and the terms for their implementation. We found that a wide range of new models are available for ICSOs to test, adapt to their needs and roll out. However, implementing new business models – many of which are significantly different from ICSOs' present ones – will only be possible if ICSOs are willing and able to change their present organisational culture.

This led to the International Civil Society Centre's project for this year, which looked into how ICSOs may proceed towards *A Culture of Change for Civil Society Organisations*, documented within this report.

ICSOs have a demanding change agenda ahead of them, and it is important that they become faster, more efficient and more effective in implementing change. Two major obstacles stand in the way of fast and transformative change:

- ICSOs' recent history of outstanding success makes it difficult to argue for change. Why should the basis of the last few years' achievements be changed? Shouldn't they stay on the safe side and keep things as they are?

- Successful ICSOs' size and complexity make change difficult to start and slow to see through.

Changing successful, large and complex organisations is a very demanding task. Transformative change can only succeed if ICSOs focus their attention not only on changing structures and policies but also on changing identities and cultures. They need to learn how to identify required culture change and how to plan and implement such change. This report aims at helping ICSOs with analysing their existing culture, identifying necessary culture change and implementing such change over time. The report is based on the collaboration of contributors from different organisations from a wide range of sectors with a variety of perspectives (please see Annex for the list of contributors). However, most participants are convinced that ICSOs can – and in fact have to – embark on major culture change, and that formal and informal leaders play a critical role in shaping the new culture.

What is the potential of leaders to affect culture change, and what are the limits of leadership?

Some people think that strong leadership from the top can strongly drive culture change, others see more limitations of leaders' potential in this regard. Some also think that 'radical, new leadership' is critical and the only thing that is going to make culture change happen, while others are more skeptical of both the potential of leaders to affect such change and of the ICSO sector to truly accept such radical leaders.

From the Working Group discussions

The group looked at organisational culture as a set of assumptions, values, and belief systems about the character or identity of an organisation. These belief systems define 'how we work around here', i.e. how we behave and how we are successful within an organisation. It is composed of mindsets, both conscious and unconscious, and expressed in a written and oral culture. Organisational culture is formed by influence factors such as society's values, common practice in the sector and the founding myths – the values and principles surrounding the organisation's beginnings. Culture is established and reinforced by symbols and rituals, language, relations and values: the stories and myths the organisation tells itself about what it stands for; what the organisation pays attention to (or not); which behaviours it rewards; the criteria it uses for selection, recruitment, and letting go of people; the physical layout of the office; as well as formal statements about itself, thereby creating a collective that is bigger than the sum of its parts. Culture is reflected not so much in WHAT we do but more in HOW we go about doing it.

Organisational culture is rarely homogenous. Often different divisions have different ways of expressing the organisation's culture: they practice their own subcultures. Fundraisers, advocacy specialists, logisticians, programme experts, bookkeepers and campaigners all have their own world views and subcultures. Voluntary activists have a different mindset than salaried professionals and the Board may approach its work in a different culture than the organisation's senior management team. In ICSOs which follow a federated model, each national affiliate may have a considerably different way of interpreting and living the organisation's culture. This is linked to the fact that organisational culture is always embedded in a wider context of sector culture, national culture, language-related culture, etc. When aiming to change organisational culture, the existence of various layers of culture which are connected to and embedded in each other needs to be taken into account.

This report aims to support practitioners who embark on culture change in their organisation. It is structured in the same way as we would recommend approaching culture change in an ICSO:

The culture we need

The report starts by exploring the features of a desirable organisational culture which embraces and nurtures change. This is also our recommendation to you: develop a clear picture about the disruptions your organisation may face and the resulting opportunities and threats and define the culture you need to navigate those disruptions. We recommend that you consult the Centre's earlier publications on disruption and new business models (listed in Annex), as well as other sources informing you about the changes ahead and options for navigating these. On that basis: develop a picture of the culture your organisation needs to better navigate disruption and to become more resilient in a constantly changing environment.

The culture we have

The report continues by reviewing the main strengths and weaknesses of organisational cultures as they presently exist in major ICSOs. This is also the second step we suggest taking: Analyse the organisational culture in your organisation and identify what you would like to reinforce, what you would like to keep, what you would like to tone down and what you need to get rid of altogether. Complement the desirable aspects of the existing culture with new aspects which you identified during the first step.

From the culture we have to the culture we need

Thirdly the report charts the way from the existing to the desired culture, discussing key strategic aspects of culture change and providing concrete guidance for change-makers on how to conduct culture change. Our considerations are intended to help you with the third and decisive step: implement your change agenda – get culture change going.

The report ends with a *Call to Action*, which compiles a short overview of a possible culture change agenda.

THE CULTURE WE NEED

We may want change,

who wants change?

but we don't want to CHANGE OURSELVES.

WHO Wants TO CHANGE!

In a situation of increasing volatility and uncertainty it is hardly possible to be certain about the opportunities and challenges ICSOs may face in a few years' time. This means, devising a culture which suits very specific needs the organisation may have in the future is not possible. However, we can be very certain that the world in which ICSOs will try to achieve their mission will be rather different from the world we are used to and that some of the changes which may occur in the coming years will be unexpected, and highly disruptive. In brief, the one thing we can be quite sure about is that in-depth, unexpected and transformative change will occur externally and that, as a consequence, change within our organisations is not an option – it is a must.

In order to prepare our organisations for such change we need to establish a culture which embraces change – a culture which is open, receptive of developments in the outside world, dynamic, and encourages flexibility and adaptation. Such a culture needs to be based on a significantly different concept of change. As the Centre's *Riding the Wave* report states: "change itself has changed: it has become faster, more fundamental and more surprising." However, until today, change is still seen as an uncomfortable phase of disruption between comfortable phases of continuity. While we can identify some aspects of our work which need to change, we do not want the changes to affect us and we certainly do not want to change ourselves.

We need to learn to love change and to live change in all aspects of our work.

Given the fact that all ICSOs aim to make the world a more egalitarian, just and sustainable place, change is the very foundation of our sector. This means we should have a much more positive perspective on change. And now that outside pressures demand increasing and faster change, maintaining the status quo is no longer an option. We need to learn to love change and to live change in all aspects of our work. We need to develop an organisational culture of change.

Building Blocks
of a Change-Embracing Culture

Below we list ten building blocks of a change-embracing culture. Given the diversity among ICSOs it is impossible to identify building blocks which are equally relevant to all. Some of the ones we have identified may be very relevant for your organisation while others may be less so. There are many more than these ten which you can identify and add. Define the most important building blocks for your organisation and shape your desired culture of change in line with your organisation's specific requirements.

Ambition

The culture is based on an exciting and demanding vision/mission. The organisation has a clear picture of how it wants to change the outside world. The organisation's leadership, staff, volunteers, partners and supporters understand, share and pursue the vision/mission as the core driving source for any action.

Quality

The organisation consistently focuses on the purpose of its vision/mission and not simply on its own survival. It is committed to a high level of quality in its work, and ensures that all staff contribute to defining what this means for their own work and for the organisation as a whole. Quality is not a fixed concept, but is closely linked to the impact the organisation wants to have in a rapidly changing world.

Identity

The organisation prioritises collaboration and sees itself as an open platform rather than a closed entity. It has a culture of hospitality inviting others in and providing the basis for joint learning and cooperation. While the organisation is proud of its highly valued global brand, it prioritises achieving impact over brand considerations.

Concept of Change

The organisation is in a permanent process of evolution. Change is no longer perceived as the undesirable state of flux between desirable phases of "business as usual". The organisation's culture embraces change as exciting and desirable. It invites its critics to contribute to the discussion and values dilemma, accepts uncertainty and a little bit of purposeful chaos as necessary aspects of transformation.

Experimentation

The organisation invites staff and activists at all levels to experiment. Curiosity, playfulness, appreciating disagreement, and openness about failure are highly valued aspects of its culture. Both successes and failures are extensively analysed and contribute to the learning and progress of the whole organisation.

Decision Making

In a light-touch and flexible governance and management structure, decisions are taken at the lowest appropriate level. The organisation practises a culture of inclusion, consultation and participation way beyond their inner circles, while at the same time securing timely and effective decision making. The organisation systematically uses digital means for participation, and sanctions the delay or reopening of decisions.

Implementation

Implementation is usually a participatory process widely shaped by the implementers who negotiate its terms. The traditional approach of donors and recipients, deciders and implementers has been replaced by a partnership of equals. The organisation takes on the role of a broker, driving progress by influencing rather than controlling.

Accountability

Rather than focusing on delivery against plans which are "set in stone", accountability promotes innovative and effective ways of advancing the mission. Light-touch, in-time stakeholder engagement ensures that the organisation stays on track towards mutually agreed objectives. Both individuals and groups share responsibility and expect to be held accountable – and to hold others accountable – for their contribution to achieving the mission.

Trust

All cooperation is built on trust. Control is limited to a minimum and embedded in horizontal accountability rather than hierarchical "command and control" mechanisms. To trust and to be trusted are key values of all who work for the organisation.

Leadership

The organisation is led by servant leaders who foster innovation by setting broad directions, leaving ample space for experimentation, tolerating failure and supporting individual and group learning. Leaders recognise the importance of culture and make belief systems explicit through stories and symbols. By encouraging an open dialogue about culture, the question of whether existing values serve the mission is brought to the fore.

Once you have identified the main building blocks of your desired organisational culture you should review these against the culture your organisation has at present. Where are overlaps? Where are contradictions? What exactly do you need to change?

THE CULTURE WE HAVE

Our sector is driven by highly ethical objectives such as securing human rights, eradicating poverty or protecting the environment. On the way to achieving these objectives we are guided by strong moral values. How we go about achieving our aims is as important as our aims as such. It is no wonder that ICSOs in general command very strong and deeply rooted organisational cultures. Culture helps institutionalise what worked in the past and culture defends established routines against change. This is how culture can create inertia. Any attempt at changing ICSO culture needs to be based on a thorough analysis of the existing culture. Such an analysis needs to be conducted on a case-by-case basis for each organisation which embarks on a systematic culture change effort. We started our analysis with exploring key features the outside world requires our culture to have and will now compare this to the culture we presently have.

We identified seven key characteristics of existing organisational cultures in ICSOs. Each of them combines a major strength with a substantial weakness. While the weaknesses may present gateways for disruption the strengths may be helpful in navigating transformative change. Below we briefly describe each of the characteristics and identify necessary changes or required refocussing towards the culture we need in order to better prepare ICSOs for seizing the opportunities and managing the challenges of an increasingly disruptive environment.

A culture of solidarity and mutual support often hampers accountability

In accordance with what they stand for, ICSOs have developed a culture that highly values harmony and solidarity. This entails great strengths. With it comes passion, empathy, a common purpose that extends beyond the organisation, and staff who are strongly motivated by the organisation's mission. For many activists and employees the culture of solidarity and mutual support is one of the main attractions of our sector. Working in teams, sharing resources and supporting each other are desirable approaches for most people working in the sector. Helping a colleague who finds it difficult to come to terms with a specific task is part of the daily routine in many organisations. However, this very positive behaviour sometimes helps to hide ongoing underperformance of a specific colleague or unit. This can lead to a situation where underperformance is not addressed, underperformers are not even aware of their deficits and colleagues providing continuous support are feeling overstretched and frustrated.

The desire for harmony and avoidance of conflict sometimes protracts situations of under-performance and dilutes personal and team accountability. Once underperformance has been tolerated for too long it is difficult to address. In fact, reporting and addressing underperformance are often seen more negatively than underperformance itself. The problem transcends beyond lack of accountability for the individual or unit into lack of accountability for the overall mission.

In order to better balance the positive and negative effects of a culture of solidarity it is important to secure a hierarchy of loyalties. Loyalty to the organisation's mission should be strictly prioritised above personal loyalties among staff and activists. Accountability should not be focused on delivering on a pre-conceived plan, but on finding the most innovative and effective answer to advancing the organisation's mission. More transparency throughout the organisation and stronger personal and team accountability are essential in securing optimal performance towards the vision. Constant, light-touch stakeholder feedback is at the heart of this concept.

Participative culture hampers quick and consistent decision making

Improving the state of the world, no matter in what field, necessarily requires the inclusion, consultation and participation of many, ideally all, of those concerned. And in fact, the moral and political support by a large number of citizens is the key power base our sector has. Thus wide-ranging inclusion, consultation and participation are at the very centre of ICSOs' effectiveness, and – rightly so – at the heart of organisational culture. At the same time, the demands for consultation among activists and staff are often unrealistically high. This sometimes leads to cumbersome processes, for instance to finalise policy papers, which take so much time that the debate in the external world moves on and, once the well-considered and widely legitimised paper is available, it is no longer of interest.

ICSOs' statutes define the organisations' governance, usually with a Members Assembly, an elected Board and a management structure led by a CEO. But, due to the complexity of federated structures and an intricate web of informal power holders, the terms of decision making are often opaque. Frequently participants in a decision making process are unclear about their role: are they being consulted by the decision makers or are they taking the decisions themselves? Misunderstandings, frustration and lack of loyalty to decisions are often the effects of such confusion. And even where participative decision making works, sometimes not all who participated in the decision feel obliged to implement it. Most frustrating can be decisions which have been made unanimously by the CEOs of all national affiliates of a federation, but are only implemented by some of them.

Another flaw of participative decision making is the habit to reopen the discussion once the "final" decision has been taken. Usually this obstruction comes from people who are opposed to the decision or from those who feel they have not – or not sufficiently – been consulted.

However, while inclusion, consultation and participation are sometimes excessively practiced among staff and activists they are much less extended to the beneficiaries, partners and other key stakeholders the organisation depends on. Participation by the privileged few who work in headquarters and close to the power holders cannot replace participation by those who are supposed to benefit from the organisation's work.

Much more participation of ICSOs' beneficiaries, partners and other key stakeholders in the organisation's decision making is a key strategic answer to looming disruption. ICSOs need to learn to consult much more broadly and much more efficiently. They need to be clearer about who makes the final decision and who will be consulted before the decision is made. At the same time they need to speed up their decision making processes. They need to set the timeframes for their decision-making in line with external requirements and not based on internal limitations. Using digital communication for wide – even worldwide – consultation is possible within a very short time frame. For instance, the highly participative global discussion process which produced the Sustainable Development Goals shows that wide consultation within a limited time frame is feasible. Following this and other recent examples, ICSOs should extend and refocus their culture of inclusion, consultation and participation way beyond their inner circles, while at the same time securing timely and effective decision making.

During our meeting we used the term 'ecosystem' to describe the complex interactions of diverse actors. This recasting in itself reflects a changing culture, towards a stronger investment in collaboration with more permeable boundaries between organisations. It also signals a level beyond our organisation which has a 'culture' which we can help to shape (for good or bad).

From the Working Group discussions

Strong organisational identities can foster silo mentality and thwart cooperation

Strong organisational identity and extensive brand recognition are valuable assets in terms of ICSOs' effectiveness and impact. Consequently ICSOs have systematically developed global brands which they work hard to protect and build further. Impressive brand recognition makes activists and employees proud of being part of the organisation. However, pride in some cases turns into arrogance, with staff believing that their own organisation is so brilliant that it could not possibly learn from others. This is one reason for a silo mentality. Another reason is the longing for small and cosy insider groups, members of which permanently reinforce each other's world views. Sadly we can observe the silo mentality at all organisational levels. Here are some examples:

- The civil society sector often finds it difficult to cooperate with governments and business
- Large ICSOs (usually with Northern roots) and smaller national or local CSOs (including many from the South) often regard each other with contempt or distrust
- Individual ICSOs that hesitate to engage in wider coalitions for stronger political effect fearing that by joining they may dilute their brand
- National affiliates of federated ICSOs that try to preserve their national identities as a member of a global family
- Specific divisions or departments within one organisation that try to defend their sub-sector specific identities and cultures

Thus identities and branding get in the way of ICSOs achieving maximum impact towards their mission.

In order to strengthen their impact and better navigate disruption, ICSOs need to reshape their identities and cultures away from a silo towards a platform approach. They need to learn that strong identity does not have to mean strong walls against the outside world. They should value humility and accept that crucial insights may well come from others outside their own organisation. ICSOs need to embrace a culture of openness and hospitality to the outside world as a basis for achieving more impact and strengthening their organisation's resilience.

Making creative collaboration 'mission critical' for Oxfam

Context

Oxfam has developed a powerful global brand where working with allies and partners locally and globally has been crucial in its ability to address issues of global poverty. There are numerous examples in its history of the potential of creative collaboration to achieve wider impact. For example, in the 1980s Oxfam developed energy biscuits with Oxford Brookes University, in the 1990s it launched the first Fair Trade Foundation and in the 2000s it played a pivotal role in the 'Make Poverty History' campaign. More recent examples include the Arms Trade Treaty campaign and the Sustainable Food Lab.

Given the rapid external changes described in *Riding the Wave* and the book *The Hedgehog and the Beetle – Disruption and Innovation in the Civil Society Sector*, the need for creative collaboration is more important than ever for Oxfam to remain relevant and achieve impact at scale.

What are some of the ways that Oxfam might increase the porosity of its organisational boundaries, play a greater brokering role and act as a platform for collaboration? How can Oxfam intentionally increase its 'collaborative advantage' rather than its 'competitive advantage'?

Challenges and hurdles

One challenge is that creative collaboration is often not perceived as mission critical, even by senior staff – a lot of organisational attention may be drawn to urgent short-term priorities and the pressures of maintaining and delivering existing work. Systematic scanning of the horizon, exploration of potential new partnerships and investigation of new approaches may be seen as a luxury rather than a necessity.

Another challenge is that the strong identification that Oxfam staff have with the organisation may also have its own downsides – it can create a 'them and us' distance between Oxfam staff and those outside; it may inadvertently establish parent-child or donor-recipient relations between larger and smaller organisations. It may create a 'not-invented-here' unwillingness to explore solutions developed by others.

Concepts and concrete steps

Here are just a few examples of ways to make creative collaboration mission critical for Oxfam.

People

- Get the right people on board by actively recruiting staff who are naturally creative, collaborative and open to learning
- Create spaces, real and virtual ones, for people to get out of their organisational bubble and into shared spaces, e.g. through labs, prototyping camps or shared workspaces
- Similarly, use secondments, both to and from Oxfam, to lay the foundation for future collaboration with others and to bring in fresh thinking
- Nurture a movement amongst staff for creating and propagating the mindset and culture shift that we seek across the organisation
- Use internal communications to celebrate collaboration with 'unusual suspects', building on Oxfam's history of collaboration
- Build a groundswell – for example by establishing communities of practice among forward-looking staff for dialogue and sharing experiences of creative

collaboration

Programmes

- Change formal expectations around programme design to include stronger stakeholder engagement
- Develop internal or external expertise to support wider use of co-creation methodologies
- Use anticipated changes in restricted funding as a 'burning platform' to increase urgency around creative collaboration
- Invest in and showcase radical and unexpected collaboration across the organisation
- Give up power in programmes: an example could be where a youth programme is designed and led by a committee of young people
- Invest in and actively pursue the development of new business models based on creation of shared value

Community

- Ensure all external collaboration is explicitly driven by shared values of respect and equality
- Allow more hybrid models – where the line between Oxfam and non-Oxfam staff becomes blurred
- Consider different ways that Oxfam can use its brand, for example by bringing complementary, strategically aligned work of others under Oxfam's umbrella

As shown above, making creative collaboration mission critical is not only a question of formal strategy but also of shifting mindsets, changing ways of working and shaping organisational culture.

"Transformational change will never happen without disruption, disagreement or delay. We will continuously have to challenge ourselves to remain true to the spirit and culture of what we are trying to do, rather than simply focus on the mechanism of the process."

Oxfam International's Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima

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BE THE CHANGE > THE CULTURE WE HAVE

A culture of avoiding risks undermines playfulness, experimentation and innovation

Accepting voluntary donations, often combined with delivering vital services to people living in precarious circumstances, naturally entails a strong drive to avoid risks. It would be highly unethical to speculate with donations or put the survival of people at risk. However, the necessity to avoid such critical risks has engendered a risk-averse culture in the sector and affects all areas of ICSOs' work. This is disadvantageous in a situation where successful and well-established concepts and approaches stop generating the desired results and need to be replaced by new, innovative and often untested ones. Innovation always entails risk, and risk avoidance hampers innovation.

Innovation will hardly be possible without making mistakes along the way. However, like "taking risks", "making mistakes" is not part of ICSOs' present culture. Looking at the sector's publications we find innumerable accounts of successful projects and programmes but hardly ever an honest description of failed efforts. The same is true for most internal communication: we try to avoid failures at all cost, and we try to hide the ones we make. Thus we deprive ourselves of the opportunity to systematically learn from mistakes and use them to improve our performance and innovate.

Lately ICSOs have become more systematic in exploring and managing unavoidable risks. As they learn to better manage risks they cannot avoid they should become more comfortable in accepting such risks which they feel they could avoid, namely the risks entailed in innovation. In order to cope with disruption ICSOs need to learn to embrace and manage, rather than avoid, risks. They should develop a culture which regards mistakes as a necessary part of personal and organisational learning and encourages open discussion of failure and systematic learning from mistakes. Stronger accountability and openness towards failures, which innovation necessarily brings, are not contradictory as long as accountability is driven by the right objectives: "driving innovation and effectiveness towards the mission" rather than "avoiding mistakes at any price".

How can a global humanitarian organisation mainstream innovation?

Context, main cultural challenges and hurdles entailed

Our organisation views itself as having a long history of innovation, where humanitarianism in itself can be understood as the definition of innovation. It therefore composes an integral part of the organisation's identity. But if we think that we are already there, will we continuously strive for improvement and learning? Do we stay open to grasping the urgent need for transformational innovation as opposed to incremental change? The fact that innovation is generally perceived as a positive and integral organisational feature should be built on so that our humanitarian history is reframed and mainstreamed into aspiration.

Concepts for addressing this

Transformational innovation should be about increasing the utility of new trials, proofs of concept and experimental programs. The more innovations move from being incremental to substantial to radically new, the greater the degree of added value. Mainstreaming high-value innovation requires full alignment of behaviour and consequences: positive behaviour needs to have positive consequences on an individual perception level that creates a real experience for staff, just as negative behaviours needs to have negative consequences. It is crucial that positive behaviour does not have negative consequences, just as negative behaviour should not result in consequences perceived as positive. External drivers can support mainstreaming innovation: funders can make transformational innovation essential, and citizens/beneficiaries can create a demand for it in inclusive programme design processes.

Concrete steps towards culture change

From the building blocks identified in the Culture Change project, four key building blocks were identified as essential for this particular culture change to be successful: the **identity** of the organisation, **ambition**, **embracing change** (and history), as well as **leadership**. Building on these elements, we have identified the following action points for our organisation to move towards transformational innovation:

Identity
- Link our history to where we want to get to
- Connect culture to results and review performance against the mission: How many people are resilient today?

Ambition
- Communicate the desirable culture and related behaviour, and highlight successes

Embracing Change
- Analyse and break unintended consequences and review success at all levels (individual, unit, organisation, movement, sector…)

Leadership
- Appoint an innovation "czar"
- Address the elephant in the room: a decision to decentralise operational functions often entails a high degree of uncertainty and low agreement. The fear component this brings along needs to be addressed, as fear kills innovation – co-existing survival is not an option. Explore how technology can facilitate geographic reorganisation: feed the elephant, be part of the solution.

Deeply engrained ethical values can foster conservatism and resistance to change

Our sector is often envied for its motivated and dedicated people. The extent to which moral and ethical values drive performance in ICSOs cannot be copied or replicated by other sectors. ICSO culture is strongly shaped by the organisation's vision and mission. Most activists and employees have chosen to work for the organisation because of its specific moral, ethical, religious or political direction. This secures not only highly motivated individuals but also helps to build effective teams working on a common objective.

However, the privilege of being able to build on a strong ethical motivation can become a major challenge when organisations need to change. All too often the absolute value of the organisation's foundations is used as an argument to reject changes in the way the organisation goes about fulfilling its mission. The mission to make human rights a reality for all people, or to eradicate poverty, or to protect the environment, etc. cannot be touched – but shouldn't the way in which we go about achieving our mission be flexible and adapt to changing external conditions? Change efforts in ICSOs often meet resistance and arguments that changing the way the mission is being pursued would be an unacceptable breach of the organisation's ethics. This overly restrictive interpretation of the mission generates a conservative culture which tries to preserve everything which is only vaguely related to the organisation's foundations.

Over the last decade, many ICSOs have made significant changes to their fundraising approaches, shifting to more digital technologies for donor engagement. How might we apply the learnings from this successful change to our means of program delivery? Effectively working towards the organisation's mission in a situation with a dynamically changing external environment means constantly reviewing the way in which we go about achieving our objectives. Firmly sticking to our old ways will not secure optimal progress towards our mission. While ICSOs are effective at preserving the purpose and foundations they have been created to pursue, their strategies for achieving their mission need to be flexible and adaptive.

Activist and corporate cultures exist in parallel, occasionally blocking each other

Most ICSOs have strong activist roots. Usually the founders have been volunteers conducting the first activities and building the first structures. As volunteers' activities proved more and more successful they started working full-time for the organisation and received a salary for their work: activist volunteers turned themselves into salaried staff. They brought with them a culture of activism, which values spontaneity, direct action, solidarity and a constituency-focused mindset. Over time, as the organisation needed more staff and growing complexity required better qualified professionals, employees with little or no activist past came on board and the culture changed towards placing higher value on professionalism, systematic planning, reliability, etc.

As the salaried part of the organisation developed a more corporate culture the volunteer part maintained its activist culture and a gap between the organisation's two pillars started to emerge. In some ICSOs the governance structures continue to be dominated by elected activists, which leads to notable culture differences between the organisation's Board and management. At times decision making under these circumstances becomes protracted, painful and ineffective.

Closing – or at least significantly narrowing – the gap between activist and corporate cultures is essential to producing quick, legitimate and impactful decisions and securing cohesion across the organisation. At a time of digital mass movements and powerful social networking, many ICSOs need to reconnect to their activist past and rediscover their activist culture in order to attract broader support for transformative change.

A culture of working in hierarchies based on control prevents open source, co-creation and platform approaches

Large, complex and highly professional ICSOs are usually structured in a hierarchical setup with clear roles, responsibilities and powers. Wielding full control is the ultimate aim of the system and of the management working within it: line managers are responsible for their specific work area and staff – they are supposed to control content, processes and people and they have the power to enforce agreed policies. They again work under the control of their superiors who are being controlled by the ones above them. Such a system depends on firm long-term directions and strategies. It is difficult for the system to react to quick and often contradictory changes in the outside world. The culture of hierarchical systems often contains strong elements of paternalism. It values clear distribution of tasks and compartmentalisation of responsibilities. It prefers "law and order" thinking over creativity and spontaneity.

Many of the pillars of the most recent innovations – such as open source approaches, co-creation strategies and processes, cross-functional cooperation, open access platforms with unclear or non-existing allocation of responsibilities – are incompatible with the demands of a hierarchical culture. Navigating disruptive changes requires more flexibility and openness than granted by traditional hierarchies. It requires developing a culture that appreciates the qualities of open platforms and co-creation, and a culture willing to exchange less control for more influence.

Changing organisational culture is a complex and demanding undertaking. The risks of failure are high and even successful change can revert back quickly if its achievements are not continuously promoted and protected. To increase the probability of success, any change in an organisation's culture should be built on the valuable elements of the existing organisational culture. The positive elements should be preserved and developed while harmful elements of the existing culture should be toned down or replaced by others. In the next chapter we will discuss how to undertake the change process from the *culture we have* to the *culture we need*.

What does it mean for CARE International to be 'truly global' and how do we change our culture accordingly?

Context

CARE International's Board passed a resolution in November 2014 committing to "a fundamental realignment of our confederation from one that is predominantly comprised of members from the global north to one that is predominantly made up of members from the global south". This 'realignment' is recognised as a central (and potentially the most critical) part of the current change effort to transform the organisation and recast its identity for the future. At its most basic level, this means changing the makeup of CARE's membership. At its most transformative, it is about addressing how power is distributed, how decisions are made, how resources are shared, whose voice and perspective matters, and which cultural norms and beliefs are adopted and influence organisational direction.

Challenges and hurdles

Becoming more truly global is inherently political and linked to power dynamics within CARE and in relation to civil society. Staff involved in these discussions consistently raise concerns about CARE's reluctance to acknowledge and embrace the political dimensions of this change, and point to the dominant culture in the organisation (particularly in interactions across members) that over-emphasises structures and administrative processes and under-attends to people, power, and relationships (internal and external). CARE's major hurdle in this 'globalising' process is the implicit assumption that the

way to become truly global is to 'help' organisations from the Global South to join CARE and become a part of the current way of being and doing, within a predominately Global North culture and worldview (and the systems and structures that are set up to reinforce it). The tendency is to emphasise 'their' transition, rather than an overall organisational transition to a new way of being.

Concepts

CARE frames its transformation as becoming "a truly global network of peers, set up to multiply impact locally and globally". While it is still being unpacked and (re) defined across the organisation, becoming 'truly global' signals that while CARE has always been a global organisation, operating in multiple places around the world, it will now seek to be an organisation that is genuinely shaped by the leadership, perspective and experience from the Global South and North. This entails becoming much more connected to and influenced by its constituencies in the Global South. CARE also has used language of a 'network of peers' from the outset of its change process. This has helped support the truly global concept, in that CARE seeks to be set up as a network with diverse ways of belonging and contributing to multiply our collective impact, with different roles to play in doing so, all of which are equally valued and with each entity treated as peers. This directly relates to the shifting organisational paradigm about who holds knowledge and

resources, and whose voice matters, encouraging a new multi-directional approach to resource flows and new ways of engaging with each other and with our partners and allies.

Concrete steps

CARE has recognised a need to refocus attention on shifting the mindsets and behaviours that underpin the current cultural barriers to its transformation. In the coming year, some of the levers that CARE will use to bring about a broader culture change to become more truly global include:

- Equipping leaders to model related behaviours, focusing on the new collective leadership team made up of the CEOs of each of the members

- Identifying signs and symbols that signal the future now, being careful that communications reflect them

- Using organisational dialogue and crowdsourcing to define what truly global means by framing key issues or questions and keeping a network of change agents up to date on the latest thinking, for them to build on and share 'back' with each other

- Identifying ways to integrate into systems and processes so it becomes/ reinforces ways of working. Given that CARE's change process is currently underway, with related changes to governance, management systems and structures, CARE has the rare opportunity to shape these systems and processes so that they reflect the culture we seek.

- Leveraging one of CARE's priority areas of work – increasing its Global South membership, starting with a first cohort in 2015. CARE is being intentional about using this process to surface broader organisation-wide changes that need to be made for an inclusive, equal-value environment for new members. This will help move attention away from an exclusive focus on change within transitioning members, and instead draw attention to internal partnerships and necessary changes in all CARE entities to make the network of peers a reality. These changes include: improving understanding about power imbalances; identifying ways to adapt policies and processes to level the playing field for emerging members; and enabling emerging members to participate effectively in governance processes early in their transition.

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BE THE CHANGE > THE CULTURE WE HAVE

CULTURE CHANGE
TOWARDS
A CULTURE OF CHANGE

One of the examples given during our discussions was of an Olympic rowing team that focussed relentlessly on the question, "what makes our boat go faster?". They de-prioritised everything else and even missed the opening ceremony but ended up winning a gold medal. Building on this example we asked, what would make ICSOs' "boat go faster" – meaning "our change efforts more effective" – and found that we are often not very good at focusing on the essentials. Given the challenges and risks of organisational change, those who drive culture change need to be personally dedicated to achieving the intended changes. They need to be willing to serve as examples for a new culture, and they need to show impressive stamina: under certain conditions – for example when a new leader comes on board – culture change can happen quickly but it may take years before it becomes sustainable and persists even after its original protagonists have left the organisation. In this chapter we provide a number of recommendations for change-makers on how to take culture change forward.

If we know from research that 70% of big organisational change efforts in the private and public sectors fail, we need to go in with our eyes wide open.
From the Working Group discussions

Meet the change-makers

Some contributors to our discussions raised doubts that culture change can be initiated, driven and directed from the top. They agree that organisational culture is changing – for instance due to generation changes among board, management, staff and activists, or due to technological change such as the emergence of digital communication – but see limited possibilities for leaders to systematically steer such change processes. However, a number of examples provided by practitioners show how culture change has been successfully driven from the top. Examples for both perspectives indicate that culture change can either come from the midst of the organisation or be driven from the top. Ideally both dimensions come together and work in the same direction. Whether at the top or any other position in the organisation, change-makers need to be perceived as legitimate and credible role models for an attractive alternative to the dominant culture.

Successful founders, those who leave a sustainable organisation behind, are often charismatic people. They do not just set the objectives for the new organisation but also chart the way towards these: they don't just define the WHAT of their new organisation but also the HOW. These earliest leaders of the organisation attract activists who are willing to take their lead from the founder and they employ staff who comply with their expectations. By shaping and running the organisation in their own very specific way and by bringing in specific activists and staff the founder very much defines the organisation's culture. Once the founder steps back the question arises whether the successor will fit the leadership mould shaped by the outgoing leader. And from then on this question comes up every time the organisation's leader is replaced. Change in leadership is the time when organisations usually worry about whether they can maintain continuity, but it is also the most obvious opportunity to initiate change. Sometimes a Board deliberately chooses a leader who has a significantly different approach to the HOW of management in order to initiate culture change in the organisation.

As role models – be it in the positive or negative sense – leaders play an important part in shaping an organisation's culture. Whether they play this part consciously and skilfully or not defines very much how effectively they determine organisational culture and how successful they are at changing the culture. Leaders who live and breathe an organisational culture of change – who are change-makers themselves and who do not shy away from accepting the personal disadvantages that change sometimes entails – are leaders who are credible role models of change and can reshape organisational culture. At a time when ICSOs have to go through major and continuous change they need leaders who are prepared to "be the change".

From the Working Group discussions

From my experience those very small "self-designed" and "self-executed" changes in behaviour, surrounding and processes create a relevant degree of ownership that can support the overall change process dramatically.

But change-makers do not necessarily occupy senior management or Board positions. Quite often change-makers are informal leaders who occupy line positions and do not necessarily hold any formal power. Some of these are creative people with a strong commitment to the organisation's mission, striving for high performance. They develop their own ways of how to best achieve the organisation's mission and attract others who are impressed with the different approach this colleague takes. Others are newcomers to the organisation who bring a different culture from their former employer. Often they meet resistance from the dominant culture: "This is not the way we do things here…" But occasionally – for instance, if they have been hired to help change the culture and if they are supported by the organisation's senior management – they can become very effective catalysts for culture change. Others are key figures in a subculture in one of the organisation's departments or divisions. For instance, fundraisers often have a different work culture from the programme specialists, and the advocacy unit works with a different culture than the IT department. Effective change-makers in any of these (and other) departments can drive culture change for the whole organisation.

Change-makers can be found at all levels of an organisation. And especially changes in an organisation's culture, which cannot be effected by formal decree, can be driven – and is being driven – by people at all levels of the organisation. Not all those who hold formal leadership positions are change-makers, but successful change-makers always have strong leadership credentials, be they formal or informal ones. Thus, our comments below refer to change-makers at all levels of the organisation, whether they are formal leaders or informal ones.
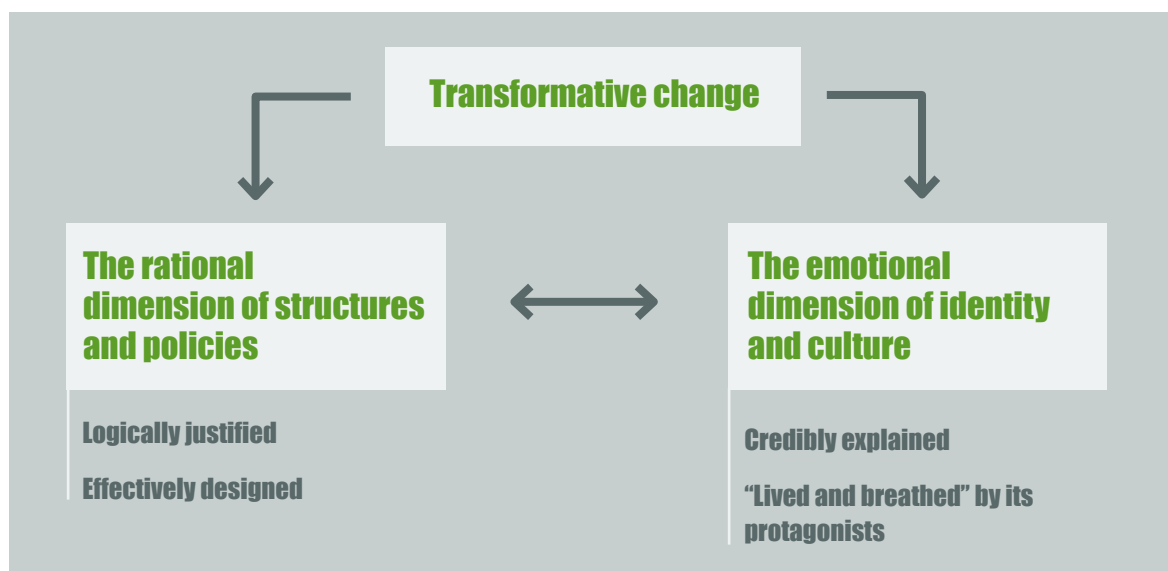
Address the emotional dimension of change

We have not heard of an ICSO yet which decided: "We have to change our organisational culture. We will change from our present culture which is characterised by (...) to a new culture which is built on (...). We will start our culture change tomorrow and we will finish in three months' time." And we don't expect to hear about such an organisation in the foreseeable future. More likely, culture change in ICSOs will happen in connection with a wider change agenda. For instance:

- The organisation wants to introduce a new business model and finds that this does not only require a change in procedures and routines but also a different understanding of the new tasks and a change of mindset in approaching these tasks.

- The organisation wants to improve the speed and quality of its decision making so it changes structures and policies in order to allow decisions to be taken closer to where the issues arise. However, the organisation finds that many of the new decision makers cling to old command and control habits and are reluctant to accept increased responsibilities which come with the new distribution of roles.

- The organisation wants to change its global governance to properly reflect the interest of its partners around the world and experiences rejection of new board members and the perspectives they bring because these are not in line with the board's traditional perspectives.

In these and many other change projects, culture change complements the usual changes at management and governance levels. Reacting to changes in the outside world, the organisation wants to change structures and policies and finds that these changes can only take the desired effects if they are complemented by respective changes in the organisation's culture. In short: the change process needs to have well-synchronised rational and emotional dimensions.

For transformative change to be implemented successfully it needs to be implemented simultaneously in both dimensions:

In order to secure less friction and greater effectiveness of change we recommend adding to the traditional approach of changing policies and structures a second one: changing culture and sometimes also identity. Both dimensions of change, the rational and the emotional ones should be pursued in parallel, from the earliest stages of planning onwards and on a permanent basis throughout all steps of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Culture change will rarely be an objective in itself but rather an indispensable component of any in-depth change process.

Make the case for change

Almost everything written about change management underlines the importance of communication – and almost every evaluation of a change process points to the lack of appropriate and timely communication. Especially in the civil society sector where staff, activists and partners expect to actively participate in the running of the organisation, communication is essential. And when major change is on the agenda, frequent and extensive communication is a decisive factor. So, what goes wrong in our communication and how can we better make the case for change?

All too often leaders focus on the rationality of change. They point out that a specific change reduces costs by x% or that decision making time will be reduced from y days to z days, etc. No question, the logic – and the logistics – of change are important, but so are the emotional dimensions of change. Staff, activists and partners who are supposed to be part of the change will ask themselves: How will I be affected by change? What will happen to my role? What will I lose and what will I win as a result of change? How and with whom will I work together in the future? Change-makers who systematically and extensively address the doubts, hopes and fears of those they lead through change stand a much better chance of success.

More importantly, they communicate empathetic and change-embracing cultural norms. Through their own approach to communicating about change they encourage and inspire others to follow suit. Taking time to talk about change, addressing all who are affected by change, taking hopes and fears seriously and encouraging everybody in the organisation to go about change in a similar way are important steps towards a change-embracing culture. Change-makers should show that they take everybody who is involved in and affected by change seriously, and they should show that they care about the people going through change.

Communication needs to be frequent and complete. Leaving specific aspects of the change agenda out of updates – for example because nothing new has happened there – often raises suspicion. If nothing new has happened, say that nothing new has happened. A culture of full transparency fosters change in two ways: it identifies successes and failures, the driving elements behind change, and it reduces suspicion and rumours, which often hamper change. Leaders who not only demand transparency but also are transparent in their own behaviour and decision making serve as role models for a culture of transparency.

Lead by vision

In our discussions we repeatedly came back to the concept of a "burning platform" which refers to the situation oil workers are in when their platform far out in the sea catches fire: they need to leave the platform as soon as possible – they change (their location) out of fear (for their lives). The question we looked at was whether change-makers need to instil fear in their organisations to drive change or whether they can, and should, make the case for change based on hope.

Given the threatening scenarios of climate change and other planetary boundaries, political oppression and the decline of previously successful business models, ICSOs have several burning platforms to be deeply worried about. But besides this negative basis of fear they also have a strong and convincing positive basis of hope, expressed in their vision and mission statements. Changing out of fear may be the stronger driver for quick and immediate change but changing out of hope provides a much more sustainable basis for transformative change. ICSOs are being built on the dream of a better, more just and sustainable world. Some of them have

I was very struck by the assessment that specific ICSOs could slip into irrelevance through a gradual decline in income and impact – but that this might be missed by many involved who only look at year-on-year figures and don't take in the bigger picture. The absence of a 'burning platform' is perhaps one of the biggest barriers to culture change, since there is no clear imperative for action.

From the Working Group discussions

pursued this dream for more than 100 years already without losing hope. On the contrary, they have been changing with the requirements of the time and have navigated many crises on the way. To date their exciting vision has served them well and they should firmly base their organisational culture on their vision.

An organisational culture based on the question "How can we better achieve our vision and mission?" is certainly quite different from one which is based on the question "How can we protect our business model from collapse?" The dream that "a better world is possible" is driving our sector. Our organisational cultures – and our leaders' thinking and actions – should start from there. Leading by vision and building on hope are the obvious tools of change management in our sector – and much preferable over leading by sanctions and building on fear. Leaders who base all their actions on the organisation's vision and mission, and who can demonstrate that their personal vision and mission is well aligned with the organisational one, will set strong markers for the organisation's culture and will find it easier to conduct transformative change.

Walk the talk

Getting the message right and linking it organically to the organisation's mission and vision are the basis for driving culture change. But only if you can be seen as consistently and convincingly acting in line with what you say will you be perceived as a role model for a different culture. The following is an example is an example of the negative effects of a lack of consistency between what you say and what you do, recounted by one of the major ICSOs.

They had invited an external presenter to provide an update on the latest state of the climate discussion. The presenter gave a very impressive account of the growing dangers and argued that everybody had to change their personal behaviour in order to contribute to keeping our climate stable. In the discussion after his talk he received very positive feedback from the audience. However, when he was later seen driving off in a large limousine his credibility disappeared. He obviously did not live in the way he strongly asked others to adopt. Being consistent in "walking your talk" is essential. The presenter may be a role model for climate sensitive behaviour in many other aspects, but the fact that he was seen driving off in a luxury car completely destroyed the effect of his convincing speech.

Walking the talk consistently with very few, if any exceptions, is critical in being accepted as a role model for a new culture. One of the main questions that others will have about change-makers wanting to establish a culture of change is: "Do they also embrace change when it affects them personally, when they also have to pay a price for change?" If the leaders of a change process ask others to change their habits, give up privileges or accept some risks in order to conduct change, but are seen avoiding the negative consequences of change for themselves, this destroys their credibility as proponents of a culture of change. The most convincing strategy to implement a culture of change is for change-makers to start change at the point where it affects themselves the most and thus demonstrate through their own behaviour that their demand for a culture of change is legitimate.

> **A culture of openness, which appreciates failure as a necessary component of progress, is a condition for innovation.**

As we have discussed before, culture change can be effected relatively quickly – especially by a new leader or in a situation of crisis – but it takes a long time before the new culture is deeply engrained in the organisation and continues even if the change-makers no longer drive it. For leaders who embark on a change of organisational culture this means being prepared to stay the course for several years. In other terms, they need to be prepared to "walk their talk" over a long period of time during which they need to be seen consistently driving change, enjoying change and accepting the pains of change (both for the organisation and for themselves).

Learn from failure

One of the reasons why we are usually not too fond of change is that it normally carries risks. Change means doing things differently than before, and this means that we cannot be certain that our new approach works. We are lacking experience, we will have to experiment and we may fail. If only we could stick with the tried and tested processes of the past…

In most organisations failing is not an option. For instance, if we look at ICSOs' annual reports: they are usually full of data and reports showing success but they rarely point out a mistake or failure. The same is true for many meetings in our sector: we may discuss arising challenges to try to avoid failure, but an admission that failure has already occurred – together with the invitation to analyse our mistakes and learn from them – is still a rare exception. We would rather invest time and effort in hiding our mistakes than in analysing them – and if we analyse them we try to avoid including others in the process.

However, change without experimentation is hardly possible, and experimentation without failure is difficult to imagine. This means, a culture of change needs to be a culture which not only accepts mistakes but which demands occasional failure. There are examples showing that the most successful teams in a company were also the ones who reported the largest number of failures. A review examining what looks at first glance like a contradiction found out that the teams' success was due to their greater willingness to try and test new approaches, and as they experimented more they necessarily failed more often.

Leaders trying to establish a culture of change need to be aware of this correlation. This means they need to encourage experimentation and accept failure as a necessary consequence. They should start by talking about their own mistakes and failures and inviting others to help them with analysing what has gone wrong and learning from the experience. If the leader is seen failing and openly admitting and analysing failure this is a very encouraging sign for others in the organisation that experimentation is desirable and failure acceptable.

In their communications and actions, change-makers should express that experimentation is a crucial part of securing the organisation's future. They should encourage organisation-wide discussions about fields for improvement and innovation and they should make it clear that failure is accepted as an unavoidable part of experimentation. From an organisational perspective, encouraging experimentation only makes sense if you can be certain that failures are not hidden but brought out into the open and carefully analysed. Making mistakes but not using the opportunity for the organisation to learn from these would be counter-productive.

A culture of openness, which appreciates failure as a necessary component of progress, is a condition for innovation – and thus for the organisation's future relevance. Those change-makers who hold a formal leadership position can also use their powers to foster a culture of openness and innovation. For instance, they should accept mistakes made when experimenting, they should revise appraisal systems to include experimentation and innovation as key components, they should demand experimentation from members of their senior leadership team, etc.

Invite everybody to come on board

If CEOs want to drive culture change in their organisations they should make sure that their Senior Management Team is fully on board with the changes envisaged. If senior managers are not backing the intended changes the CEO needs to convince them first. Should that effort fail CEOs may only have the options of dropping their plans for change or recruiting a new Senior Management Team.

But whether driven by the CEO, the Board, staff or volunteers, culture change can only happen if all, or at least the vast majority, of the organisation's staff and activists accept and embrace the change. Inviting all who are part of the organisation to join the change is essential. This invitation should come early in the change process, be repeated frequently and include everybody. Change-makers should clearly express their intention to approach certain issues differently in the future and their hope that everybody will join in with the new ways of going about the organisation's mission.

Are we coddling dissenters?

If dissenters continue to resist change, it may be argued that they are not proceeding with true consensus decision-making, which is not universal agreement, but rather "a group decision-making process in which group members develop, and agree to support, a decision in the best interest of the whole… an acceptable resolution, one that can be supported, even if not the 'favourite' of each individual." (Wikipedia). When a decision is reached, the boat has left the station; one needs to decide then if they are on the boat or off the boat.

From the Working Group discussions

Usually it will become obvious very quickly who the champions of the new culture are. Change-makers should try to identify these early and work with them, helping them to live the new culture, showing others that "it can be done" and "how it works". It also may be helpful to bring the champions together as a group of change-makers, helping them to support each other in their endeavours to drive change and convince the doubters in the organisation. Usually, if the wider leadership can be seen practicing a different culture and if a number of informal leaders in the organisation are on board, the change process will develop dynamics of its own.

However, as with any change it is likely that there are some dissenters. Ideally they will be convinced by the teams in which they work. If that does not succeed, management needs to try to convince the dissenters. Should that fail, leaders need to take a decision on whether they can live with the dissenters or not. Generally, diversity in an organisation is desirable and accepting different views is important in a situation where the organisation embraces change and accepts the entailed risks. One of the considerations in the management's decision will probably be whether the dissenters are openly resisting the change of culture and trying to convince others not to go with the change.

Another important tool at a leader's disposal is the possibility to recruit to the new culture. However, those who recruit and those who manage the new employees need to be aware that driving change through new staff who are not yet fully integrated into the organisation's informal communities can backfire. In our working group we discussed an example in which a new employee working in the culture desired by the organisation's leadership was mobbed out of the organisation by his team, who fiercely stuck with the old and still predominant culture. Still, hiring to the new culture is an effective means to drive culture change, but it requires ongoing support of the new employees by the organisation's leadership.

Develop and consistently implement your own tool box

Change-makers should develop their own tool box for driving culture change depending on their specific situation. Their selection of tools and approaches will depend on whether they are formal or informal leaders, which organisation they belong to and what the culture change agenda is. In any case they should be very concrete in showcasing how a specific change in culture (e.g. different behaviour) would support greater effectiveness in advancing their organisation's mission.

For change-makers, some of the following approaches may be helpful depending on the specific situation:

> Start with small steps and be clear that failure on the way is a necessary part of the change process

> Look for allies and co-change-makers – bring formal and informal leaders on board

> Confront gaps between officially espoused culture and values and real, in-use behaviours

> Model the new culture in your own and your co-change-makers' behaviour

> Redesign and re-compose specific groups and structures to allow change to take hold

> Bring in outsiders who come with the culture you want to promote

> Redesign positions in line with the new cultural requirements

> Change the basis of your rewards systems – reward behaviour which reflects the desired culture

> Replace old rituals and celebrations with new ones

You should regularly review the effectiveness of your tools and adapt and re-calibrate your tool box as appropriate.

CALL TO ACTION

1. There will be continuous and increasing pressure from the outside world on ICSOs to change. Define change as an ongoing process rather than as a short interval between long periods of stability.

2. Base your change efforts on the understanding that change has a rational component (policies and structures) and an emotional component (identity and cultures) and that you may fail if you ignore one of the two.

3. Even the most consistent organisational culture is embedded in a set of wider cultures (sectoral, national, etc.) and entails a set of narrower cultures (affiliates, sub-sectoral, activist, corporate, etc.). Take these wider and narrower cultures into account when changing organisational culture.

4. Identify the building blocks of the new organisational culture. Make sure the culture supports ongoing and transformational change.

5. Develop a credible and convincing narrative about the desirability and benefits of the new culture.

6. Rather than trying to replace the existing culture with a new one, identify positive and useful elements of the present culture, preserve these and build on these.

7. "Live and breathe" the new culture. Make sure your actions are well aligned with your messages. Otherwise your legitimacy as a change agent will be hampered.

8. Lead by vision and build on hope. These are the obvious foundations of a culture of change in our sector – and much preferable over leading by sanctions and building on fear.

9. Try to bring everybody on board the change process. Identify change-makers across the organisation and develop a strategy to bring in, sideline or release dissenters.

10. Stay for the long haul. Culture change can take years before it is deeply engrained in the organisation and persists without the constant sponsorship of change-makers.

ANNEX

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International Civil Society Centre

The global action platform for ICSOs

International civil society organisations (ICSOs) play a crucial role in the fight for a sustainable and more equitable world. With their programmes all over the world, ICSOs have a unique knowledge base, exceptional reach and significant influence. As globalisation progresses, challenges and opportunities increasingly demand a response at the global level. ICSOs are in a key strategic position to contribute and they carry a special responsibility to deliver.

For ICSOs to grasp the opportunity and fulfil the obligation to co-shape a better world they need to change. As expectations are changing and new competitors enter their fields of work, ICSOs need to redefine their role and business models. To navigate change ICSOs need to become more agile and better prepared to embrace and adapt to change.

The International Civil Society Centre helps the world's leading ICSOs maximise their impact for a sustainable and more equitable world.

The Centre:
• Scans the horizon for fundamental and disruptive changes and exciting opportunities;
• Develops strategies for ICSOs to successfully navigate change;
• Enables learning and cooperation among ICSOs and their key stakeholders;
• Supports ICSOs with developing effective and efficient global leadership, governance and management;
• Promotes robust accountability to strengthen ICSOs' effectiveness and legitimacy.

The Centre is a not-for-profit organisation working with the leading ICSOs, predominantly at the senior leadership level. We strive to set high standards in management, governance and strategy and for transparency and accountability across our sector.

The Centre is fully owned by the organisations it serves. They help shape our strategic direction and programmes, ensuring that we embrace and reflect the needs of the sector. To date, 13 ICSOs have acquired shares in the Centre:

Amnesty International	Oxfam International	VSO International
CBM International	Plan International	World Vision International
ChildFund Alliance	Sightsavers International	WWF International
HelpAge International	SOS Children's Villages Intl.	
Islamic Relief Worldwide	Transparency International	

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