

Frequently Asked Questions - The Change Alliance

This is a working document, which can inform you during the discussions and might be changed by the insights and ideas gained during the Launch Event.

1. *What is the aim of The Change Alliance?*

The aim of the Alliance is to strengthen humanity's capacity to achieve sustainability – social justice, healthy economic development and environmental protection – by increasing the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder processes. By the term “multi-stakeholder processes,” we refer to a diverse range of learning, dialogue and innovation processes that complement formal governance mechanisms by bringing citizens and stakeholders from government, civil society and/or business together to tackle difficult issues in ways that build trust and understanding and enable collective action. These processes have become increasingly important parts of strategies to address the most pressing and intractable societal challenges. However, they often do not realize their potential and this shortfall limits the ability of the different elements of society to work constructively together on a common agenda.

2. *Why has The Change Alliance emerged?*

The idea for the Alliance has evolved from a wide set of conversations between individuals in organisations who are engaged with multi-stakeholder, learning and dialogue processes and who have indicated strong interest in participating. These conversations have focused on three areas of need:

- To strengthen and improve the depth and quality of the dialogue, interaction and critical learning that multi-stakeholder processes produce
- To develop the capacities of those who lead and participate in multi-stakeholder processes to work with the full range of issues – for example, about social, economic and political change, power dynamics, and different forms of governance and democracy – by bringing the most relevant theory and practice to bear in critical reflection on real-world experiences
- To advance the practical application of complexity thinking in support of multi-stakeholder processes and the mechanisms of governance more broadly

The institutions that have initiated the Alliance are committed to looking critically at their own successes and failures with multi-stakeholder processes. They also seek to gain access to a wider network of expertise and support by linking with other institutions to explore the challenges they face. The Alliance aims to deliver practical support in both these areas to those who participate and to others involved in multi-stakeholder processes.

3. *What activities does the Alliance envision?*

The Alliance envisions supporting multi-stakeholder processes through two main activities:

- Action inquiry initiatives that will engage the multi-stakeholder processes of the Alliance partners, 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 that will link the action inquiry initiatives to each other and 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.

4. *Who participates in The Change Alliance and how?*

The table below describes five categories of participation

Who participates?	How?	
	Role	Description
Institutions that fund, sponsor, convene and/or support multi-stakeholder change processes	Champions	Champions are institutions that actively promote the Change Alliance and use their reputational capital to lend credibility to the CA and raise its visibility with key groups. Some members of this group will provide funding.
“	Steering group Alliance secretariat	The Steering Group is a sub-group of the partners that participates directly in the governance of the CA. One partner institution, Wageningen International CDIC, will act as the secretariat for the Alliance.
“	Partners	Partners are those institutions formally engaged with the CA in action inquiry initiatives and/or the global learning platform.
Groups and individuals that provide expert support to multi-stakeholder change processes as experienced process leaders, trainers, academic experts	Members	Members of the CA contribute to and participate in the global learning platform and are connected to the CA network.
Groups and individuals that are interested in the work of the Change Alliance	CA Network	The Network includes all who connect to the work of the Change Alliance through its virtual learning platform, web site, and publications.

5. *How is the Alliance governed?*

The Alliance is governed by its partner institutions through a globally representative Steering Group. One partner institution, Wageningen International CDIC programme, will serve as the Secretariat, coordinating the activities of the Alliance under the direction of the Steering Group.

6. *How will it be funded?*

Seed funding has been provided by the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO), Wageningen International, and the Generative Change Community. The Netherland Ministry of Foreign Affairs—Development Cooperation (DGIS) has tentatively committed €3 million over three years to launch Alliance activities. We anticipate that this and additional grants will support the global learning platform and provide key resources for action inquiry initiatives, which the Alliance will fund jointly with the participating institutions.

Action Inquiry Initiatives

1. *What does the Change Alliance mean by action inquiry?*

In action inquiry, groups working together to make change agree to build in time for group reflection at various points in the change process. This ongoing assessment and reflection, which pays attention to both action and the thinking that informs it, helps the groups be more responsive to shifts in context and more able to adapt strategies to achieve stronger results. The Alliance intends to support and accompany change initiatives in action inquiry in order to achieve greater effectiveness on the ground.

2. *How can action inquiry within the Change Alliance add value to a specific change initiative?*

By providing access to expertise and knowledge, financial support and links to a practitioner network, the Alliance will help create the conditions for the change initiative to engage meaningfully in action inquiry. This will contribute to greater success in achieving desired and sustained outcomes, more robust learning and greater capacity for the current and future change initiatives. Finally, through a global learning platform, the Alliance will provide a vehicle for the initiative to expand its learning and impact by connecting its experience to that of a broad, diverse community of practice.

3. *How can action inquiry in a specific change initiative contribute to the global learning platform?*

The purpose of the Change Alliance is to make multi-stakeholder processes more effective at bringing about sustainability and social justice. The documentation of a particular action inquiry in a change initiative not only supports effective action on the ground but also serves as the basis for sharing and connecting that experience and learning with others. The global learning platform will link experiences and learning from many change initiatives across the boundaries of geography and issue areas to pursue its broad learning agenda. This will enhance the common understanding about the use of multi-stakeholder processes in complex situations and the mobilization of political support for the solutions that change initiatives can offer.

4. *What concrete outputs are expected from the action inquiry component of the Change Alliance?*

One output will be documentation of the unfolding of the change initiative. This documentation will capture assumptions and thinking about context, strategy and results and record the changes in strategy and/or implementation that occur as the initiative unfolds. Another concrete output, which could take various forms (written report, video, web site) will capture the learning and knowledge developed along the way. Action inquiry will also produce an enhanced set of practical tools, techniques and more robust methodologies that can be used in facilitating change in a flexible way.

5. *What are the anticipated outcomes of the action inquiry initiatives?*

The Alliance anticipates that its support of action inquiry will contribute to positive impacts on the quality of individual and collective thinking, the quality of communication and interaction, the quality of strategy, and ultimately the effectiveness of action. Another anticipated outcome is increased capacity for working effectively in a multi-stakeholder context, based on the individual and collective learning that takes place in the action inquiry initiative. Finally, we anticipate that the knowledge creation that comes from systematically articulating and capturing the choices made and the results from those choices will be a significant outcome contributing to the broader interests of the Change Alliance.

6. *What are the characteristics of a change initiative that are likely to make it a good candidate for action inquiry?*

The Alliance is particularly interested in working with change initiatives that

- Are multi-stakeholder, meaning that they are engaging people from different backgrounds and perspectives
- Show interest across stakeholder groups in engaging in the action inquiry
- Show sufficient support from key decision makers in the change initiative to ensure the necessary time and level of engagement can be committed to the action inquiry initiative
- Show openness to allowing what emerges from the action inquiry to influence strategy and implementation on the ground
- Are interested in working in partnership with the Change Alliance to advance both work on the ground and the broader goals of the Alliance

7. *How will the Change Alliance identify and select among potential sites, organizations and/or coalitions for action inquiry?*

The Alliance will actively engage with partners, members and their networks to identify action inquiry sites, exploring the potential benefits, challenges and specific requirements of possible action inquiry processes. It is envisioned that The Alliance will set up a Responsive Fund to identify and finance action inquiry on a competitive basis. Criteria for the use of the fund shall be developed by the Alliance partners. As the work of the Change Alliance unfolds, the organic development of action inquiry sites may evolve into a more structured selection procedure.

8. *Specifically, what might an action inquiry initiative with the Change Alliance look like?*

○ *Who would it involve? With what roles?*

The Alliance includes a network of practitioners that can be called upon to provide the change initiative with capacity development and/or technical assistance as needed. In addition, the Alliance proposes the creation of a small team composed of both stakeholders in and outsiders to the change initiative. This team will provide leadership in the co-design and implementation of the action inquiry process. The action inquiry will engage all the participants in the change initiative to the extent that they take part in regular meetings where the action inquiry plays a role or in meetings devoted specifically to the action inquiry.

○ *What kinds of activities would it involve?*

While the choice of specific activities will depend on the context and needs of the change initiative, the following are some likely possibilities:

- Training for capacity development
- Engagement of stakeholders in the action inquiry initiative through interviews and dialogue
- Regular meetings of the team leading the action inquiry
- Design and facilitation of an action inquiry segment of key meetings of the change initiative
- Documentation of the action inquiry as it unfolds, to be used as a basis for ongoing reflection
- Participation in activities related to the global learning platform

○ *How much time would it require?*

Action inquiry will require taking time for group reflection, and it will leverage the time already invested in the planning and implementing cycle. For example, it might involve adding a day or two to an already organized

stakeholder meeting or on occasion organizing a separate workshop devoted to issues specific to the action inquiry. There will be additional time needed for those participating in the team giving leadership to the action inquiry process. The actual time required in all cases will depend on the scope and duration of the change initiative.

o *How long would it last?*

This is a design question depending on the needs and interests within a given context. The Alliance is committed to accompanying and supporting the action inquiry for as long as it is valuable to both the action initiative and the Alliance. Recurrent reflections on the inquiry processes will inform this commitment.

o *What would be the deliverables?*

The key deliverable is the documentation of the action inquiry process, packaged in a way that can support learning and action within the change initiative as well as sharing the learning with others.

o *How would it be funded?*

The Change Alliance will use the principle of co-funding to make action inquiry happen. Change initiatives interested in undertaking action inquiry will contribute to the process their own funding, which can be matched by funds from the Alliance drawing from different resources. It is envisioned that a Responsive Fund shall be instituted to support, with both financial resources and expertise on a competitive basis, innovative proposals for research, action inquiry, capacity development and strategic engagement.

9. *What other expectations would participation in the Change Alliance place on selected initiatives?*

The Alliance expects that those involved in action inquiry will engage with and contribute from their experience to the global learning platform.

10. *If we are already doing action inquiry in change initiative, what can a link to the Change Alliance add?*

The Alliance can offer the possibility of accessing resources and support from a broad network of others also engaged in serious reflection on their change strategies through action inquiry. The Alliance also offers a platform for sharing successes and learning in a way that can benefit the work of others.

Global Learning Platform

1. *What is the purpose of the global learning platform?*

The platform will provide both physical and virtual spaces to enable Alliance partners and members to learn and innovate together as they share their experiences with change and multi-stakeholder processes. It will also ensure that the work of the Alliance has reach and impact beyond the Alliance itself. The platform will enable practitioners, who would otherwise remain isolated, to come together with thought leaders from relevant fields of research and practice: to work on practical challenges; capture and share lessons; enhance capacities and establish a joint programme of research, learning and quality improvement. Another purpose of the platform is to support the development of robust methodologies for multi-stakeholder engagement, based on concrete experiences in the change initiatives.

2. *Does the platform have its own learning agenda?*

The Alliance partners will shape the learning agenda as the global learning platform takes shape. However, the Change Alliance has coalesced around three related learning objectives:

- To understand, experiment with and develop the capacities and tools needed to realize the full potential of multi-stakeholder processes to address the deeper challenges of social justice and sustainability that confront global society and communities worldwide
- To understand, experiment with and develop the practical value of complexity thinking in dealing with the complex contexts and issues that the challenges of social justice and sustainability present
- To understand and illuminate the role that leaders in business, government and civil society can play in creating the enabling conditions for effective multi-stakeholder processes

3. *What is the connection between the global learning platform and the action inquiry initiatives in the change alliance?*

The global learning platform will link experience and learning from many change initiatives across the boundaries of geography and issue areas to pursue its broad learning agenda. The documentation of a particular action inquiry in a change initiative not only supports effective action on the ground but also serves as the basis for sharing and connecting that experience and learning with others. Action inquiry will also produce an enhanced set of practical tools, techniques and more robust methodologies that can be used in facilitating change in a flexible way. Action inquiry sites will benefit from participating in the platform by accessing the knowledge and experience of a practitioner network and of the other change initiatives.

4. *What activities are envisioned for the global learning platform?*

The global learning platform will focus on adding value to the change initiatives of the Alliance partners and members and share its lessons learned with a wide audience. It will provide research, learning, knowledge management and capacity development functions that only become feasible and cost effective when supporting a wide network of participants. Potential activities of the learning platform include:

- Learning and coaching workshops for members of the action inquiry initiatives
- Establishing and implementing collaborative research activities on challenges and constraints to effective multi-stakeholder engagement
- Giving rise to the creation of new knowledge by Alliance members building on platform experiences
- Providing web-based and interactive resource portals

- Hosting regional and global learning and innovation workshops
- Collaborative capacity development and training programmes with regional educational institutions
- Documenting, communication and promoting the work of the Alliance
- Working with political, government, civil society and business leaders on how to create the enabling conditions for effective multi-stakeholder processes and on how to apply complexity thinking to policymaking in international cooperation.

5. *Who will be involved and in what roles?*

The Alliance partners—those institutions that are engaged in action inquiry initiatives and/or are supporting the Alliance as champions or members of the steering group—will form the core of the global learning platform. The partners will build the learning platform and its research agenda together based on the input and contributions from action inquiry sites and other change initiatives in which they are engaged. In addition, groups and individuals that provide expert support to multi-stakeholder change processes, as capacity builders, process leaders and facilitators and/or academic experts, will participate in the global learning platform as members of the Alliance. Leaders from government, business and civil society who are interested in the Alliance’s learning agenda may also participate. For a wider audience wishing to be connected to the Change Alliance network, there will be web-based access to news of the global learning platform and materials produced. The Steering Group, supported by the Secretariat, will lead in the convening and facilitation of global learning platform activities.

6. *What products will the global learning platform produce?*

With the caveat that not all information from all action learning sites can be shared publicly, the platform will synthesize the documentation of action inquiry initiatives and provide accessible presentations (reports, videos, blogs) of this and related work. The collective learning of the group engaged in the platform will also inform the development of new concepts and training materials on multi-stakeholder engagement and the practical application of complexity thinking. The platform may also produce position papers to support advocacy for greater investment in and commitment to multi-stakeholder processes as a core strategy for change initiatives focused on social justice and sustainability.