



*Learning*  
**FROM**  
**PRACTICE**



# MULTI-ACTOR INITIATIVES: LEARNING FROM PRACTICE



[www.hivos.org](http://www.hivos.org)

**Hivos**  
people unlimited

# PREFACE

Hivos has been gradually diversifying the role(s) that it performs in processes of systemic social change. To improve the effectiveness with which it is able to play these roles, Hivos periodically takes stock of its experiences. This paper entitled *Multi-actor Initiatives: Learning from Practice* is the result of critical reflection on Hivos' engagement with multi-actor initiatives (MAIs).

From 2007, Hivos began to move away from its established practice of making grants to individual civil society organizations and to support problem-focused, collaborative efforts by multiple actors that were using their complementary strengths to address complex social issues. This so-called MAI approach was to broaden the Hivos engagement with transformational development by looking beyond civil society organizations and scale up our impact. Hivos took on a variety of roles in these multi-actor initiatives.

As some of these roles were relatively new to Hivos, the Executive Board decided to assign Jamuna Ramakrishna (Senior Advisor Learning) with the task of systematizing Hivos' experiences with the development and implementation of multi-actor initiatives and facilitate a reflection on these experiences within the organization. This has amongst others led to this synthesis paper and five case studies. It also forms the basis for an internal e-learning module provided to Hivos staff.

This paper is not only an interesting and instructive read, it also provides important recommendations for the future. Hivos' MAI

experiences show that its effectiveness in performing a central role in multi-actor initiatives has varied. There are early signs of success. These are mostly in terms of developing new types of partnerships, building trust, initiating dialogue among stakeholders and successfully executing pilot projects. The ambition to achieve scale is there, although many MAI initiatives are all still in the 'proof of concept' phase. Developing and implementing MAIs have also been challenging. To help realize the full potential of multi-actor initiatives, the Hivos Board has incorporated key recommendations of this study in its organizational restructuring process. Thereby it aims to enhance the effectiveness of its MAI approach.

We feel that the relevance of these lessons go beyond the Hivos realm. Developers and implementers of multi-actor initiatives, particularly in the development field, can benefit from the wealth of knowledge gathered. Readers are encouraged to also read the case studies on which this synthesis paper is based.

Hivos is open to readers' comments and experiences with multi-actor initiatives, as we are always eager to learn more. We are also willing to provide you with more information on the practice of multi-actor initiatives.

For the present, I wish you an enjoyable read.

Ben Witjes  
*Director Programmes and Projects*  
Hivos

# CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>Organizational Character and Context</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>Terms and Definitions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Results of the Inventory: A Bird's Eye View</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A Closer Look at Five Multi-actor Initiatives</b>	<b>15</b>
A. Sumba Iconic Island	<b>15</b>
B. Malawi Campaign against Child Marriage	<b>16</b>
C. Stop Child Labour Campaign	<b>18</b>
D. Rural Value Chain Project	<b>18</b>
E. Sustainable Management and Autonomous Governance of Monte Verde	<b>19</b>
<b>Typology of multi-stakeholder initiatives</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	<b>23</b>
A. The Importance of Good Beginnings	<b>23</b>
B. Hivos' Role(s) and Added Value	<b>24</b>
C. Multi-actor Initiatives: For Whom, By Whom, With Whom?	<b>27</b>
D. Resourcing Multi-Actor Initiatives	<b>27</b>
E. Building Brands, Claiming Credit and Raising Funds in Multi-Actor Initiatives	<b>29</b>
<b>Implications: What Needs to Change to Accomplish the Strategic Shift?</b>	<b>31</b>
A. Organizational Mindset and Culture	<b>31</b>
B. Organizational Systems	<b>32</b>
C. Staffing	<b>34</b>
D. Re-design of Grant-making	<b>34</b>
<b>Rising to the Challenge: Steps Taken So Far</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Annex 1</b>	<b>40</b>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hivos, an international development organization, has responded to changes in its context by moving away from its established practice of making grants to individual civil society organizations. Instead, it emphasized support to problem-focused, collaborative efforts by multiple actors that were using their complementary strengths to address complex social problems. It took on a variety of roles in these multi-actor initiatives.

In visualizing future scenarios, Hivos foresaw other roles becoming more prominent – facilitator, coordinator, knowledge integrator, social innovator. To support its efforts to re-invent and re-position itself, Hivos decided to systematize and reflect on its experience of engaging with multi-actor initiatives, and to draw out lessons for its future direction. This paper presents the main findings and insights, which may have relevance beyond Hivos, for others involved in multi-actor initiatives.

The systematization of experiences took the form of an inventory, based on a questionnaire survey, and case studies of five multi-actor initiatives. The five cases were deliberately selected because they cover a range of geographic, thematic and role diversity.

The case studies showed that

- Some common pitfalls of multi-actor initiatives could not be avoided because Hivos underestimated the practical implications and extent of changes needed within the organization for active engagement with multi-actor initiatives. These changes run the gamut, from changes in mind set and organizational culture to changes in staff competences, procedures and systems.
- Multi-actor initiatives should not only entail collaboration of organizations but also the participation of the people who are seen to gain from the initiative. This is an aspect that has to be considered explicitly when designing multi-actor initiatives.
- The design of multi-actor initiatives should be more rigorous and intentional, and should include clear criteria for testing ideas / concepts and defined moments for decision-making (go/no go).
- The nature of collaboration varies from initiative to initiative. A broad, inspiring vision rather than a detailed and structured programme creates space for emergence, for co-development based on complementary strengths and interests.
- Hivos has played a variety of roles in multi-actor initiatives with varying degrees of effectiveness. Apart from having the competences in-house to essay these roles, clear articulation by Hivos of its roles and

responsibilities would provide a good starting point for collaborative relationships.

These challenges notwithstanding, and though most of the multi-actor initiatives that Hivos has been involved in are in the early stages, there are some early signs of success. These are mostly in terms of developing new types of partnerships, building trust, initiating dialogue among stakeholders and successfully executing pilot projects.

To realize the full potential of multi-actor initiatives, the many changes that have occurred within Hivos in the last decade need to go further. At a deep level, these changes are inter-related. Hivos' organizational systems were designed to serve what has been its core activity for decades – grant-making – and to meet the requirements of Hivos' main back donor, the Dutch government. Hivos has struggled to reconcile its approach to grant-making aimed at civic actors promoting social change with the pressures from the larger aid system for 'results'. This system often assumes that social change occurs in a relatively predictable manner, and that results can be defined beforehand. The assumptions, logic and metrics of the larger aid system are **fundamentally** different from those that have to be followed in a multi-actor initiative.

Process and learning are crucial in both multi-actor initiatives. Good process is likely to yield long-lasting dividends that are potentially deeper and more far-reaching than the immediate goals of a multi-actor initiative. Good process is also a condition for achieving those goals. If an initiative is able to generate impulses and processes that make longer-term solutions through unpredictable pathways possible, then the initiative can become a gateway to impact at the level of mission.

To the extent that grant-making continues to be part of Hivos' overall strategy, grant-making procedures should be re-designed to support collaborative and emergent processes. Likewise, Hivos' perspective and policy on partnerships may need to be revisited.

The re-structuring of Hivos as part of its 'Future Calling' strategy will help to address some of the difficulties encountered so far with multi-actor initiatives. Much will depend on effective operationalization of links between different functions and processes and on how all of these are embedded in an organizational culture that puts learning at the centre.

# INTRODUCTION

Since it was founded in 1968, Hivos, an international development organization, has been guided by humanist values and has followed its mission of working together with local civil society organizations to contribute to the creation of a free, fair and sustainable world in which men and women have equal access to resources and opportunities for development. It has responded to changes in its context and seized opportunities by frequently adjusting its thematic priorities, programmes and organizational set-up. Major changes in its context occurred during the 1990s and picked up pace during 2000s. By 2007-08, Hivos decided to shift its emphasis away from its established practice of making grants to individual civil society organizations. While there were multiple reasons for this decision, a few key trends and developments merit mention. One, a stock-taking exercise in the course of developing Hivos' business plan for 2011-15 led to the conclusion that while grant-making to CSOs had often yielded remarkable results in each of Hivos' policy priority areas, the results tended to remain confined to 'islands of success'. Systemic change remained a distant goal in many cases. Two, Hivos saw that changing realities both in Europe and in several countries in which Hivos worked were eroding the need for the 'traditional' role of funders. Three, due to domestic political developments, Hivos' traditional funding bases were becoming increasingly volatile. In response to these developments, Hivos began supporting problem-focused, collaborative efforts by multiple actors using their complementary expertise, strengths and abilities to solve complex social problems. Side by side, grant-making to individual civil society organizations continued.

Hivos did not wish merely to fund such multi-actor initiatives but to engage actively itself, and to take on different roles in these initiatives. Recognition that collaborative efforts were necessary for systemic change but usually do not emerge without facilitation underlay this interest. Hivos saw a possible role for itself in such situations. This shift in Hivos' strategy called for many different types of changes – of mind-sets, capacities, competences, processes, organizational systems and organizational culture – at the level of the organization and at the individual level. The actual magnitude of changes required was not fully appreciated at first, and became clearer in the course of engaging with multi-actor initiatives.

---

### ***The Strategic Shift***

*Hivos continues to seek a role in transformational processes of development but on the basis of being an organization with knowledge and skills necessary to further transformation through multi-actor cooperation. Grant-making is becoming a less and less important part of Hivos' added value. Hivos seeks to influence and work through other actors, by mobilizing and coordinating stakeholders. Longstanding complex problems of development are the starting point and are at the centre of the new programmes.*

---



This paper presents the results of Hivos' effort to systematize and learn from its experiences in making this shift in strategy. It has a dual purpose: 1) to identify priority issues that require follow-up in the context of Hivos' ongoing organizational re-structuring; and 2) to share the lessons learned with a broader audience in order to generate discussion and deepen understanding.

Since the moment in time in Hivos' history and Hivos' background are relevant to the analysis that follows, the organizational context and character are sketched briefly in the next section. Thereafter, terms are defined, the methodology followed summarized, and the five multi-actor initiatives that were studied are introduced before presentation of the findings and analysis.

People  
are people

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Though grant-making has been Hivos' core activity for much of its history, it has not been a 'traditional' donor. It has taken on a broader palette of roles. Its approach to grant-making was distinctive, shaped by the conviction that strong local civil society organizations are central to development processes. Accordingly, for many years, Hivos extended institutional support rather than project-based support to partner organizations. Hivos is an active linker and convener; it extends capacity development support; it has made long-term commitments to partner organizations; it has remained largely behind the scenes, positioning itself as an intermediary with vision; and its staff is generally modest, maintains a low profile, and respects the autonomy of partner organizations. These characteristics and Hivos' extensive network are potential assets for the strategic shift towards multi-actor initiatives.

The impetus for the strategic shift came mainly from three considerations. One was the gap between Hivos' ambition to contribute to systemic / transformational societal change and the results achieved to date, which pointed to the limitations of the approach followed thus far. Two, many of the countries in which Hivos had programmes were experiencing economic and social transitions and were taking on new roles at the global level (e.g., Indonesia, India, South Africa) with concomitant opportunities and challenges domestically. Three, swiftly changing economic and political realities in the Netherlands and in Europe, with substantial reductions in the

budget for development aid, and the increasingly tight coupling of geopolitical and trade interests with aid priorities, signalled the rise of a different paradigm of international cooperation, which allots a smaller role for traditional aid interventions and gives more prominence to multinational coalitions. In 2011, the Dutch government, Hivos' single biggest back donor, reduced its support to civil society through conventional development cooperation instruments. It was becoming increasingly apparent that further reductions would be made beyond 2015.

In this context, Hivos began making a concerted effort to engage more broadly with change processes, moving away from a single focus on civil society organizations, investing more in non-funding roles as well as diversifying its roles. In its application to the Dutch government in 2010, for the first time Hivos identified its programme management role explicitly as an asset and strategic direction. Alongside the shift towards multi-actor initiatives, Hivos was inspired by discussions regarding citizen driven change and civic agency. During this period Hivos endeavoured to build relationships and collaboration with a broader range of actors, and tried out some of these ideas and approaches. In 2011, Hivos launched 'Future Calling', a substantial re-thinking of Hivos' position and strategies through research and debate. Based on these explorations, Hivos defined a new ambition: to become a co-creator in social innovation processes, with a focus on six thematic areas.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more details, see Director of Programmes and Projects Ben Witjes' speech at 'Development as Innovation' Symposium, 23 April, 2013 (pdf file available for download at <http://www.hivos.org/hivos-after-2015>).

TABLE 1	
HIVOS AS GRANT-MAKER	AN ACTOR IN A MULTI-ACTOR INITIATIVE
Supports civil society organizations through institutional approach	Focuses on desired change rather than on strengthening civil society
Behind the scenes presence	Visible (when and to whom necessary), pro-active presence
Assesses proposals presented by partners	Jointly conceptualizes and is able to convert ideas to action in collaboration with other actors
Takes risks, willing to extend support to controversial issues (risk exposure is indirect)	Anticipates and assesses risks to the extent possible, attempts to mitigate risks in strategy (risk exposure is direct)
Rigorously assesses potential partners prior to entering into a funding relationship, thereafter a 'flexible' donor	Conducts thorough mapping and analysis of context and stakeholders, repeats periodically, and adjusts strategies based on outcome
Intensity of engagement with partners waxes and wanes at different points of the project cycle	Constantly monitors, reflects and strategizes. Process is intensive and key.
Approach to developing new ideas can be described as 'Let a thousand flowers bloom'	Greater intentionality and rigour in development of concepts and ideas
Has a network that consists mainly of civil society organizations and some donors	Has a diverse network, crossing sectoral boundaries. Works with that network in diverse roles. Has a diverse financial base.
Staff competences: grant-making, domain knowledge, monitoring, capacity development support, advice. To a lesser extent, knowledge generation	Staff competences: domain knowledge, brokering, facilitation, negotiation, adaptive planning, programme management, monitoring, learning, fundraising, acquisition



# TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Multi-stakeholder processes, multi-stakeholder initiatives, collective impact, coalitions, networks: there are numerous terms in current usage in the development aid sector. Hivos' choice of 'multi-actor initiative' reflects the wish to emphasize 'action' rather than 'stake'. In Hivos' parlance:

*A Multi Actor Initiative (MAI) is a large scale programme in which actors from different spheres (i.e. civil society, private sector, government) come together to address a common problem. The initiators of the MAI have agreed on a common goal, results and strategy to reach these, based on a careful analysis of the problem to be addressed. Other actors involved do not necessarily (explicitly) subscribe fully to the analysis and strategy, but they have expressed an interest to contribute to certain aspects of the Initiative. To reach the goal, the actors*

*depend on each other's activities and results and therefore a coordination structure has to be in place. Initiators and other actors can be (existing or new) CSO partners, but also commercial parties, governmental bodies or others (e.g. media). Within a MAI, Hivos can take on various roles: that of (co-)initiator, coordinator, funder, fund manager, and/or Hivos can be one of the implementing actors or a knowledge contributor. However, it is important that the sense of ownership of the Initiative stays with a broad group of initiators and actors.<sup>2</sup>*

While Hivos is not a 'traditional' donor, grant-making to individual civil society organizations has been its core activity for a long time. This core activity, and the specific requirements of Hivos' main back donor, have influenced Hivos' organizational culture and systems greatly and shaped external perceptions of Hivos. It is important to acknowledge this explicitly. Table 1 juxtaposes some key characteristics of Hivos as a grant-maker with some desirable characteristics of an actor in a multi-actor initiative, to give an indication of the nature of the change required. Deliberately, in order to drive the point home, the characteristics are not nuanced and are stated as archetypes.

Though this table overstates the case by juxtaposing two extremes, and the actual transition is a more fluid one, making the transition from one column to the other does require changes at many different levels and in many different processes. These range from mind-sets and nature of leadership to position profiles and systems and mechanisms for design, monitoring, evaluation and learning.

It would be relevant to highlight one other aspect of the organizational context: because of changes in Hivos' financial situation (already experienced as well as foreseen), there were considerable pressures on Hivos and its staff to be increasingly visible, to develop a clear profile, and to raise funds from diverse sources. For many years, Hivos had had an almost assured line of funding (largely untied) from the Dutch government, and this stability had allowed Hivos to position itself as a funder with quasi-independent funds. Over the last decade, both the certainty and size of this funding base has steadily decreased. Hivos has slowly become more of an intermediary, a fund manager, rather than a donor per se. Hivos now raises funds for specific initiatives from diverse sources. In 2000, more than 90% of Hivos' revenue came from the Dutch government. By 2007, this figure had decreased to 68%. By the end of 2013, this figure was 38%. During this period, Hivos' total revenues grew from Euro 56 million (2000) to Euro 92 million (2007) and finally to Euro 131 million (2013).

<sup>2</sup> Hivos TEC Memo 11.15 dated 28 April 2011, entitled 'Format Concept Note Proposal MAI'

# METHODOLOGY

In 2012-13, an inventory of Hivos' existing 'large initiatives' was prepared. Usage of the term 'multi-actor initiative' was deliberately avoided in the inventory because there was confusion within Hivos about what constituted a multi-actor initiative. Hivos' Bureau Heads and Directors of Regional Offices were asked to identify large initiatives using the definition given in the footnote. Their responses were taken at face value. A questionnaire survey was sent subsequently to those managing these initiatives.

The inventory provided a basic but limited mapping; for a more detailed and nuanced understanding of experiences to date, case studies of five multi-actor initiatives were prepared. The multi-actor initiatives to be studied were consciously chosen to cover the range in terms of geography, thematic focus and role(s) of Hivos. The purpose of

the case studies was to illuminate and examine Hivos' engagement with multi-actor initiatives by capturing and analyzing the unfolding process, and drawing out the lessons learnt. In doing so, specific attention has been paid to the roles played by Hivos and other actors over time, the challenges and dilemmas encountered, and the creative solutions and innovations generated.

The project was guided by an internal Project Reference Group, drawn from across Hivos. A variety of external people and resources were consulted. These interactions served to sharpen conceptual thinking regarding multi-actor initiatives, suggested tools that could be useful for Hivos' future practice, and provided insights into how others have handled the dilemmas, challenges and opportunities that multi-actor initiatives throw up.

---

<sup>3</sup> Large initiatives' were defined as those that address a complex and entrenched problem, have potential for impact at the level of structural change, have very high outreach, include multiple actors from different spheres, have high potential to influence government and/or private sector policies or people's behaviour, and involve major financial outlay (the indicative figure was Euro 1 million over three years). For all practical purposes, large initiatives fulfilling these criteria or designed to fulfill these criteria would be multi-actor initiatives.

# RESULTS OF THE INVENTORY: A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

By July 2013, 41 responses had been received to the questionnaire survey, tabulated and analyzed. The resulting picture showed that:

- The majority of the large initiatives involved actors from only one sphere (civil society, private sector or government). Going by Hivos' own definition, therefore, the majority of large initiatives were *not* multi-actor initiatives. In some initiatives, there were ongoing efforts to enlarge and diversify the group of actors involved.
- The most common role of Hivos was that of fund manager. Other roles frequently assumed were coordinator and facilitator. Additionally, Hivos provided specific inputs / performed specific functions, such as technical assistance / capacity development, linking, knowledge development, planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning, implementation and programme management.
- Most of the large initiatives had developed a Theory of Change but few had revisited, reviewed and revised this Theory of Change. This raises questions about the rigour of the process being followed, whether original assumptions were revisited critically in light of experience, and whether strategy was being adjusted based on emerging realities.
- Related to this, while most of the initiatives had created learning spaces and mechanisms, systematic critical reflection on experiences was quite rare.
- Capacity development priorities seemed to mostly follow the standard grant-mak-

ing approach and not influenced much by the shift in approach or Hivos' new role(s).

- Those managing the new initiatives felt that Hivos' organizational systems (e.g., programme administration) were geared to Hivos' regrating role and did not lend themselves to Hivos' new strategic direction and relationships.

An elaboration of the last two points may help to contextualize the case study findings. As mentioned earlier, Hivos has long been involved in extending capacity development support. Usually, this support has been in the areas of organizational development, exposure, and domain knowledge. It has rarely had to do with the actual ability of organizations to relate to and work collaboratively with others. Bringing about the desired complementarity and synergy in multi-actor initiatives takes intentionality and capacity. More specifically, (*capacity*) is about a system's ability to work with and through differences in view and power to achieve effective collaboration. It is about how divergence and asymmetries between actors are dealt with.<sup>4</sup> Thus, one would have expected the inventory to reveal an increasing emphasis on these aspects in Hivos' capacity development support agenda. And this should have been mirrored within Hivos itself, with simultaneous investment to develop parallel internal competences and capabilities.

Hivos' organizational systems were designed to serve what has been its core

---

<sup>4</sup> Jim Woodhill, 'Capacity Lives Between Multiple Stakeholders', Chapter 2 in *Capacity Development in Practice*, edited by Jan Ubels, Naa-Aku Acquaye-Baddoo and Alan Fowler, published by Routledge with SNV in July 2010.



© Josh Estey

# A CLOSER LOOK AT FIVE MULTI-ACTOR INITIATIVES

activity for decades: grant-making. The programme administration's main purpose is to track financial flows and to record results at the level of grantees. The standard contract template emphasizes the financial relationship and does not convey the sense of a partnership, of a common vision or shared responsibilities. Neither do these documents clarify where legal responsibility rests in multi-actor initiatives. Tension persists between Hivos' adoption of the Theory of Change approach, which implies a certain degree of flexibility and adaptive planning, and the fixed time frames and clarity

demanded by the established planning, monitoring and evaluation systems.

In the interests of brevity, only a flavour of the findings of the survey has been provided here rather than an exhaustive reporting. Suffice it to say, the inventory indicated that while Hivos had certainly embarked on a new path, much remained to be done. The case studies provide a more detailed and nuanced view of select multi-actor initiatives, and through this view a sense of the progress made and the gaps that remain.

Four of the multi-actor initiatives studied were national or sub-national and one was multi-country. The key characteristics of each initiative are summarized in Annex 1. Before getting into the individual cases, it may be pertinent to state that the nature of collaboration varied considerably across the five multi-actor initiatives studied. To give a sense of the range: Sumba Iconic Island takes its inspiration from a broad, ambitious overarching vision, and is loosely structured. There is ample space for actors to find their niches within the initiative, and to shape their contributions in line with their strengths and interests. The framework of the Rural Value Chain Project, on the other hand, was pre-determined by the USAID's Feed the Future Initiative Call for Proposals, and it is a time-bound initiative that has brought together several actors that had cooperated with each other earlier. In spite of this, the case study observes that the implementation phase of the latter programme was delayed because *many issues were not properly considered during the design phase, especially those dealing with the diversity of interests in highly complex context in terms of geography and politics*. Clearly, building and maintaining healthy collaboration is a constant work in progress, in which nothing can be assumed. And having participated previously in bilateral collaboration does not necessarily prepare organizations sufficiently to collaborate with multiple actors to achieve a larger goal that none can achieve individually. Such collaboration calls for shifts in stance, new competences, and an organizational agility that has to be cultivated.

## A. Sumba Iconic Island

The Sumba Iconic Island initiative seeks to serve the energy needs of over half a million people on the remote Indonesian island of Sumba through 100% renewable energy sources by 2025. The initiative was conceived by Hivos in 2009 as a showcase for its 100% Sustainable campaign. At the programme's start, only a quarter of Sumba's population had access to electricity. Fuel must be transported to the island, resulting in high energy production costs and unreliable supply. Around two thirds of the population depended on expensive and polluting kerosene for lighting and firewood for cooking. Sumba has abundant renewable energy resources, and the initiative aims to work with all stakeholders to produce a replicable model for achieving energy access in island settings. The initiative also provides a focus for campaigns in the Netherlands and in Indonesia to raise public awareness of and knowledge about climate change, renewable energy, energy access and poverty.

Sumba Iconic Island builds on the energy programme, track record and contacts of the Hivos Regional Office in Indonesia. Hivos interacted with local stakeholders in Sumba early in the programme. However, the main initial engagement was with the Indonesian Ministry for Energy and Mineral Resources, which went on to become Sumba Iconic Island's champion. The commitment of Ministry officials played an important role in securing local participation. The Sumba Iconic Island initiative was informally launched in November 2010. Since then, it has been able to bring together government (local, provincial and national), NGOs (local, national and international), private sector investors and donors around

the broad vision of 100% renewable energy for Sumba.

So far,

- Commitments have been secured from government, civil society and the private sector to work together towards the goal of 100% renewable energy on Sumba;
- A strong evidence base has been established through a series of feasibility studies for renewable energy interventions on Sumba;
- Pilot projects (micro hydro installation, biogas digesters) are being implemented and have increased support for the initiative;
- New actors have been mobilized to secure funding and implement renewable energy interventions;
- For the first time, inter-agency and inter-district dialogue on energy access has been generated;
- New structures and systems have been developed to coordinate, plan, monitor and evaluate the initiative; and
- The relevance of the Iconic Island Initiative has been communicated to wide audiences in the Netherlands and Indonesia.

It is too early to judge whether it will be possible to fulfil the ambitious goal of 100% renewable energy for Sumba by following a multi-actor initiative approach. The approach takes time and calls for a long-term commitment. However, the quick wins by pilot energy projects, successful engagement of important actors, and the acceptance of the overall objective by the Indonesian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources are early indicators of success.

## B. Malawi Campaign against Child Marriage

The idea for the Malawi Campaign against Child Marriage can be traced to community meetings that Hivos Programme Officers had during field visits to Malawi in 2009. At these meetings, the Programme Officers (Gender, Women and Development & HIV/AIDS) noticed that many girls were pregnant or already had babies. Conversations with the girls brought to light high levels of sex-

ual abuse and child marriage. It appeared further that sexual abuse was condoned.

The campaign is a response to the fact that 50% of girls in Malawi are married by the time they are 18 years old and, in most cases, not by choice. The practice of child marriage in Malawi is complex, diverse and deeply rooted, fuelled by different cultural and religious beliefs and exacerbated by poverty. Often, girls are married off to older men. The constitution of Malawi allows for children to be married by the age of 15 years with parental consent but married girls cannot access contraception as they are deemed too young.

The campaign visualizes the end of child marriages in a generation in Malawi through the promotion of the right of girls to choose their own destiny, and the development of socially and psychologically empowered young women. The campaign works through existing national and community-level structures, engaging with law and policy makers, religious, traditional and community leaders, parents, peers and community-based organizations to create social pressure, to develop policy and legal instruments to punish those who conduct child marriages, and to change attitudes and behaviours towards girls.

Since its inception, the campaign has helped to draw attention to the issue of child marriage. The campaign combines policy advocacy at the national level with community mobilization. The campaign has developed relationships with the Ministries of Youth, Gender, Justice and Health, has organized three high-profile national-level gatherings on the issue, and secured government endorsement for three regional symposia which have helped to galvanize action. These conferences and symposia have brought together seven groups of actors – media, academia, religious and traditional leaders, civil society, government, police, and social welfare agencies. They have made presentations, participated in group discussions and made commitments to end child marriages.



### C. Stop Child Labour Campaign

The Stop Child Labour Campaign (SCL) was inspired by the work of one of Hivos' partner organizations, the Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MVF) in India. In the 1990s, MVF questioned the then conventional wisdom that child labour is the inevitable consequence of poverty. Through its work, MVF demonstrated that the perpetuation of child labour sustains poverty by depriving children of education, and adults of jobs and fair wages. Breaking this cycle requires a shift in attitude among all concerned: schools, teachers, community members, local government, parents and children. MVF was a forerunner in taking a multi-actor initiative approach to the problem of child labour and by doing so was able to withdraw 600,000 children from labour and to make 1,500 villages free of child labour.

Seeing MVF's work on the ground inspired NGOs, trade unions and governments from around the world to adapt and adopt MVF's approach in other settings. In the current phase of the campaign, SCL is facilitating this process in Morocco, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. These countries were chosen because of the high incidence of child labour in sub-Saharan and southern Africa and because the members of SCL had local partners in those countries. The ambition of SCL is to withdraw 20,200 children from labour and to create 34 Child Labour Free Zones in these countries by the end of 2015. So far, 12,000 children have either been withdrawn from child labour and reintegrated in schools or prevented from dropping out of schools in these countries. Recently this work has been expanded to Central America.

SCL's strategy has evolved since its inception in 2003. At first, the campaign's agenda centred on education, awareness-raising, and advocacy aimed at influencing policy makers and decision makers to recognize and accept the link between child labour and education. Once that goal had been achieved in the Netherlands and the European Parliament, the campaign shifted its attention in Europe to issues of trade and economy, and began to engage with the

private sector. At present, SCL's ambition is to follow a two-way strategy: 1) encourage corporate social responsibility initiatives and companies in Europe to develop better policies and practices to combat child labour in the full supply and production chain; and 2) simultaneously link these initiatives and companies to local organizations to work together to create Child Labour Free Zones. The focus has been on two industries: footwear/leather and hazel nuts. As SCL's focus and strategy have evolved, some of the original actors left the campaign, some decided to support it from 'outside', and new actors joined the campaign.

Through SCL's work, the concept of Child Labour Free Zones has been gaining wider acceptance. In April 2013, the Kampala Declaration was signed by 120 representatives of NGOs, trade and education unions, employers, national governments, European Union, African Union and international organizations. Twenty-four countries, mostly African, were signatories; ILO was a witness. At a regional conference in October 2013, six Central American countries signed the Managua Declaration. By adopting these declarations, the signatories have shown commitment to the creation and strengthening of Child Labour Free Zones in their own local, national and international contexts. The concept has received strong support from the government of Netherlands as well.

Subsequent to SCL's constructive dialogue with companies and corporate social responsibility initiatives in the footwear industry, 17 out of 28 companies have taken steps to improve their policies and practices to stop child labour. As a consequence of SCL's campaign on child labour in the harvesting of hazelnuts in Turkey, UTZ developed a first certification programme for the hazelnut sector in Turkey.

### D. Rural Value Chain Project

The Rural Value Chain Project aims to improve food security and nutrition while simultaneously creating employment opportunities and increasing incomes among the smallholder farmers of the

Western highlands of Guatemala. This region is characterized not only by high levels of poverty, inequity and exclusion but also by conflict and polarization. Conflicts relate mostly to control over land resources. Lack of access to and ownership of land is a key factor in the persistence of poverty of indigenous peoples.

The Project grew out of the work of Hivos' longstanding partner organization, AgExport (Guatemalan Association of Exporters). Over the years, AgExport had developed a Value Chain Programme that linked small producers' organizations and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with the buyers and companies at the international level. Some of the SMEs were eco-enterprises, i.e. 'green' businesses. In the course of this work, AgExport had developed bilateral cooperation with other organizations with complementary expertise. In 2010-11, AgExport worked with these organizations to respond to USAID's Call for Proposals under the 'Feed the Future Initiative'. Following the requirements of USAID's Call for Proposals, the proposal was framed as a multi-actor initiative, with AgExport in the lead. Hivos joined this multi-actor initiative.

While AgExport brings its experience with value chains and development of SMEs to the initiative, the other actors bring in complementary strengths: Vital Voices - promotion of gender equality; Rainforest Alliance - forest management and access to carbon markets; Institute for Nutrition in Central America and Panama - addressing malnutrition; Inter-American Institute of Cooperation for Agriculture - systematization, knowledge exchange and learning within the value chains; Sotz'il - multicultural dimensions; Hivos - gender, renewable energy, carbon markets.

At Hivos' behest, three of Hivos' strategic regional partners participate in the multi-actor initiative as 'invitees'. CEDECO's expertise is in a methodology for certification of carbon sequestration in sustainable agriculture; SEFAS' is in promoting inclusive rural financial services and connecting small agricultural producers' organizations to financial institutions; and BUNCA's is in promoting

renewable energy technologies such as small hydroelectric plants and improved cook stoves.

After putting systems, structures, mechanisms and tools in place, implementation began in January 2013. During 2013, 43 value chains in horticulture, coffee, and handicrafts were approved. This signifies that one or more interested buyers have been identified, business and investment plans have been assessed and approved, and implementation of activities as per the business plans has begun. Also in the course of 2013, the actors approved a Gender Policy and agreed to set up a Gender Committee that would be charged with monitoring the main indicators of the Project, some of which are related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

### E. Sustainable Management and Autonomous Governance of Monte Verde

After prolonged struggles, new laws enacted in 2009 and 2010 opened up possibilities in the Bolivian political system for indigenous peoples to exercise territorial autonomy. More than 20 million hectares of land were subsequently designated as Indigenous Peasant Territories. These areas are extremely rich in biodiversity and natural resources. Having secured the right to autonomy and self-governance, indigenous communities are now faced with the challenge of managing these territories in a democratic, environmentally sustainable and economically viable way.

Hivos' partner organizations and Hivos' staff identified the territory of Monte Verde as having the best potential for facilitating the emergence of a multi-actor initiative aimed at empowering the communities and organizations of indigenous people to govern and manage their territory autonomously and sustainably. The multi-actor initiative builds on Hivos' 20 years' experience of working with indigenous peoples' organizations in Bolivia's lowlands, and its engagement with human rights, democratisation and sustainable economic development. It is an effort to coordinate and create syner-

getic action between indigenous peoples' organizations, local communities, producer organizations, community forestry associations, municipal and provisional territorial government, technical support organizations, NGOs, INGOs and private companies.

The key actors and their contributions are SNV (inclusive businesses, promotion of partnerships between the private sector and communities for sustainable business relations), APCOB (community development, comprehensive forestry management, production diversification and territorial planning), AFIN (sustainable forestry management and indigenous territorial organization management), SBDA (legal and environmental aspects of natural resources management), SICIREC (business oriented approach to natural resources management), and Hivos (gender, business opportunities for women and young people). These actors are cooperating closely with three federations of indigenous peoples (CCIC, CIPJ and CICOL) and the municipalities of Monte Verde. A coordination platform has been established, which includes other organizations that are active in Monte Verde.

There are multiple challenges in Monte Verde, ranging from encroachment and illegal felling of timber to lack of management tools and information and lack of capacities

in indigenous organizations and in the provisional government. The multi-actor initiative has begun by coordinating action on the first set of problems: pooling resources to improve patrolling and protection of the territory. This has proved to be a good way of building trust among the actors, and of generating goodwill in communities. Simultaneously, extensive consultative processes led to the formulation, first, of a strategic plan and, later, of a Comprehensive Development Plan for Monte Verde. This Plan was an important first step; much work remains to be done to ensure that it is widely known and understood in Monte Verde, and to facilitate the emergence of a common understanding and perspective. **Enhancement** of leadership and (technical) capacities using diverse methodologies is work in progress.

While the multi-actor initiatives studied represent a wide range of thematic content and geographic context, they also have some commonalities. At the level of vision, they share an ambition to transform the lives of those who have been marginalized – socially, economically, and politically – by enhancing their voice and agency. Participation is a core characteristic of all multi-actor initiatives but is an even more central concern when the goal is transformational development.

# TYOLOGY OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES

May Miller-Dawkins<sup>5</sup> has proposed a typology of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) in industry based on forms of participation. (These are MSIs that are used for setting technical standards, certification schemes, mediation and transnational rules-setting). This typology could be adapted and applied to multi-actor initiatives as well. Miller-Dawkins suggests four categories:

Representative-Stakeholder, Deliberative-Dialogue, Functional-Collaborative, and Participating while Remaining Outside (see Table 2). In reality, of course, these types are not watertight compartments, and there are, for instance, hybrids that combine elements of Participating while Remaining Outside with Functional-Collaborative. It would seem that most of the multi-actor

**TABLE 2: TYPOLOGY OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES BASED ON FORMS OF PARTICIPATION<sup>6</sup>**

TYPE OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVE	MAIN MODALITY	KEY PRINCIPLE
Representative-Stakeholder	Representative participation (with adequate attention to who actually participates)	People who are likely to be affected by the intervention are involved in its creation.
Deliberative-Dialogue	Dialogue and decisions by consensus	Get the voices of the marginalized heard.
Functional-Collaborative	Solving problems, drawing on expertise, resolving conflict	There is genuine commitment to change.
Participating while Remaining Outside	Campaigning, monitoring activities	Civil society is more effective at influencing change when different groups play insider and outsider roles in multi-stakeholder initiatives.

<sup>5</sup> <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/how-can-you-tell-whether-a-multi-stakeholder-initiative-is-a-total-waste-of-time/>

<sup>6</sup> Based on May Miller-Dawkins, 'How can you tell whether a Multi-Stakeholder Initiative is a total waste of time?' <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/how-can-you-tell-whether-a-multi-stakeholder-initiative-is-a-total-waste-of-time/> (March 10, 2014).



© Samuel Grumiau

initiatives that Hivos has engaged with to date could be characterized as 'Functional-Collaborative' because they focus on solving problems, drawing on expertise and resolving conflict. Though deliberation, negotiation, and compromise are important ingredients of the multi-actor initiatives that Hivos has engaged with, problem-solving – *action* – is at the core. This is reflected in Hivos' chosen terminology as well: multi-

actor initiatives. Miller-Dawkins flags the danger of overlooking political dimensions of collaborative relationships in Functional-Collaborative multi-actor initiatives, where disagreements among actors may be glossed over, leading even to co-option in the most extreme cases. It may be useful to keep this warning in mind when considering the case study findings.

# LESSONS LEARNED

## A. The Importance of Good Beginnings

The early stages of multi-actor initiatives are especially crucial. Choices made then and patterns set can determine the future effectiveness of an initiative.

### Proximity to the situation, depth of involvement, and continuity of engagement are crucial.

The Malawi Campaign and the Rural Value Chain Project both suffered from a lack of proximity because they were managed 'remotely' for significant portions of time, and Hivos' engagement was inconsistent. This made it very difficult for Hivos to 'sense' what was emerging, what could emerge, and to build on these opportunities or respond quickly to challenges. In the Rural Value Chain Project, there was a period of five months when there was no Hivos Programme Officer assigned to the multi-actor initiative, plus problems of communication and coordination between Hivos and AGEXPORT. This affected the delineation of Hivos' role in the multi-actor initiative and the development of relationships with other actors. The relationships remained bilateral, with AGEXPORT as a nodal agency. In the Malawi Campaign against Child Marriage, Hivos had no one based in Malawi till well into the third year of the campaign, and there was again a gap in the fourth year. This has made it difficult to sustain momentum and fulfil the expectations generated. Clearly, every multi-actor initiative that Hivos is involved in requires an anchor person within Hivos, who holds the vision and represents the multi-actor initiative internally and exter-

nally. Multi-actor initiatives cannot be staffed in the same way as grant-making activities. This issue will be addressed further in the section on resourcing multi-actor initiatives.

### Early and regular stocktaking needed to ensure that there is clarity regarding the approach to be followed and that procedures are effective.

The inventory and the case studies show that there was considerable confusion about what was meant by 'multi-actor initiative' and how these were to be realized. Hivos did take cognizance of this and issued a Memo and instituted a new procedure<sup>7</sup> to be followed to get formal approval for concept notes and to access resources. This procedure was not required if the role of Hivos in a multi-actor initiative was minor, i.e. if Hivos was one of many actors and not a co-initiator, key implementer or fund manager. To date, this procedure has been used only twice and one of these two initiatives did not get beyond concept note stage. Meanwhile, many more multi-actor initiatives have come into being, with no clear and consistent criteria having been applied when deciding whether to proceed or not. Rigour sans red tape and well-established go/no go moments would be helpful.

### The positioning or embedding of multi-actor initiatives within an organization requires forethought since it can affect the initiative's potential effectiveness.

The pros and cons of this issue may be best understood by looking more closely at the experiences of the Stop Child Labour Campaign and Sumba Iconic Island. The Campaign's

<sup>7</sup> Hivos TEC Memo, *op.cit.*

initial inspiration came from a partner organization in India whose work was supported during a period when Hivos' regional offices had considerable autonomy. For many years, the Campaign remained rather disconnected from the rest of Hivos. Its focus areas - children, child labour, and education - were not priority areas for Hivos. The framing of the campaign as a human rights issue did not resonate within Hivos HO. It was not until the campaign's strategy shifted to advocacy towards businesses, and campaign partners and back donors demanded greater involvement from Hivos that the campaign became better anchored within Hivos. The lack of links to other units of Hivos meant that there was little cross-learning or efforts to build synergy with other rights-based work going on elsewhere in Hivos. Early evaluations noted the lack of strategic direction and communication.

Like the Campaign, Sumba Iconic Island is also housed in Hivos' Bureau External Relations. The idea for Sumba was originally developed within this Bureau, with little involvement of either the Regional Office in Indonesia or of the Bureau for Sustainable Economic Development. The Regional Office became involved in selecting the island for the initiative. Later, the initiative was brought closer to Bureau for Sustainable Economic Development and the Coordinator was asked to move his office to this Bureau. Now, the initiative is better integrated into the overall strategy of Hivos, ownership is more broad-based, and some of the difficulties experienced by the Stop Child Labour Campaign have been avoided. Positioning these multi-actor initiatives in the Bureau of External Relations has also had its benefits: Bureau staff is highly skilled in defining missions that have appeal and in getting the message out. Initiatives are kept simple and easy to grasp. The initiatives have been able to evolve at their own pace.

**Clear articulation of Hivos' role and added value is critical for putting collaborations on a good footing.** The case studies show

that it was not always clear to other actors what role(s) Hivos was playing. It was much easier to demonstrate and communicate Hivos' role and added value when the strategic positioning of Hivos was articulated unambiguously and consistently from the outset as was done in this case: *The primary purpose of Hivos in Sumba is not to shoulder responsibility for implementation, but to mobilize and bring together other agencies capable of planning, funding and implementing projects on the island, and to profile useful approaches.* This is a crucial issue, regardless of whether Hivos is attempting to start a multi-actor initiative or is joining an existing one. This clarity is a minimum requirement for laying the foundation for collaboration, and for other actors to recognize and acknowledge non-funding roles of Hivos.

### **B. Hivos' Role(s) and Added Value**

The case studies show that Hivos has played a variety of roles ranging from initiator, convenor, broker, facilitator, coordinator, advisor, implementer to funder and fundraiser. Especially in situations like Monte Verde where there has been a history of tensions and conflicts between potential actors, Hivos has been able to use its good relationships to convene those who may otherwise not have come together. It has endeavoured to be the broker who ensures that the process is inclusive and that all with Authority, Resources, Expertise, Information and Need<sup>8</sup> are actors in the initiative.

It has not always been clear to other actors, however, which roles Hivos was assuming and which responsibilities associated with those roles Hivos was accepting. This was an observation made in interviews both in the Rural Value Chain Project and in Monte Verde. The funder role is such a powerful one that in spite of the best of intentions, it tends to eclipse other roles, and to restrict behavioural options and partnership development. It remains questionable whether it is possible to have an open and honest con-

versation with grantees regarding Hivos' added value and its performance in diverse roles.

When working with longstanding partner organizations in multi-actor initiatives, it would be important to remember that they, like Hivos, have to make a shift from a project perspective to a strategic vision. This is a frequently encountered challenge, typified by the experience in Monte Verde. Both Hivos and its partner organizations are well-versed in institutional planning at the level of individual organizations. But strategic planning in a multi-actor initiative calls for a very different perspective and analysis. That being said, the indigenous leaders in Monte Verde recognize that the nature of (international) cooperation is changing and that Hivos' role has changed from providing direct support to grassroots organizations to promoting strategic cooperation and coordination. This realization has to percolate throughout multi-actor initiatives and inform the way in which all actors play their respective roles.

Further, if actors are accustomed to seeing Hivos in a donor role, it will take time to assume the role of facilitator bringing in new themes and expertise to the table. In Monte Verde, Hivos introduced new themes (gender, small businesses, and agency of indigenous federations) which are valued now but were not at the beginning.

Well-established multi-actor initiatives like the Stop Child Labour Campaign show that roles (including Hivos') evolve with time. Hivos started as a donor in the Campaign. Over time, in response to the demands of the campaign and the context, Hivos became coordinator, advocate, agenda setter, and grant seeker. Each of these roles called for different competences and capabilities and these new demands were not always anticipated in a timely fashion. Not everything can be known or decided from the start. Emergent design, adaptive planning and iterative approaches imply that dif-

ferent types of abilities, resources and activities will be needed at different points of time in a multi-actor initiative. At any given point in time, however, actors should be clear about their roles and what these demand. The changing staffing requirements of a multi-actor initiative over its life time will be discussed in the section on resourcing.

What has been Hivos' added value outside of funding? Added value is a function of resources, competences and time. The competences include domain knowledge and crucially, facilitation<sup>9</sup> and negotiation skills. AGEXPORT recognizes that Hivos offers the possibility to create innovative models and that is what AGEXPORT values in the partnership. Innovation inevitably means risk. Hivos was able to mitigate risk for private sector investor Nagata Bisma Shakti in Sumba by assuring support, stakeholder coordination and commissioning focused research. Subsequently, Nagata Bisma Shakti decided to invest in a pilot wind turbine installation Sumba. In keeping with its mission and values, Hivos promotes certain principles in multi-actor initiatives. This is reflected in Monte Verde, where Hivos has pushed for the inclusion of women and young people in the multi-actor initiative. Hivos has also worked to ensure that Sumba does not become a testing ground for unproven technologies. In all the initiatives, attention has been paid to building local ownership and to issues of sustainability. Meaningful realization of the principles of local ownership and inclusion calls for *in situ* capacity which is not always available. Hivos has been able to help diverse actors, sometimes with histories of conflict, to find common ground. In Monte Verde, Hivos organized dialogues to bring points of view of the participants in the coordination platform closer together. Hivos has also created opportunities for cross-learning by organizing exchange visits. The Stop Child Labour Campaign is the best example of this among the case studies.

<sup>8</sup> Peggy Holman, *Engaging with Emergence: Turning Upheaval into Opportunity*, 2010, Berrett Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, quoted in 'Guidance Note for the Programmatic Approach of the ICCO Alliance' (Version 2).

<sup>9</sup> Though external facilitators may be engaged in a multi-actor initiative to facilitate meetings of actors, for example, facilitating skills are needed throughout a multi-actor initiative and should be available with all the key actors.



Of course, the competences required to fulfil the role(s) that Hivos aspires to have to be available within the organization. Most importantly, Hivos has to begin performing the new roles from the start of each new initiative and in a convincing fashion. When this happens, as it has in Sumba Iconic Island, other actors begin to perceive Hivos differently and alter their approach to Hivos accordingly. *Those most closely involved in the initiative are enthusiastic about what they see as a new and useful approach, and value the role of Hivos in coordinating and pushing the process forward. Promoting this change in mindset is perhaps one of the key challenges for a multi-stakeholder approach.* In the case of Sumba Iconic Island, Hivos was helped by the fact that it was already known to the Indonesian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources in another role, as the manager of BIRU, the Indonesian Domestic Biogas Programme.

Hivos sees its partner network as an asset. It can be an asset, provided Hivos invests early on in facilitating interaction and dialogue among the actors, supports partners to prepare sufficiently developed products or approaches that fit well with local needs, and creates spaces for synergies to emerge. Merely bringing partners together in a programme is insufficient. Hivos may see an obvious niche for its own expertise and that of its partners. This 'fit' may not be as clear to the other actors in the initiative as it is to Hivos. The experience of the Rural Value Chain Project illustrates this.

### **C. Multi-actor Initiatives: For Whom, By Whom, With Whom?**

The case studies reflect what is generally true of multi-actor initiatives that Hivos is engaged in: the actors are usually organizational actors. This raises a serious issue that May Miller-Dawkins' typology pointed to: To what extent are people represented and participating in transformational processes in which they are the key stakeholders or 'beneficiaries'? Because of legal and other considerations, more often than not, involvement of these key stakeholders is very indirect and extremely limited during crucial design and development phases of multi-actor initia-

tives. Issues related to capacity are likely to surface – lack of organization, of professionalism – and act as barriers to substantive engagement. This limits the possibilities for those most affected to take up leadership roles in implementation phase as well.

The experience in Monte Verde brings this point into sharp relief. Though there are federations of indigenous people that the multi-actor initiative relates to, the main actors involved are NGOs, and it has been a continuing struggle to promote the agency of the federations. Hivos has been focusing on this and stimulating reflection on the changing role of NGOs. In Sumba Iconic Island, too, linking local with national agendas and mobilizing community around this has been challenging. There may be any number of reasons why this is a struggle in any given context but ultimately, dignity and agency are intangibles that are intrinsic to systemic change. Further, it is unlikely that systemic change can be achieved without working simultaneously at different levels (from personal to community to national and beyond), and linking those strategies.

One of the implications is that in forming partnerships and designing multi-actor initiatives, the individual and collective ability of potential actors to promote citizen agency has to be assessed. Any capacity enhancement that may be necessary should be woven into the design of the multi-actor initiative. It cannot be assumed that all civil society organizations have the capabilities needed to promote citizen agency. This should be a major issue for reflection and analysis in the inception / design / feasibility phase of multi-actor initiatives.

Due to various pressures, it is possible to lose sight of the fact that the specific immediate problem that a multi-actor initiative addresses is just an entry point to reach the ultimate goal of empowerment and agency. Losing sight of this larger goal undermines the *raison d'être* of multi-actor initiatives.

### **D. Resourcing Multi-Actor Initiatives**

Because of the nature and ambitions of multi-actor initiatives, there are many

aspects to resourcing them. The financial aspects have tended to preoccupy Hivos compared to other resources and attributes necessary for multi-actor initiatives: information (database and dissemination), relationships, expertise, credibility, products, and space/infrastructure. Viewing all of these through financial lens can distort the value of what each actor brings into a multi-actor initiative. In fact, genuine collaboration may emerge when there are no financial resources on offer. In such a situation, there is less doubt about the motivations of the different actors, and less temptation to act unilaterally.<sup>10</sup>

Multi-actor initiatives undoubtedly require financial resources but in the early stages what is more important are human resources with specific competences and an organizational environment that is conducive to team work, testing of ideas and building of partnerships. A look at the financial data of the five multi-actor initiatives described in this paper confirms this to be the case.

So far, Hivos has been able to provide the 'seed money' to finance the early stages of developing and designing multi-actor initiatives. Process is key in multi-actor initiatives, which implies certain minimum human resource requirements (quality and quantity), which means, in turn, that overhead costs cannot be reduced beyond a point. Investments in human capital, infrastructure and management information systems are invariably needed. Meeting these costs may require some unconventional thinking. Donors are becoming increasingly open to supporting collaborative processes. It would be strategic to involve them at an early stage so that they are oriented to the nature of multi-actor initiatives and the need for flexible funding modalities. But other ways of

covering costs should be explored as well. For example, the exploration of a new idea could be 'sold' to a directly involved stakeholder.<sup>11</sup>

Besides mobilizing additional resources, existing resources could be better used. Hivos has sometimes not been able to make optimal use of its capacities because multi-actor initiatives were not seen as team endeavours, with team members having clear roles and responsibilities. The Malawi Campaign against Child Marriage is a case in point. Team work is constrained by the individualistic work culture in Hivos, by the lack of internal incentives and stimulus, and the tenuous nature of informal cooperation. In addition, some core expertise and skills (finance, Theory of Change, gender, Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, for instance) were not decentralized enough. Hivos' 'bench strength'.<sup>12</sup> In these core areas, it would appear, was less than it should have been given the number of multi-actor initiatives Hivos entered into. Hivos reduced staff in 2011 in response to a budget cut implemented by its main back donor; in the wake of these reductions, management wished to restrict fresh recruitments financed from this source of funds.

The introduction of the project management procedure and current re-structuring of Hivos should help to address these problems. It would be important to take cognizance of the fact that the organizational context for this procedure, specifically the dynamics between Head Office and Regional Offices, how teams are formed, and how organizational units cooperate will greatly influence the effectiveness of the procedure. There should be stock-taking of the adequacy of Hivos' bench (in terms of composition as well as its size) at regular intervals after the new procedure has been

introduced, organizational restructuring has been completed, and new staff members are on board. The project management procedure should be reviewed as well. Is team work actually happening? Is essential support being extended when, where and how it is required?

To the extent that grant-making continues to be part of Hivos' overall strategy, the difficulty juggling contract management with developing and managing a multi-actor initiative will have to be recognized. Apart from serious time pressures, the competences required for contract management are quite different from those needed for engaging with multi-actor initiatives.

Not only do multi-actor initiatives require very different competencies than grant-making, the requirements change over the life of an initiative. In the early stages, entrepreneurial qualities, abilities to develop and test ideas, good radar for identifying new opportunities, and excellent networking skills are required. Later, when the multi-actor initiative has matured, and the emphasis is on scaling up, more managerial abilities and advocacy skills are needed. Excellent communication, negotiation and facilitation skills are necessary throughout. Such a dynamic approach to staffing is not discernible yet in Hivos; this could be because most of the multi-actor initiatives in which Hivos is engaged are still in the early stages.

Trust is the basic glue that holds multi-actor initiatives together and is essential for true synergy to emerge. Building trust takes time and deliberate effort - crucial work that needs to be done in the early stages of multi-actor initiatives, even though it may not appear to be producing any tangible results. Maintaining trust also requires ongoing effort. In other words, process remains crucial throughout a multi-actor initiative, and not only in the beginning. Staff changes can disturb or even set back the level of trust among partners in a multi-actor initiative. Staff changes in the Rural Value Chain Project, especially, slowed down the development of collaboration substantially. Well-planned and executed hand-over and induction processes can help to reduce these ill effects.

Multi-actor initiatives demand different competences and different mind-sets from staff and from management. First and foremost, both staff and management have to be able to deal with uncertainty and with emergent scenarios. Staff has to be able to shift gears and be able to think and act swiftly at different levels (from micro to macro). Key qualities and process skills in addition to particular thematic or technical expertise: listening, adapting, enabling, weaving, constant learning (and unlearning), facilitation (of systemic change process, of multiple relationship partnerships, of building trust and shared confidence), building shared analysis and Theories of Change, conflict resolution.

Ideally, staffing in a multi-actor initiative should be demand driven. It should be predicated on stakeholder demand for coordination, communication, etc. This remark from the Sumba case study is particularly insightful: *the minimal staffing arrangements had some beneficial effects by ensuring that Hivos stayed focused on stakeholder mobilization and coordination. ...too much spare capacity could potentially lead staff to veer off into too much own implementation. Staffing was therefore kept very limited until after Hivos had secured more external funding and progress.* So this is one of the tightropes that has to be walked in multi-actor initiatives: finding the balance between too many staff and too few staff.

### E. Building Brands, Claiming Credit and Raising Funds in Multi-Actor Initiatives

The pressure to be visible to donors (mostly), to be recognized for effectiveness in chosen role(s) and to raise funds confronts every actor in a multi-actor initiative to some degree. How this pressure is handled by the initiative, whether do's and don'ts have been discussed among participants early on, and how (potential) conflicts of interest are defused are all critical factors in determining the longevity and continuing effectiveness of a multi-actor initiative. There is no time limit for these issues to crop up. Even quite well-established multi-actor initiatives can come close to being de-stabilized when

<sup>10</sup> "(Actors in a multi-actor initiative) shouldn't be there in search of a lost identity or funding. (Rather they should be) clear about what they can contribute to solving the social problem that (the initiative) is facing." Rob van Tulder in the Foreword to 'Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives: A Strategic Guide for Civil Society Organizations' by Mariette van Huijstee, SOMO, Amsterdam, March 2012, ([http://somo.nl/publications-en/Publication\\_3786/?searchterm=](http://somo.nl/publications-en/Publication_3786/?searchterm=))

<sup>11</sup> Kennisland, for instance, starts many of its big programmes in this way, bringing on board the relevant Ministry or housing corporation or other stakeholder as an investor.

<sup>12</sup> Human resources 'over capacity' in key support functions and core interest areas. Though this may run counter to the idea of becoming a lean organization, this over-capacity may be necessary if Hivos wants to become more hands-on, to seize opportunities, and to deliver on its commitments.



one or other of the actors tries to claim credit for achievements and/or to use the association with the multi-actor initiative to gain visibility for itself and/or to raise funds. The Stop Child Labour campaign has weathered such a moment:

*In 2013, (Hivos') Bureau External Relations organized a 'school campaign' on child labour and education (in the Netherlands). This has unleashed sensitivities with other consortium partners in the Netherlands, because they were not engaged and not consulted, and because it was felt that Hivos had hijacked the issue.*

Besides being prepared for these tensions and situations, and agreeing upon a code of conduct with regard to profiling, branding and fundraising, making some practices standard may be helpful. Joint fundraising

efforts and/or putting the initiative rather than participating organizations at the centre of fundraising efforts may help. Both Sumba Iconic Island and Stop Child Labour Campaign have routinely presented 'Iconic Island' and 'Stop Child Labour, School is the Best Place to Work' as the official face / 'brand' of their respective multi-actor initiatives. This can work remarkably well in making sure that the mission of a multi-actor initiative remains in the forefront rather than the individual organizations involved.<sup>13</sup> Though this practice is generally followed, the Stop Child Labour Campaign still had to deal with a crisis when the school campaign was run. That shows that visibility and profiling are sensitive subjects, especially when competition for resources is stiff; alertness to this reality along with a trust and good communication are crucial to avert serious crises.

<sup>13</sup> Wei and Silver assert that this approach also strengthens collaboration in the long run: *Networked nonprofits understand that when it comes to recognition, giving can be more powerful than receiving. Sharing or even eschewing recognition for contributions to the network builds a reservoir of goodwill that motivates all participants to fully invest and lend their ongoing support to the network.* Jane Wei and Nora Silver, Four Network Principles of Collaboration Success, *The Foundation Review*, 5(1): 121-129, 2013.

# IMPLICATIONS: WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE TO ACCOMPLISH THE STRATEGIC SHIFT?

There have been many changes within Hivos in the last decade but in order to engage more effectively with multi-actor initiatives, the changes need to go further. At a deeper level, these changes are inter-related.

## A. Organizational Mindset and Culture

The assumptions that underlie the larger aid system are fundamentally different from those of a multi-actor initiative. To put it very simplistically, the larger aid system assumes that big money = big programme = big impact.<sup>14</sup> Impact is not possible if funds have not been disbursed and spent. Because of this reasoning, there is considerable pressure to meet spending targets. The logic of multi-actor initiatives is different: big impact is the result of very intelligently designed programmes and small but flexible funding<sup>15</sup> (small relative to the ambition of the initiative). This understanding has to inform how goals are set, planning and budget are done, how staff is deployed, and how funds are raised.

Closely linked to the previous point is the issue of what drives Hivos to engage with multi-actor initiatives. Is it because Hivos is convinced that systemic change is not possible without involving actors from different spheres? Is it because Hivos wishes to

ensure its own future as a meaningful actor in development processes? These drivers are not necessarily diametrically opposed but if both exist side by side, there will be continual internal tension, which will express itself when planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning systems and other organizational systems are (re)designed, when staff and organizational capacities are (re)defined, and when the work culture is (re)described.

Hivos' approach to partnerships has to be re-defined. As a grant-maker, Hivos refers to its grantees as its 'partner organizations'. The funding contract is a central part of that partnership, and there is an element of control in the relationship, a sense of being in the driver's seat, however illusory that sense may be. Partnerships in multi-actor initiatives are about trust-based relationships and about developing a pattern of behaviour that demonstrates commitment to the values of the initiative by all involved. Partnerships in this context are about building a core of trust and letting go of control. Success in a multi-actor initiative would depend very much on sensing and forging the right partnerships, and on identifying leverage points and dead ends. To the extent that a funding relationship remains, there is a possibility that issues of power differentials will distort the partnership. In all five cases studied, Hivos did have funding relation-

<sup>14</sup> This usually translates into many individual partner organizations, broad outreach, and diverse and indirect contribution to impact.

<sup>15</sup> Which can and has been used to leverage substantial additional funding.

ships. Hivos did not have the lead in two cases – Rural Value Chain Project and Monte Verde – and in another case – Sumba – has had to contend with a large and influential donor, ADB. These are uncomfortable positions to be in for Hivos, and it is taking time for Hivos to learn how to negotiate these situations and make meaningful contributions.

Multi-actor initiatives (and social innovation) accept that there are no silver bullets waiting to be deployed. Or blue prints, or ‘one size fits all’ solutions. While this absence of readymade perfect solutions opens up space for creativity, it simultaneously increases the need for real-time learning, discipline, rigour, questioning and testing. Of particular importance are the ability to learn from failure and to develop and adopt a systematic approach to experimentation. Learning has to become an integral part of organizational culture, programme design has to include tight feedback loops, and those involved in the programme have to have capacity for experiential learning.<sup>16</sup>

In parallel to internal learning, more systematic efforts to learn from the experiences of others are also necessary. For example, Hivos was not the first to venture into multi-actor initiatives. Those who preceded Hivos have produced numerous case studies, tool kits, reflections and analyses. Though there are differences in terminology and though very few organizations have tried to be both funder and actor in a multi-actor initiative, there were many relevant lessons that could have informed Hivos’ path and helped to avoid some common pitfalls.

Finally, looking also to the future and to Hivos’ ambition to become a social innova-

tor, Hivos could give higher priority to nurturing its non-financial assets and to investing in developing these (political knowledge, connections, and skills, for example). At present, the overwhelming emphasis is on financial assets. However, non-financial assets are hugely important in both multi-actor initiatives and social innovation.

## B. Organizational Systems

Organizational systems are very closely linked to organizational culture, organizational context, core business, priorities and values. In Hivos’ case, both the grant-making and the monitoring and evaluation systems were largely shaped by the requirements of the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation (DGIS), which was Hivos’ main source of funds from 1978 till the early 2000s.<sup>17</sup> In the early years, DGIS followed a trust-based system which allowed a great deal of flexibility and autonomy. Hivos was relatively free to design its own monitoring and evaluation systems and practice. In the last 15 years, however, DGIS has shifted to a protocol-driven approach in response to increasing political and public distrust of subsidized development cooperation. With each new funding phase, DGIS adopted increasingly narrow and control-driven frameworks. Simultaneously, in the formal aid system, there was a narrowing of what constituted valid evidence. In this environment, Hivos attempted to marry the purposes of accountability, learning and autonomy. This proved to be an uphill battle for multiple reasons. Organizational habits are shaped by the incentive mechanisms of the aid system which prioritize short-term results, blue-print thinking, upward accountability and project funding. *In short, the context of international cooperation was – and is – not conducive for approaches*

<sup>16</sup> Though Matt Andrews and colleagues coined the label in another context, ‘problem-driven iterative adaptation’ could be applied equally well here to describe the social innovation process, especially. For more on problem-driven iterative adaptation, see *Escaping Capability Traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation*, Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP12-036, by Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett, and Michael Woolcock, August 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Marjan van Es and Irene Guijt have traced and analyzed the consequences of the growing pressure for upward accountability on Hivos’ approach to monitoring and evaluation in their draft chapter ‘Theory of Change as Best Practice or Just Another Artefact? Reflections on Hivos’ Journey’ (working title, September 2014). The final version of the chapter will be published in 2015 in the book *The Politics of Evidence in International Development: Playing the Game or Changing the Rules?* This section draws heavily on their chapter.



© Josh Estey

*that acknowledge uncertainty and complexity and promote adaptive responses, and pushed partner organizations and Hivos itself in an opposite direction.*<sup>18</sup> This is a challenge that Hivos faces going forward as well: it will have to swim against the tide in order to re-shape its systems to suit social innovation. Inevitably, the monitoring and evaluation requirements of future sources of funds will affect the space that Hivos will have to re-shape its systems – regardless of whether that source is part of the formal aid system or not.

Undoubtedly changes in systems are required. Complex initiatives need very clear structures, good programme administration systems and good tools. Other actors should be clear about how Hivos is organized, who they should address, and who is responsible.

Hivos’ organizational systems were designed to serve what has been its core

activity for decades – grant-making. Hivos has struggled to reconcile its approach to grant-making with the pressures from the larger aid system for ‘results’. This system often assumes that social change occurs in a relatively predictable manner, and that results can be defined beforehand. Several changes are necessary in Hivos’ organizational systems to support the ambition to achieve systemic change.

- Adaptive planning, where flexibility is maintained, and monitoring and evaluation systems are adjusted to cater to non-linear processes of change;
- Metrics for assessing progress are suitably adjusted;
- Related to the earlier point, clarity on what success would look like in a multi-actor initiative or social innovation. In other words, what would the markers of an effective multi-actor initiative or social innovation be? What would be the appropriate time for Hivos to step in and step out of both these types of processes?

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

- Different approach to budgeting, that takes into account that the initial costs of multi-actor initiatives and social innovation are likely to be low but longer term investment will be needed and is likely to be unpredictable;
- Given that both multi-actor initiatives and social innovation are time-intensive processes, assignment of dedicated personnel to ensure continuity and good institutional memory;
- Decision-making processes are adapted to the logic of multi-actor initiatives and social innovation;
- Communication (skills and infrastructure) are widely available throughout the organization;
- Mechanisms to assess risk are developed and linked clearly to decision-making processes.
- Contracts and agreements that orient multi-actor initiatives by reflecting their spirit and dynamics, by capturing the roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved, and by tracking outcomes that go beyond the achievements for a single organization.

### C. Staffing

- Ability to work with collaborative approaches should be an explicit criterion in recruitment and performance assessment processes, as well as ability to manage a variety of relationships, to resolve conflicts, to maintain a diverse network, and to communicate Hivos' added value.
- Continuous development of knowledge and skills needed for multi-actor initiatives (including process aspects) by enabling par-

ticipation in relevant networks and meetings and by conducting action research

- In-depth country experience and technical knowledge.

### D. Re-design of Grant-making

Though grant-making is expected to decline in prominence beyond 2015, since it is likely continue to be part of Hivos' overall strategy, it is useful to consider how it can be re-designed to support Hivos' engagement with multi-actor initiatives (and social innovation). In fact, this could be a niche area of innovation for Hivos. So far, the nature of Hivos' grant-making has not been affected significantly by Hivos' involvement in multi-actor initiatives. Standard contracts continue to be used. Some priorities to guide re-designing:

- A fresh approach to due diligence process;<sup>19</sup>
- Flexible (but not open-ended) funding;
- Support is mission-driven rather than organization-focused;
- Avoidance of spending targets and short-term pre-defined results;
- Theory of change recognises and captures complexity and unpredictability.

There is also the difficulty of playing multiple roles when one of the roles is that of funder. Though by no means ideal, a pragmatic via media can be to assign contract management tasks to a different staff member than the one who represents Hivos in the multi-actor initiative. Hivos has also tried operating at arm's length, handing over the decision-making regarding grants to intermediary organizations.

<sup>19</sup> The existing due diligence process is focused on an organizational assessment. In multi-actor initiatives, a different type of assessment that takes stock of the relevance of the multi-actor initiative and its potential effectiveness may be necessary. Pertinent questions may include: What other relevant collaborations already exist? What are the pros and cons of joining existing collaborations rather than developing a new one? What is the relationship between citizens' / peoples' organizations and the (potential) actors involved in the proposed multi-actor initiative? To what extent can citizens' / peoples' change agendas be included through the actors involved? What motivates the potential actors? What does each one of them bring to the multi-actor initiative?

# RISING TO THE CHALLENGE: STEPS TAKEN SO FAR

This stock-taking of Hivos' experience to date with multi-actor initiatives is but one of several ongoing activities which are intended to assist Hivos in repositioning and reinventing itself. The 'Future Calling' trajectory mapped out Hivos' strategic choices in terms of objectives, roles, themes and business models. One of the main outputs was a plan for reorganizing and restructuring Hivos, specifically aligning staffing pattern, position profiles and competences with Hivos' ambition of becoming a social innovator that leads in a limited number of themes, and is skilled in acquisition and advocacy. New positions like Business Development Officer and Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer have been created. Hivos' core process was redefined as well, moving away from grant-making to one of co-creation and facilitation of social innovation processes. Hivos expects to complete the restructuring process in 2015. Since there are many similarities between the competences and organizational capabilities required for social innovation and for multi-actor initiatives, these adjustments should be helpful for Hivos' future involvement in multi-actor initiatives as well.

To induct and orient staff, and to build and maintain competences, Hivos revamped its professional development programme, the Hivos Academy. It has been converted into a series of e-learning modules. Apart from a module on multi-actor initiatives and one on social innovation, the Academy has modules on related topics like Theory of Change.

A new project management procedure is being formulated which is expected to streamline the project cycle and team work, and indeed make this the preferred way of working in Hivos. The procedure will support optimal deployment of human resources. In addition, time writing is being introduced so that planning and budgeting of staff time can be done more systematically.

The existing procedure on multi-actor initiatives is being revisited and reformulated. Clear go / no go moments will be incorporated in the procedure, as well as criteria for assessing the feasibility of the initiative.

Standard contract templates will be reviewed and updated with advice from legal experts so as to make them better suited to the nature of the new partnerships that Hivos is entering into.

Though the multi-actor initiatives that were studied are not examples of this, Hivos is working on re-designing and re-casting the manner in which it plays the 'donor' role. Hivos is attempting to reposition itself as 'activist co-investor' and to make a clear break from the traditional donor role, where the main function is grant-making and respecting the autonomy of the implementing organization. For instance, Hivos is in the process of setting up several impact investment funds. An example is the Mid-East Creative Impact Investment Fund, which would fund start-ups and small enterprises in the creative industry that are too small and risky for banks and micro-finance institutions and do not qualify for grant money but which are congruent with Hivos' vision.

# CONCLUSIONS

What were Hivos' assumptions and aspirations when it shifted its strategy towards multi-actor initiatives? It wished to broaden its engagement with transformational development by looking beyond civil society organizations. It chose the term 'multi-actor initiatives' because it wanted to emphasize 'action' more than 'process'. It visualized a central role for itself in multi-actor initiatives. And it chose multi-actor initiatives as a way of scaling up impact. It would appear from the case studies that greater attention to process and improving process-related capabilities may, in fact, help to clear some of the bottlenecks and barriers encountered in defining the agenda for action. The effectiveness with which Hivos has played a central role in multi-actor initiatives has varied. The ambition to achieve scale is there but most of the initiatives are in the 'proof of concept' phase.

The case studies show that because, at the outset, Hivos' understanding of the nature and nuances of multi-actor initiatives was incipient, many implications of the decision to shift strategy towards greater engagement with multi-actor initiatives were not sufficiently appreciated. Therefore, many requirements and consequences of making the shift were under-estimated and/or too much was assumed.

Hivos' network still consists mainly of civil society organizations and other donors. The civil society perspective remains the vantage point from which Hivos views transformational development. The inventory showed that though Hivos has built relationships with private sector and with government through new initiatives in recent years (e.g., Women@Work, an initiative with

the flower industry; biogas programmes in several countries), many of the initiatives that Hivos is engaged with at present involve mainly familiar partners. It may take a very deliberate effort to see beyond the familiar, and to recognize other possible relationships, perspectives, potentials and opportunities. It will take effort, too, to engage with these players but this investment is essential, given the ambition of contributing to social transformation.

Hivos played a variety of roles in each of the multi-actor initiatives studied. There is not (yet) a new way of working in Hivos but Hivos is now playing more diverse roles and is being recognized in these roles – not only because of its engagement with multi-actor initiatives but also because of its growing experience with other types of initiatives (such as in thematic funds that may combine re-granting activities with knowledge integration and elements of implementation). There is still lack of clarity and consistency regarding non-funding roles; thus, one can see a range of quality in the manner in which these roles were played in the multi-actor initiatives that were studied. To achieve consistent quality, the following may be necessary: a) clarity within Hivos regarding role and 'added value'; b) quality and consistency in human resources deployment; c) timely provision of essential technical support by leveraging organizational resources.

Given that multi-actor initiatives are extremely demanding processes, it may be prudent to focus on a limited number of multi-actor initiatives and to invest in these. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to do justice. 'Limited number' should not be taken to mean 'small-scale and marginal to

the organization'. These well-chosen, select multi-actor initiatives should be central to Hivos and to its way of functioning. Simultaneously, a concerted effort would be required to align organizational systems, culture and processes to collaborative ways of working.

A more rigorous readiness assessment may be called for before making the decision to embark on a multi-actor initiative, regardless of whether Hivos proposes to join an existing initiative or to develop one. Hanleybrown, Kania and Kramer<sup>20</sup> have suggested three pre-conditions for collective impact: the involvement of influential champions, a sense of urgency, and the availability of adequate financial resources. Some additional criteria may be helpful in arriving at a considered decision:

- Clarity on role of Hivos and its added value in the multi-actor initiative;
- Positioning of the multi-actor initiative in relation to other ongoing initiatives: does it fill a (critical) gap?
- Are the (potential) actors convinced of the need to engage with each other?
- Do potential actors recognize the existence of a common problem and do they see that some benefit would accrue to all by engaging in a multi-actor initiative?

Increasingly, cross-sector, collaborative approaches are being adopted by those striving for systemic change, whether they are donors or other actors. But multi-actor initiatives will not be the most appropriate modality in all or even most situations; a thematic fund or a capacity development initiative may be better suited to a given context or goal. So the readiness assessment is crucial. It may be that the conditions for initiating collaboration have to be created first using other approaches and instruments.

Because multi-actor initiatives are heavy processes, the question inevitably arises: are they worth the investment? Do they actually bring about systemic change? The purpose

of the case studies was not to arrive at a cost-benefit analysis or cost effectiveness analysis of multi-actor initiatives. In any case, only the Stop Child Labour Campaign has been underway long enough to say anything conclusively regarding impact (and in that case, three evaluations have assessed the impact positively). But still, the first indications are promising. The Sumba Iconic Island case study observes:

*The initiative aims to create an environment that fosters collaboration, transparency and accountability. All of the actors interviewed for this study noted that it represented a fresh and useful approach, which had created a more open and collaborative environment. The initiative has begun to open up decision making to civil society, which can begin to play an active and critical role in shaping plans and demanding that commitments are followed through.*

Further, for the first time, inter-agency and inter-district dialogue on energy access has been generated, though the results of this dialogue are yet to be mainstreamed into local planning.

These developments in Sumba get back to why 'process' is so important in multi-actor initiatives, and well worth investing in: good process is likely to yield long-lasting dividends that are potentially deeper and more far-reaching than the immediate goals of a multi-actor initiative. If the initiative is able to generate impulses and processes that make longer term solutions through unpredictable pathways possible, then the initiative can become a gateway to impact at the level of mission. In Sumba, the first steps have been taken towards building structures and relationships that enhance the possibilities for 100% renewable energy even if Hivos has little control over the pathways and pace at which this may happen.

When framed in this way, the meeting ground between multi-actor initiatives and social innovation is obvious. The overall

<sup>20</sup> Fay Hanleybrown, John Kania and Mark Kramer, 'Channelling Change: Making Collective Impact Work', www.ssireview.org, January 2012.



goal is the same but in social innovation there is more emphasis on process rigour, on testing concepts, and on broadening the palette of possible allies and intervention strategies. In the choice of issues or problems to focus on, social innovation leans towards issues that demand creativity, new angles, re-framing and new approaches.

Because of this general commonality in the two approaches, the lessons learned in multi-actor initiatives are pertinent for Hivos' course towards social innovation. If one is unable to manage a multi-actor initiative effectively, it is unlikely that one will be able to manage social innovation. If anything, social innovation is a step up, and calls for a

higher order of the capacities and abilities. In that sense, with social innovation Hivos would be transcending multi-actor initiatives rather than rejecting them. Therefore, the more Hivos can act upon the lessons emerging from its engagement with multi-actor initiatives, the better positioned it is likely to be as a social innovator.

The current organizational re-structuring responds to some of the problems encountered so far in multi-actor initiatives. Much will depend on effective operationalization of links between different functions and processes. And on making learning an integral part of the organizational culture.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people helped me to write this paper by contributing their time, experience, insights and knowledge. My sincere thanks to the 40+ colleagues who responded to the questionnaire survey for the inventory. I am particularly grateful to colleagues, organizations, communities and consultants who contributed to the preparation of the case studies: Sandra Winarsa, Rob de Groot, Eco Matser, Rebecca Mahlunge, Sofie Ovaa, Pablo Alvarez, Juan Pablo Solis, Corina Straatsma, Dineke van den Oudenalder, Margreet Doodewaard, Tanja Lubbers, Jan-Jaap Klienrensink, Paul Adams, Theo van Koolwijk and Julieta Hernández. Special thanks to the members of the Project Reference Group, whose advice, questions and suggestions were invaluable: Tunggal Pawestri, Bishwadeep Ghose, Sanne van den Berg, Rebecca Mahlunge, Will Jansen,

Josine Stremmelaar, Marjan van Es, Ben Witjes, Mario Valori and Raquel Chaçon. Words cannot express my appreciation for the openness, generosity and patience with which Hettie Walters, Jane Wei Skillern and Chris van Bergeijk have shared their experience and wisdom. I am deeply grateful to those who provided substantive feedback on an earlier version of this paper: Jane Wei Skillern, Sanne van den Berg, Marjan van Es, Hettie Walters, Juan Pablo Solis, Lucia Acosta, Pablo Alvarez, Margreet van Doodewaard, Will Jansen, Raquel Chaçon, Ute Seela, Remko Berkhout, Michiel Beker, Josine Stremmelaar, Ben Witjes, Jappe Kok, and Corina Straatsma. I am especially thankful to Ben Witjes, Josine Stremmelaar, Marjan van Es and Jappe Kok for their guidance and support. Needless to say, any shortcomings and errors in the paper are my own.

# ANNEX 1

ANNEX 1			
NAME	WHEN (BRIEF TIME LINE)	WHERE	WHAT (GOAL)
Sumba Iconic Island	Idea: mid-2009 Launch: November 2010 First activities: 2011 Draft governance structure: 2012 Road map drafted: 2012 Governance structure formalized and road map adopted: 2013	Sumba, an island in the Nusa Tenggara Timur province in eastern Indonesia	To serve the energy needs of Sumba's half million people entirely via renewable energy sources by 2025.
Malawi Campaign against Child Marriage	Idea – 2009 Internal note – 2010 First activities - 2011	Malawi	To reach 5000 girls in 2013-14.
Stop Child Labour Campaign	Idea: 2002 Launch: 2003	Multi-country	1) To increase and strengthen Child Labour Free Zones; 2) To involve consumers, companies, governments and international organizations in solving the problem of child labour.
Rural Value Chain Project	Idea: 2010 Launch: 2012 Implementation: 2013	Western highlands of Guatemala	1) Improve competitiveness & productivity of value chains increasing household participation; 2) Improve household productivity to increase household income & food availability
Sustainable Management and Autonomous Governance of the Indigenous Territory of Monte Verde	Idea: 2010 Launch: 2011 Implementation: 2011	Santa Cruz (Chiquitano Dry Forest), Bolivia	1) To get autonomous indigenous territory status; 2) To set up a control system to ensure natural resource conservation & protection against illegal activities; 3) to identify forest products that can be processed locally; 4) To facilitate access to health, education & communication.

ANNEX 1		
WHO (ACTORS INVOLVED)	ROLE(S) OF HIVOS	REMARKS
Ministry of Energy & Mineral Resources; provincial, district and local governments; PLN (state electricity company); YSS, IBEKA, Winrock International (NGOs); Nagata Bisma Shakti (private sector investor); Asian Development Bank, Royal Norwegian Embassy; BNI (Indonesian bank); Hivos; Blof, Sawadee Travel (sponsors)	Initiator, catalyst, facilitator, secretariat, part-funder	Larger vision: to demonstrate that the energy needs of people in small and mid-sized islands can be met by sustainable provision renewable energy. Such islands do not have to be 'victims' of climate change.
FCR, Masuna, CYDSE, RISE, WLSA, CEYCA, YONECO (NGOs)	Initiator, facilitator, coordinator, convenor, knowledge generator, networker, fundraiser, funder	Larger vision: the end of child marriages in a generation in Malawi through the promotion of the right of girls to choose their own destiny, and the development of socially and psychologically empowered young women.
Hivos; AoB, FNV (unions); ICN (NGO); Kinderpostzegels, PIN*, CESVI*, IBIS*, ICCO/Kerk in Actie (donors & *Alliance2015 members), KIN [Uganda], CACLAZ [Zimbabwe], FSCE [Ethiopia], SNE [Morocco], MVF [India] and other NGOs in other countries	Funder, coordinator, facilitator, technical advisor, backstopper, facilitator, implementer, PMEL, strategist, communicator, campaigner, fundraiser	Larger vision: to eradicate child labour and to ensure that all children are in school.
AGEXPORT (Guatemalan Association of Exporters); Save the Children, Rainforest Alliance, Vital Voices (international NGOs), INCAP, IICA (regional institutes), Sot'zil (NGO), Hivos (donor and implementer), BUNCA, CEDECO, SEFAS (NGOs and regional strategic partners of Hivos)	Funder, advisor, implementer (specific inputs on renewable energy, climate change, and gender)	Larger vision: Increase sustainable market-led growth in rural areas as a means of sustainably reducing rural poverty & chronic malnutrition.
SNV (International NGO); APCOB, AFIN, SBDA, SICIREC (local NGOs); CCIC, CICOL, CIPJ (indigenous peoples' federations); Hivos	Funder, facilitator, coach, fundraiser (specific inputs on gender, and business opportunities, especially for women and young people)	Larger vision: To stimulate social and economic development among the indigenous people living in the territory of Monte Verde and to increase their control over territory and resources.



## Colophon

© Hivos, November 2015

Text & research: Jamuna Ramakrishna

Design: Sazza

Cover photo: Frans Lemmens / Hollandse Hoogte

## Hivos

Raamweg 16

2596 HL The Hague

The Netherlands

T + 31(0)70 376 55 00

[www.hivos.org](http://www.hivos.org)

[www.hivos.org](http://www.hivos.org)

**Hivos**  
people unlimited