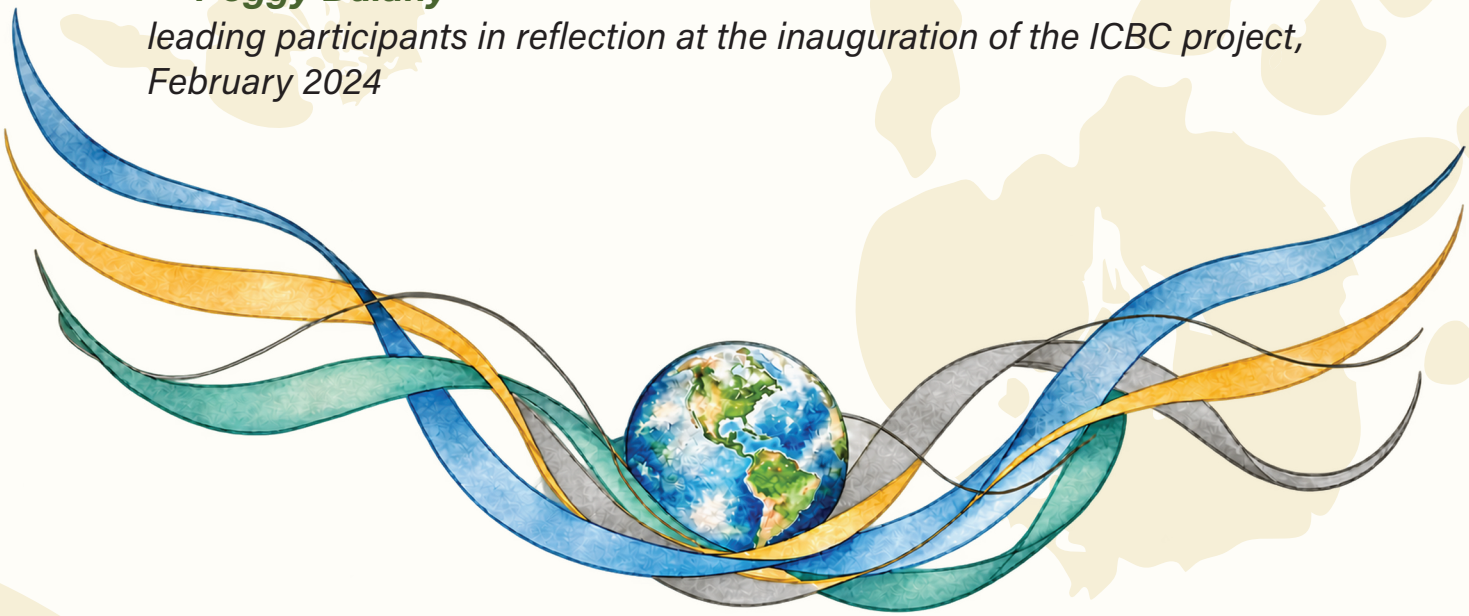


Chapter 2

Taking action together: Building trust and inclusive collaboration

> *Take a minute to think what would be the ideal outcome you could imagine. Take a deep breath…* ***What if children of the world*** *became the inspiration for resolving the conflicts, resolving the divides, resolving the inequities and taking care of our planet…* ***wouldn't that be amazing?***

- Peggy Dulany
leading participants in reflection at the inauguration of the ICBC project, February 2024



> ***If we listen to each other,*** *and we understand each other's needs, and really feel compassion,* ***it allows the space for us to co-create.***

- Marlene Ogawa
Synergos South Africa

INTRODUCTION

We hold a vision that all young children across Bangladesh have access to integrated Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services to help them survive, thrive, fulfill their health and human potential, and participate actively in shaping a bright future for Bangladesh. And, we know that our vision is too complex to be fulfilled by a single sector, ministry, or organization. We realize that **fulfilling our vision requires us to work alongside many stakeholders, some of whom may hold different perspectives and interests on the issues at hand.** Through collaboration, a single organization or ministry need not amass all the resources required to address the problem. Each stakeholder could use their investment, expertise and knowledge to leverage and align with other resources and opportunities that may be available in their context to pursue our collective vision. A Bridging Leader does precisely this. S/he works with key stakeholders to leverage and mobilize collective resources and action, and cultivate sustainable relationships that can carry the collaboration forward.

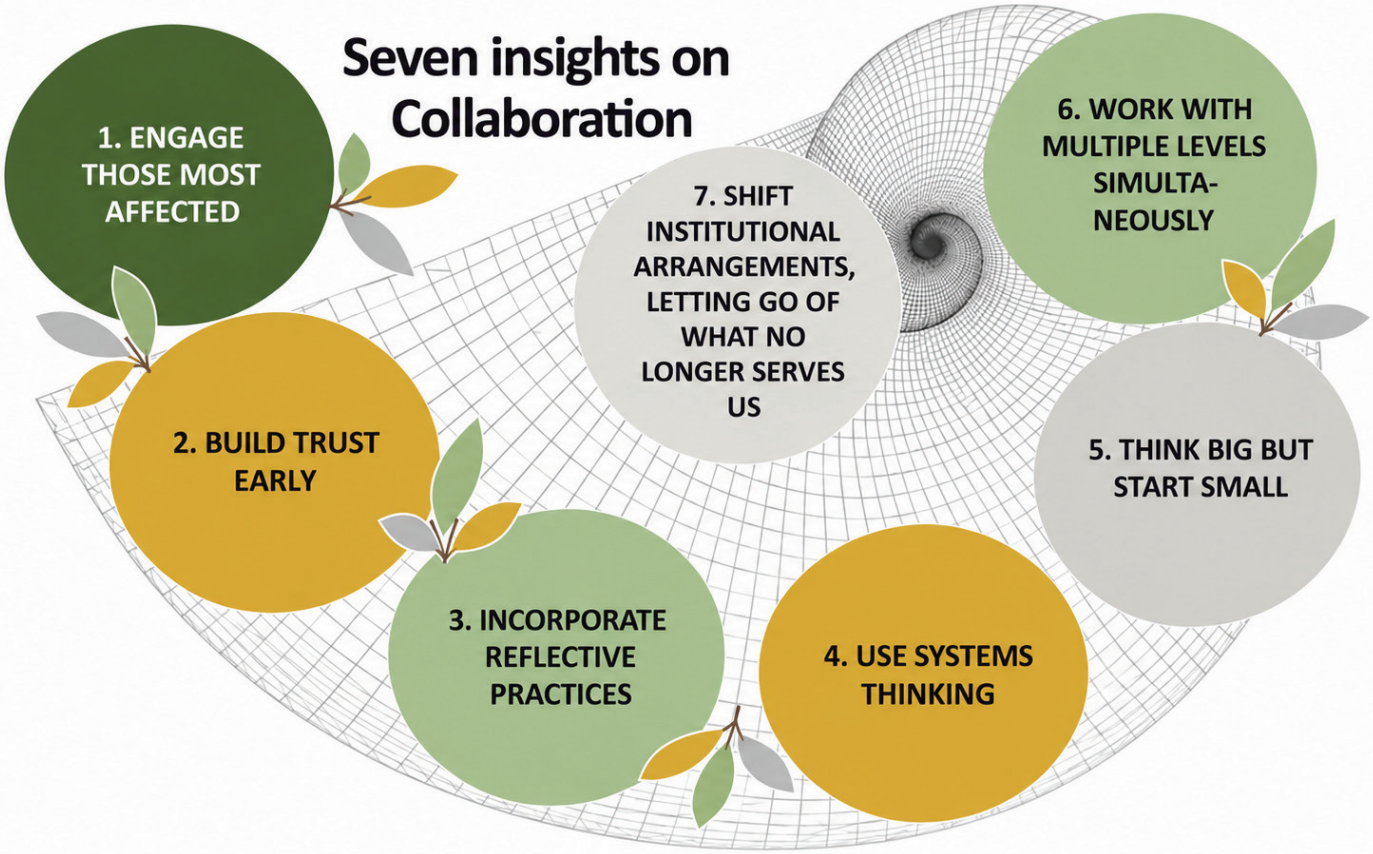
For the provision of integrated ECCD services for children and their families, this means leveraging services, resources and skills across health, nutrition, injury prevention, education, disaster management, local governance and others in the ECCD ecosystem. Early in the implementation of the government of Bangladesh's Integrated Community-Based Center for Child Care, Protection and Swim-Safe Facilities Projrct (ICBC), various actors from the ECCD ecosystem came together to understand the system and to explore how they may collaborate to make integrated ECCD services a reality. They wondered whether it would be possible to refer children from ICBC project community childcare centres set up by the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs to other relevant services such as those provided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

While these sound like exciting possibilities, we recognize that stakeholders with different perspectives, experiences and entry points may not be used to interacting with each other, and may not always find it easy to work together. Further, there may not be ready-made protocols to enable this kind of collaboration. Implementing the delivery of integrated ECCD services in a dynamic context in coordination with many others in the ecosystem requires new skillsets and different ways of working than what we are used to. It may call for us to cultivate different kinds of relationships, and to be much more aware and intentional about how we engage others and about the roles we play in the ecosystem. We may need to change the way we manage and monitor our work, or the way we seek information and adapt our plans. And, we may need to do all this in coordination with others with whom we may not have worked in the past. This will require us to listen more deeply to others in our ecosystem, especially those whom we aim to serve - children and their families. We will need to position ourselves in the ecosystem in relation to and through the lens of others as well – see ourselves through their eyes and together embrace our shared purpose. Importantly, doing this may call for us to give up some control and break long-held habits of holding our own interests over those of others, as we may have been trained to do. This is a vital part of Bridging Leadership.

What we describe here are radically different ways of working which will require us to **cultivate new capabilities, such as for inclusive collaboration and trust building among ourselves.** We can help each other build these capabilities and shape new roles, functions and ways of working together. This is not just aspirational idealism or something we believe is morally good. We know that traditional leadership and management practice designed for work in silos with total vertical control does not serve us well in addressing complex problems. It can be costly, create unintentional harms in other parts of the system, and unequal power dynamics that exclude some who may play vital roles in addressing the problem at hand. In this Chapter, we take a deeper look at frameworks and tools that may help us cultivate inclusive collaboration and build trust.

At its heart, **Bridging Leadership is the ability to build trust for collective action.** In Chapter 1 we explored how we build awareness of the system. In this Chapter we draw our attention to what may grow between and among us – inclusive multi-stakeholder collaboration and collective action for transformative change. This is essentially about transforming relationships between people in the ecosystem to leverage change. We will focus here on understanding and navigating relationships and power, and cultivating trust to shape our work together toward a shared purpose. We also explore here some helpful frameworks and tools to support collective learning, communicating with compassion, and collaborative decision making. **Our collaboration is shaped through the spaces in which we interact** – in formal and informal meetings and workshops, in online and in-person spaces, in one-on-one and group dialog. We may use all these spaces to practice learning and working together toward a shared purpose, and over time, our collaboration can be shaped through different ways of organizing ourselves.

Synergos has been involved in enabling and supporting Bridging Leaders to cultivate multi-stakeholder collaborations around the world in many different contexts, including Bangladesh. We have been able to surface important insights from this work. You may listen to Chong-Lim Lee of Synergos describe in **this video** seven key insights on collaboration from work done by Synergos in Ethiopia. We explore some of these ideas more deeply in the sections that follow.



Practice: *If you have a few minutes, watch this video on collaboration here. Do these insights resonate with you? Can you think of collaborations of which you have been a part in which one or more of these insights may have played out? Perhaps you can think of a current situation where some of these insights may help the work. Think of someone with whom you would like to share your reflections, and invite them to reflect with you.*

USEFUL
FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS

The frameworks and tools presented here are intended to help us be more mindful and intentional in our partnerships and relationships, and in the spaces for collaboration that we create.

Creating a shared vision

Systems do not shift merely by adopting new tools or a common plan. The most powerful way to shift a system is to change what it serves, the philosophy that drives it, and therefore its purpose. A Bridging Leader may use the purpose of a system as the focus around which to rally people, activities, resources, roles and work practices to make change together. **Collectively reimagining its purpose is a powerful way to shift a system.** It helps shift the reason for which systems actors work together. This can be an inspiring and mobilizing process. One way to collectively reimagine the purpose of our work together is through a visioning exercise that helps people connect their personal purpose to a compelling shared vision of what they want to build together. As much as possible, visioning should not just be an intellectual exercise or product of words alone. Bringing different ways of knowing and expressing ourselves to shape our collective vision, such as art, stories, and movement, can be very powerful as we embark on a journey together.

We have learned that visioning exercises can take time and must not be rushed. But they yield strong dividends, as we may keep debriefing from a visioning process (sensemaking) in different ways, multiple times for different purposes, exploring the various levels of the iceberg (described in Chapter 1). Visions also provide a useful anchor from which to draw our attention to a higher shared purpose, opening possibilities for different ways of working. This kind of process can help free us from the confines and stuckness of our current reality. There are many ways to facilitate a visioning exercise, short or long, individual or collective or a mix. Annex 2 of this resource pack includes a facilitation guide for a visioning exercise conducted with a group of Bridging Leadership champions for the ICBC project.

Relationships and power - two important levers of change

Systems (especially social systems) are relational. It is the pattern of relationships between different stakeholders that give a system much of its character. **Therefore, transforming the relationships between people in the system is a key lever for systems change.** By paying attention to possibilities for change in roles, relationships and how decisions are made in the system, Bridging Leaders can help the system to generate new value. In the context of the ICBC project, we realised that our intent to provide integrated ECCD services through referrals could benefit from a focus on activating enabling relationships between functionaries in different sectors, or expanding certain roles to build connections between sectors. There is no formula for cultivating relationships. However, steady attention to key foundational skills around listening (described in Chapter 1) and communication, as well as carefully shaping our spaces of interaction help build the conditions to deepen relationships.

The nature of power in the system is another powerful lever for change. It is not likely that a system can shift without a shift in the nature or the distribution of power within it. Power is often defined in negative terms and as a form of

domination of one party over another – in visible, invisible or hidden ways. But **power is not necessarily a zero-sum game in which if one gains power the other must lose. It can also be a positive force for collective action.** Bridging Leaders search for more collaborative and equitable ways of exercising and growing the power of all involved. Instead of merely seeing power as exercised by one person or organisation over another (***Power Over***), they may proactively cultivate other expressions of power such as ***Power With*** others, building bridges across different interests to create collective strength, mutual support and collaboration. By recognizing the potential of every person in the ecosystem to shape her or his life and world (***Power To***), they motivate them and open up possibilities for each person's fullest contribution to the shared purpose. This may also include the power we hold to support another as an ally or to advocate on their behalf, if they would like that. Another important expression of power is the ***Power Within*** every person. This includes a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge -- the capacity to imagine and to have hope.

Observing and understanding these different expressions of power can help us be more intentional about the kind of expressions of power we are growing in the ecosystem to best suit our purpose. If we remain limited to Power Over, too much of our attention is focused on engaging those with conventionally more formal power in the system or official hierarchy. While it may be important to do so to get their support and use of resources, if we only focus on this kind of power, we miss learning from different kinds of experiences or harnessing different forms of knowledge. We may risk continuing to exclude those who have traditionally been marginalized in the system. Taking intentional action to explore expressions of Power With can be useful in nurturing collaboration in the ecosystem. Many of the materials in this Chapter help us do this.

In Chapter 3 of this resource, we explore practices to affirm Power Within ourselves by overcoming barriers that hold our prejudices in place and prevent us from embracing change or collaborating with those different to ourselves. Bridging Leaders support the cultivation of power within every person, which then helps grow the Power To collaborate deeply with others and to contribute to change across the system. Understanding and shifting power is a key skill for Bridging Leaders as it helps overcome conventional hierarchies and command and control structures to unleash the potential and possibility of all stakeholders in the system. The list of additional resources at the end of this pack include some additional reading materials on these expressions of power. The image below highlights some everyday ways in which we can start to grow a wider range of expressions of power[3].

[3]Several of these expressions of power were inspired by a reflection from Richard Bartlett on The Hum, listed in the Additional Resources at the end of this chapter.

Taking Steps Towards Creating Different Expressions of Power

How may we encourage more *Power Within?*

- Encourage our peers. Don't be afraid to say, "Well done!".
- Discourage permission seeking – If someone asks for our approval, we may say, "what do you think?" or "let's figure it out together".
- Create spaces to practice sharing more of ourselves – not everyone is used to expressing themselves beyond their formal role.
- Find inspiring mentors to support people.
- Rotate roles between participants, such as facilitating meeting or making presentations.
- Support and encourage inner work and self reflection.

How may we encourage *Power With?*

- Build awareness about different expressions of power beyond Power Over.
- Make different levels of engagement clear, accepting that not everyone can engage equally.
- Clarify how different types of decisions will be made to move work forward, allowing for people to make decisions within their own domain of expertise.
- Create opportunities for teams to experiment with new ideas.

How may we minimize use of *Power Over?*

- Encourage dissent and be sensitive to coercion.
- Establish participatory decision-making mechanisms for important decisions.
- Explicitly use decision making tools that enable people to contribute their opinions beyond yes/ no.
- Find ways to embed co-ownership of key processes, eg. allocation of budgets, approval of initiatives.

How may we grow each person's *Power To?*

- Encourage reflection of organization and individual roles in the ecosystem eg. connector, learning facilitator.
- Celebrate instances when people go beyond their traditional roles to influence change.
- Build understanding of Bridging Leadership and create opportunities to build capabilities.
- Offer inspiring examples of changemakers, showing what is possible.

Practice: *Find a colleague or friend and go for a walk together. Invite your partner to think about a situation at work, at home, or with friends in which you see some of the other expressions of power (beyond Power Over). Share your stories with deep empathic or generative listening (described in Chapter 1). Discuss how these other expressions of power may add value to the systems of which you are a part. You could also adapt this practice for use as part of one of your regular meetings.*

> *"**Becoming** our most effective selves empowers us to **trust daringly** and **collaborate deeply** to create lasting change"*
>
> **- *Peggy Dulany***

A reflection on building trust

We may agree on a shared purpose, plan to collaborate, and invest our energy in understanding the relationships in our ecosystem and the types of power at play. But at the end of the day, we can only really make change together by cultivating trust. **Bridging Leaders cultivate the capacity and will to build trust** and invite the fullest contributions of diverse stakeholders in the system, helping them to overcome their divides and come together to collaborate for a shared purpose. Authentic collaboration is only possible by building trusting relationships. When we trust others, we listen more attentively to them, and we can empathize with them. Fear sometimes prevents us from trusting. This may be because of previous experiences that did not go well, or because of patterns or prejudices ingrained in us at a young age through our upbringing. We may also be influenced by heightened polarization in our environment, or we may simply fear breaking established ways of doing things. When we trust another, we are willing to be more open and authentic with them. This takes courage.

One way to cultivate trust is to try to **practice being more trustworthy ourselves**. Some ways we can do this are by paying attention to: Speaking more authentically, consistently fulfilling our commitments, expressing that we care for others' wellbeing, sharing our own and accepting others' vulnerabilities, recognizing the contributions of others, opening our hearts to others, and honoring confidences. This may require us to work on ourselves to overcome our barriers and fears, as we will discuss more in Chapter 3.



Another way to cultivate trust is to **build safe spaces where trust can grow**. These spaces may be cultivated at meetings, workshops, events, online interactions. What makes a space of interaction safe enough for trust to grow? We explore this further in Chapter 4, which focuses on the work of a facilitator in holding space and fostering change. In designing the Leadership for Collaboration workshops for the ICBC project, we did this in many different ways:

- By being mindful of the number of participants, to allow for every person to be seen and build connection with others in the room
- Striving for participatory, not passive engagement. We did this by repeatedly inviting direct, creative contributions, sharing and feedback
- Arranging the room in ways that encourage flexible and dynamic interaction. Whenever possible we brought participants into a circle where they could all see each other, de-emphasizing positional hierarchy

Sequencing activities and sessions to allow cumulative learning and sharing. While each session may have had a different focus, we intentionally connected to conversations and insights from previous sessions and linked to what was coming next. We honored and referred to every participant's contributions

Including playful and creative activities and forms of expression to break down barriers and spark new ideas

Creating many opportunities to practice more empathic and generative listening and sharing. We opened the workshops with a listening activity, but continued to refer to different types of listening (described in Chapter 1) throughout the workshops

Drawing participant awareness to relationship and connection. We created a lot of space for participants to build on each other's contributions and to reflect on actions they could take together

Curating collective learning experiences such as learning journeys

Making space for reflection and inner work throughout the workshops

Frequently drawing attention to the group's shared purpose

Establishing norms to honor confidences and being attentive to psychological safety.

Practice: *Find a quiet corner and take a minute to relax. Close your eyes if you can, and become aware of your breath. When you feel ready, bring to mind someone from your personal or professional life whom you trust deeply. Think about what feeds or contributes to this trust. As you think about each point, reflect, "Why is that important?" Answer yourself. You may ask the question again of your answer… "Why is that important?" Go to the next point and do the same. You may repeat the exercise bringing to mind someone else whom you trust.*

Next, bring to mind a professional relationship in which you would like to cultivate more trust. Drawing on your previous reflection, reflect on what can make it so.
Close your reflection with drawing loving kindness attention to each person you have brought to mind, including yourself, one at a time, bringing them to mind and saying, "May you be happy… May you be healthy… May you live with ease."

Learning to dialogue and co-create

An important way to build trust is through dialogue. And we return here to our levels of listening framework. In Chapter 1, we learned about four levels of listening: Downloading, Factual, Empathic, Generative. As we begin to listen with empathy, we start to open our hearts and see the world through another's eyes. In this Chapter, we will look at obstacles that may come in the way of practicing deeper levels of listening. These obstacles are: Our voice of judgement (that keeps our mind closed and shuts down new ideas); Our voice of cynicism (that fosters mistrust and prevents true connection and vulnerability); and Our voice of fear (that stops us from taking action to listen or build trust by playing on the fear of possibly losing status or failing) (We explore these inner voices further in Chapter 3). In order to practice empathic listening, we must overcome our voice of judgement, cynicism and fear, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable. It is here that dialogue becomes possible and it is essential that we learn to engage in dialogue in order to build trust and inclusive collaboration.

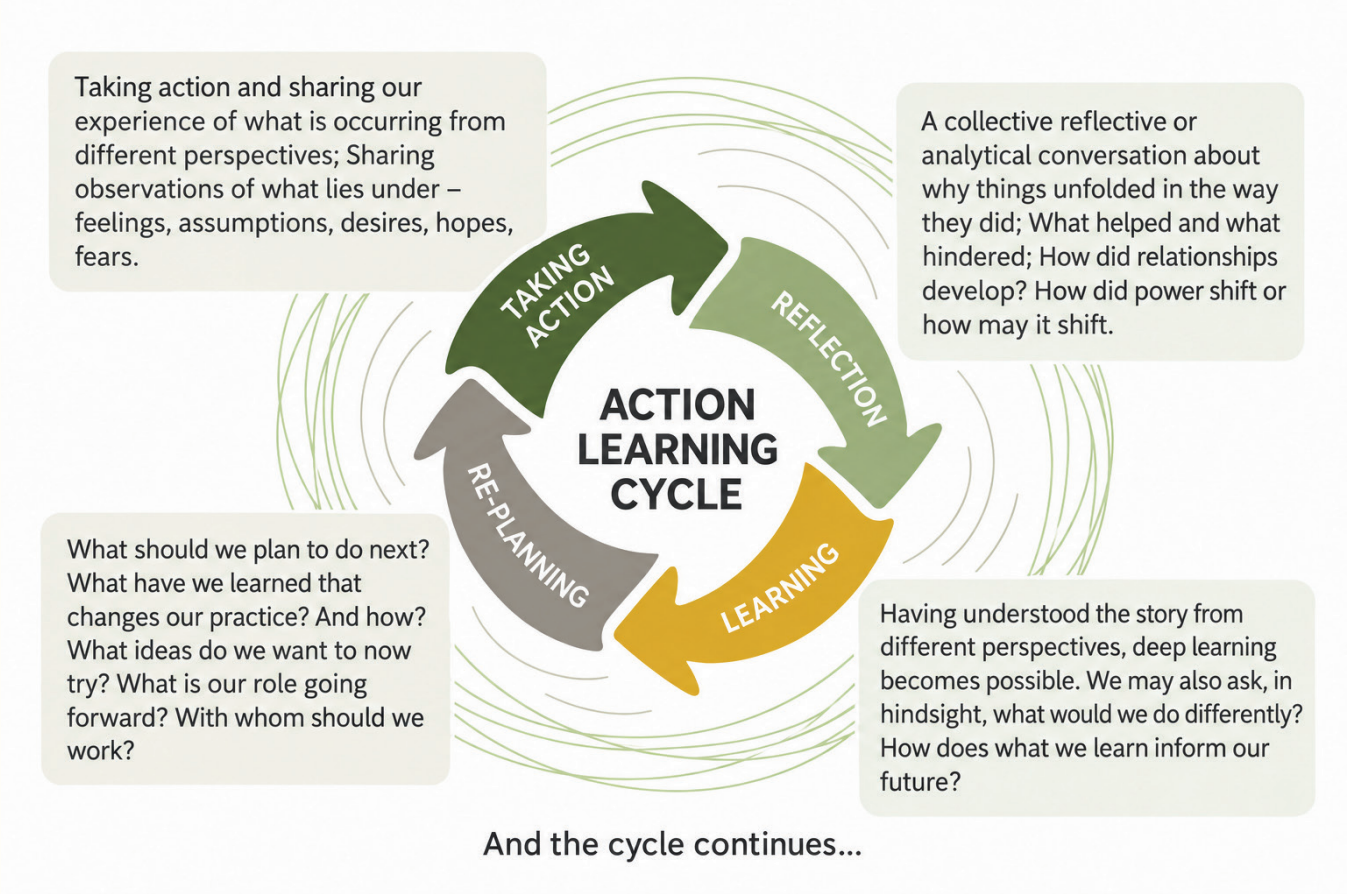
By "dialogue" we mean the kinds of conversations that change something in us when we take part in them. Something shifts between the people who are involved in the conversation. How do we recognise that this is happening? Some signs are that we become willing to take the "risk" to be authentic, or we are willing to co-create a space where others can do the same. This kind of dialogue challenges our habits of thought and interaction – we listen with attention, and speak with purpose and intention. We are willing to look within ourselves and accept that we can do better. We become more open to change in order to shift the system. In this kind of dialogue space, we try to learn and understand, not only through facts or intellectual knowledge, but also by seeing other perspectives through the eyes of someone else. Empathic listening opens the space for empathetic dialogue, where participants share perspectives without judgement, embracing the complexity of the decisions they need to make. This helps overcome the constraints of debating different positions which rest on "for and against arguments." In this space filled with empathy, we can understand each other more fully and pave the way for collaboration.

Learning together - the action learning cycle

One way to cultivate trust and build conditions for collaboration is by intentionally learning together and investing in spaces that enable collective learning. Learning together is also very important for navigating the complexity of our contexts, especially as our contexts keep shifting. The more complex and unpredictable our operating environment, the less we are able to plan and design solutions in advance. Plans become outdated and irrelevant quickly. In this scenario, **we need to have a way to learn together continuously in order to be able to respond to changes in our context, experiment with possible solutions, and adjust our plans – in other words, we carve our path by walking it.** The Action Learning approach helps us do this. It is a simple framework that draws attention to learning from doing, and adjusting plans going forward. It holds great power for collective learning. The action learning cycle has four steps – ACTION, REFLECTION, LEARNING, RE-PLANNING. A group may start with any of the four elements as they are in continuous cyclical motion.

The Action Learning Cycle is powerful and versatile. It may be embedded in regular meetings, workshops, short or long interactions at different stages of our work, or in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning activities. Even just going through one cycle can be useful. However, if there is the opportunity to repeat the cycle with a group, it serves as a powerful framework to build or deepen collaborative co-learning relationships and it helps us become resilient to change. In trying to better understand or shift a system, you may find it useful to bring together a group

that includes a diverse set of stakeholders from different parts or levels in the system using an action learning cycle. Such a session may invite participants to consciously reflect together on something they have experienced, and then attempt to draw insights by listening and dialoging empathetically and generatively with each other, noting points of agreement or divergence to collectively analyze the situation. This may offer the group ideas for joint action, collaboration and collective commitment. This kind of action learning and dialog when practised with empathic and generative listening (Chapter 1) can serve as a powerful engine for our collaboration.



Learning journeys

Learning journeys are a practice we may use to understand a system and learn together. The objective of a learning journey is to offer an immersive opportunity for participants to experience a system through the lens of different people and/ or contexts and draw insights using an Action Learning Cycle. **At the heart of this practice is the idea that we can learn a lot when we meet people in their own context, observe what is going on, and listen deeply.** Insights generated from a learning journey can be harvested through reflective dialogue to deepen our understanding of different aspects of the system, some of which we may have not been able to observe before. A learning journey also offers the opportunity for a group of learners to get to know each other better through a collective





learning experience. Learning journeys can be used to help cultivate a network of learning relationships among key stakeholders in a system or to build a shared understanding of different enablers and barriers to change in the system. In this way, over time, learning journeys can help cultivate a learning culture. If learning journeys are to help seed a learning culture, they must be thoughtfully prepared and conducted. Instead of organizing traditional kinds of field visits where those visiting are shown only what is working, they may be set up as learning journeys, embedding more curiosity, reflection and dialogue. Annex 4 of this resource pack includes a facilitation guide to help prepare and debrief learning journeys.

> *We **shape our self** to fit this world*
> *and by the world **are shaped again.***
>
> *- From The House of Belonging by David Whyte*

Ecosystem roles

Working in ecosystems is complex and multi-layered. We often don't acknowledge this complexity by hiding behind labels like Technical Partner, Implementing NGO – traditional roles in development programs. But there are many roles that organizations and Bridging Leaders can and do play to inspire positive change in an ecosystem. And most people play multiple roles at the same time. **Bridging Leaders are intentional about the roles they play as they mobilize and navigate roles and relationships in an ecosystem.** Paying attention to a wide range of ecosystem roles helps Bridging Leaders honor and appreciate what each stakeholder brings to the table in support of their shared purpose.

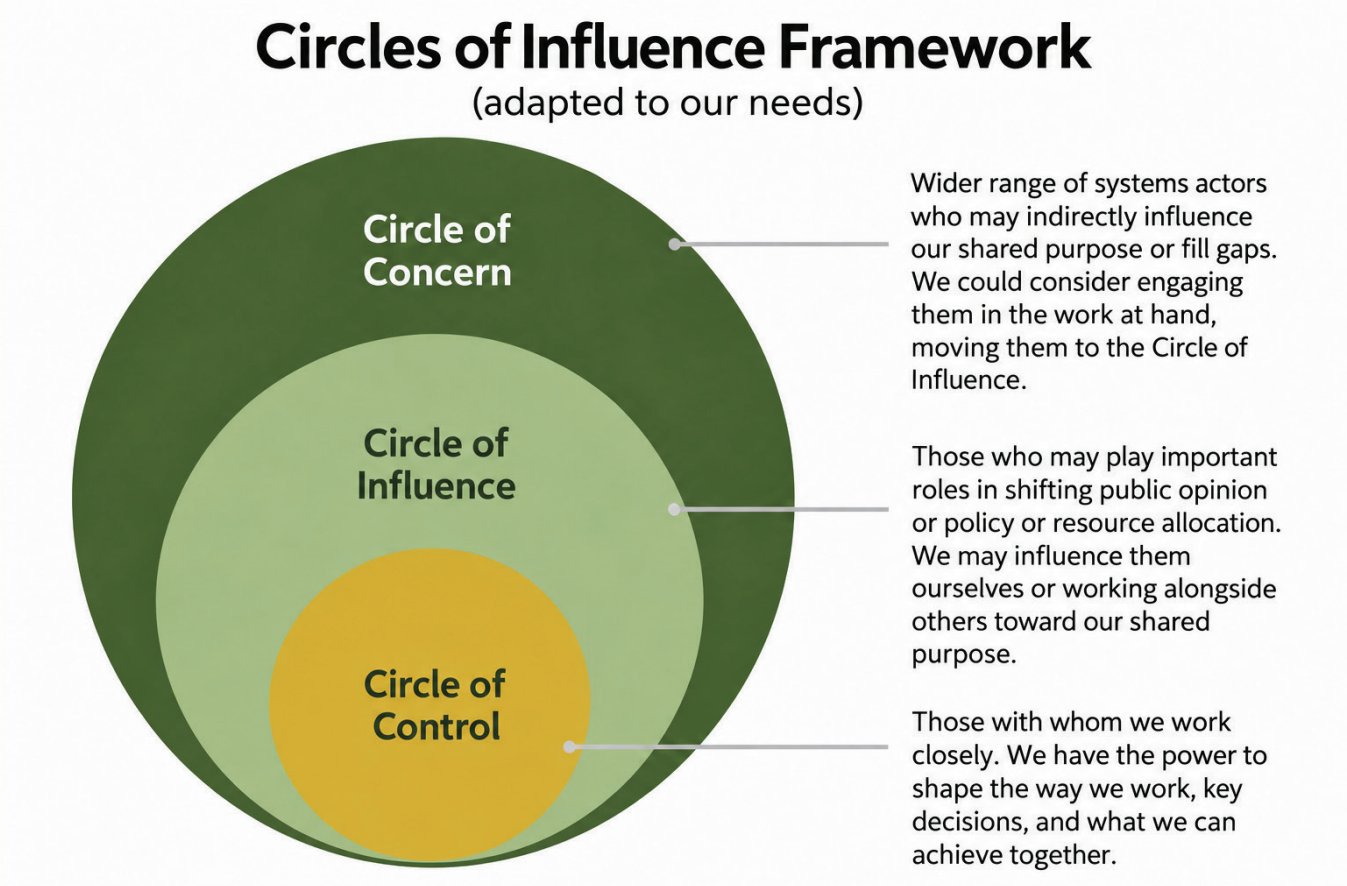
There has been recent interest in ecosystem roles, and researchers interested in systems leadership are beginning to map out various roles that people play to support the emergence of ecosystems for positive change. Some emerging roles include: Those that help seed new initiatives (**Catalyst, Strategist**); Those that amplify or accelerate the work in the ecosystem toward a shared purpose (**Convenor, Community driver, Connector, Ecosystem funder, Experimenter, Bridger, Hub, Orchestrator, Consumers of services**); Those that help turn successful experiments into established practice (**Learning facilitators, Knowledge builders, Storytellers**); Those that help us let go of practices or agendas that do not serve us well (**Truth teller, Healers, Decomposers, Activists, Disruptors**)[4]. The process of coming together with systems actors to imagine key roles may be useful in creating clarity on what systems actors see as the most important work for the ecosystem. For people already playing some of these roles, it is empowering when their contributions are recognized.

[4]The roles outlined here have been adapted from Systems Sanctuary (What roles does it take to nurture an ecosystem?) and resense[360] and iac Berlin's Ecosystem Cards

Circles of influence

Sometimes awareness of the wider system and attempts to work across an ecosystem can seem overwhelming, especially if we have been used to a significant amount of control over most of our activities. The Circles of Influence framework originates from Kurt Lewin's work in the 1940s on the social forces that shape an individual's behavior and attitude. It was later popularized through Stephen Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People". The purpose of the framework is to draw attention to the things that an individual can influence or change. Our interpretation of the framework as Bridging Leaders with systems awareness is a bit different. We may use the framework to more clearly focus our energies on collaboration with other ecosystem actors. It can also help us expand our influence to shift the system toward our shared purpose.

As we see in the diagram, the framework consists of three concentric circles/ ovals -- the smallest at the center is the "Circle of Control". Surrounding this is the "Circle of Influence," and on the outside, the "Circle of Concern." We describe the three circles here and how they may help a Bridging Leader in cultivating powerful relationships for collaboration.



Circle of control: This inner circle includes stakeholders closest to us – our own team or partners with whom we have an established relationship and work practice. We already work closely with those in this circle, and possibly have the power to shape the way we work together, our key decisions, and what we can achieve together.

Circle of influence: This middle circle includes systems actors who may play important roles in achieving our shared purpose or influencing public opinion or policy toward the purpose, but with whom we may not yet have a working

relationship. As we consider this group of ecosystem actors, we could try to focus our attention on those in this group with whom we may be able to engage meaningfully, or possibly influence their actions or decisions. If we ourselves or our organization cannot influence these actors, we may think of others with whom we could work, who may be in a better position to influence the decisions of these actors. We can then devote some energy to thinking about the kind of relationship we would like to cultivate with these influencers.

Circle of concern: This outer circle includes systems actors whom we believe can have indirect influence toward fulfilling our purpose. They may be members of the media, another part of government or private actors with whom most systems actors are not currently connected, but they may help fill some gaps, hasten the pace of work, or tap on unconventional resources for your purpose. Ideally, we may like to engage them in the work, but do not yet have a clear way to do so. Over time, with other ecosystem actors, we may be able to interest them in the work and they may move to the Circle of Influence.

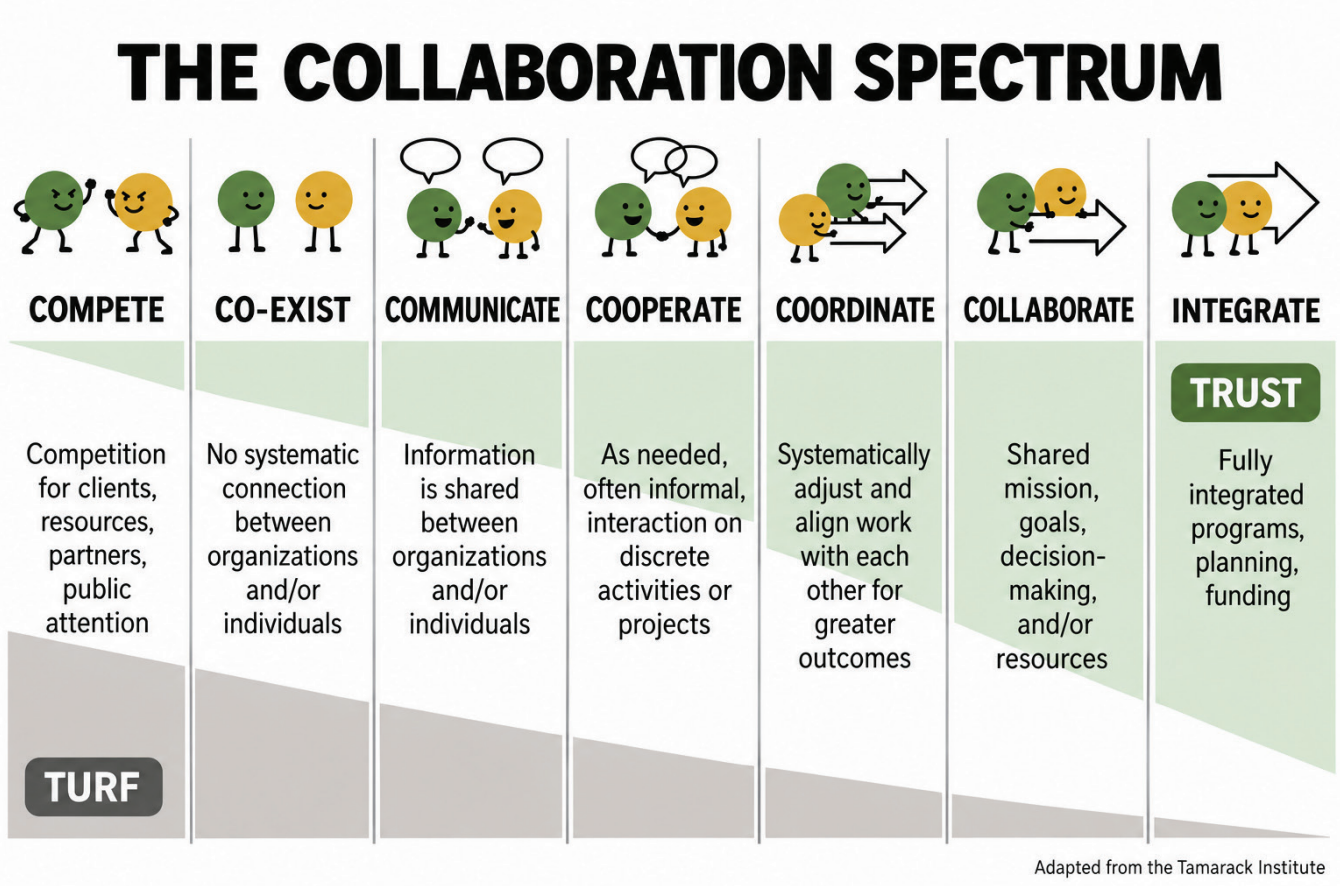
Many of us are accustomed to operating within our Circle of Control. We may use the framework in many ways – some examples are listed below:

- To consider how to expand our engagement with those in our Circle of Influence and who we need to work with to do this
- To think about which actions in the ecosystem may require working through our Circle of Influence.
- To think about how to bridge connections to those in our Circle of Concern, engaging them in the work of the ecosystem, for example, in the way the ICBC project has reached out to journalists.
- To reflect on which circle we primarily spend most of our effort and consider how we may want to shift our focus for greater influence and collaboration in the ecosystem toward our shared purpose.

A powerful way to use the framework could be in a workshop setting, following a stakeholder analysis process with an exercise that invites ecosystem actors to map and reflect on their circles of control, influence and concern in relation to the shared purpose. They may then use their insights to think about how they may want to change their outreach and collaboration going forward.

The collaboration spectrum

Ecosystem actors may collaborate for many different purposes, through many different activities, actions, modalities, each driven by different expectations. Once we have crafted a shared purpose, it is useful to reflect on the nature of collaboration that may best serve the purpose. Collaboration in complex contexts demands a balance between protecting individual or organizational interests (protecting our turf) and building trust for collective action. There is often a tension between these aims. The collaboration spectrum helps us contemplate what we give up and what we gain as we move across the collaboration spectrum from competition on one end toward collaboration and integration at the other. **Each type of collaboration on the spectrum may call for a different kind of planning, convening, sharing of resources, and communication.** This framework invites us to be intentional in how we shape our collaboration and shared work.



In the ICBC project, some participants reflected that most of their experiences around partnership and collaboration were one-on-one partnerships that were transactional in nature, such as subcontracting for a particular piece of work. Coming together as multiple stakeholders in an ecosystem is a different proposition and most people will require some time to consider why and how it is different. Bridging Leaders may use this framework to surface expectations of different stakeholders on the kind of collaboration that is fit for purpose, rather than allowing diverse expectations to remain hidden. This can help pave the way to explore the most appropriate spaces, mechanisms, protocols and resources we may consider for our work together, the norms that may serve us, and collaboration structures that we may use. For some tasks, these may be quite simple and we do not need to over-complicate things. For others, it may require a much greater degree of ongoing learning, dialogue and joint decision making.

Communicating with compassion - Non-violent communication

Since most of our collaboration is shaped through the way we communicate and the language we use, we can influence our collaboration significantly by being more mindful about the way we communicate. We may not wish to harm others through our communication, but the communication habits we may have developed over time could be causing harm either to ourselves or to others. While working with ecosystems and especially with people with diverse ideas, opinions or mindsets, communicating with compassion (listening, expressing ourselves, empathizing) can go a long way in understanding each other and moving toward our shared purpose.

Non-violent communication attributed to Marshall Rosenberg is a communication method for fostering empathy and understanding by focusing on feelings and needs. It is based on the core belief that all humans have the capacity for compassion and empathy, and the purpose of this kind of communication is to help us connect better with ourselves and others. It is therefore very helpful in resolving differences peacefully. It teaches us to understand and express our needs more clearly, and to hear our own deeper needs and the needs of others. It helps us overcome habits and preconceived ideas or judgement about others and to be more mindful and compassionate in our communication.

It contains four components or steps:

Observation: Describe what is happening without judgement (opening the door to dialogue rather than defensiveness)

Feeling: Identify and share how it makes you feel (expressing emotions clearly and honestly, avoiding placing blame)

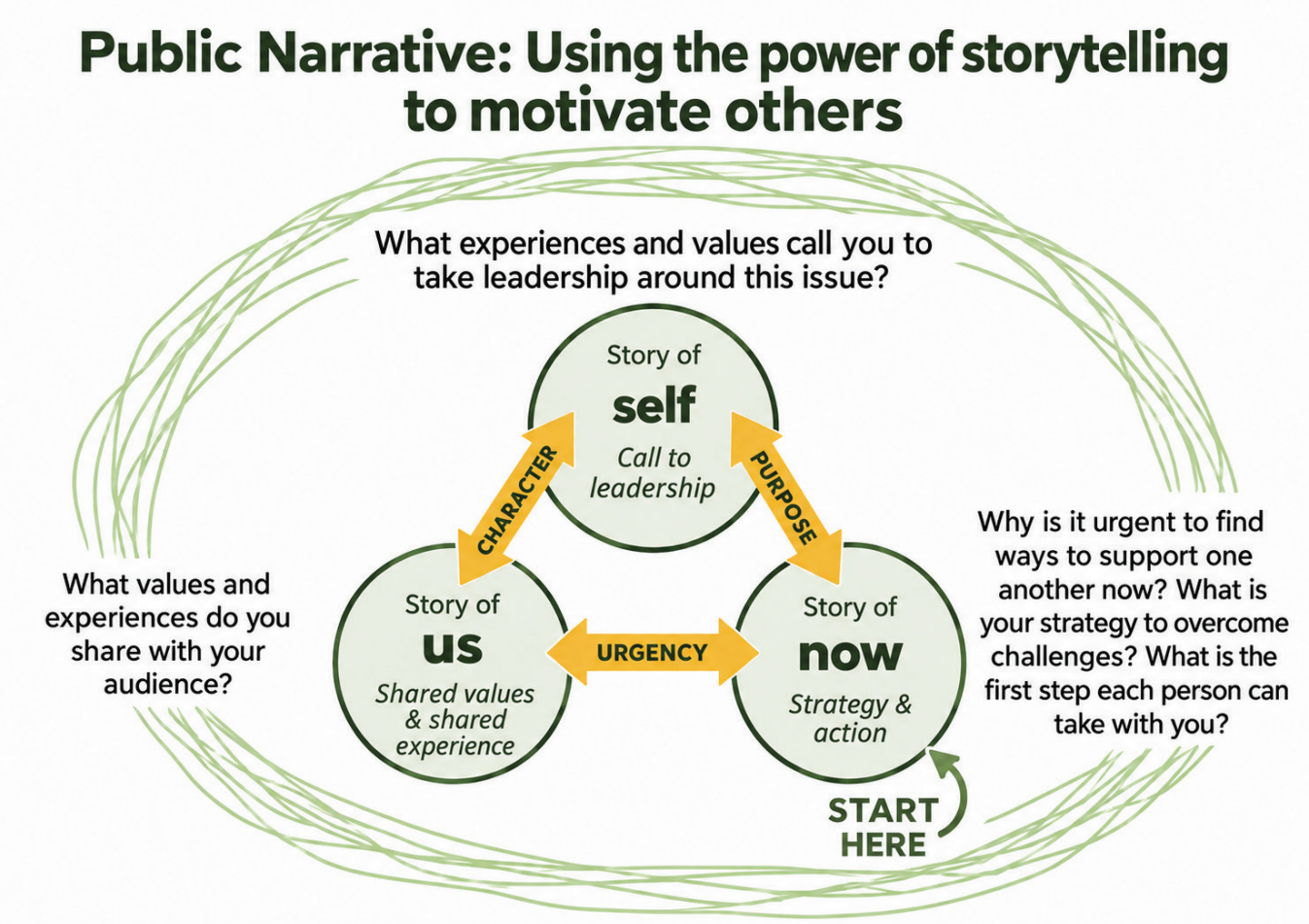
Need: Beyond emotions, identify the need connected to your feelings (when we know and understand our needs we give others the opportunity to understand us and work toward a solution)

Request: Make clear and positive requests (making a specific request inviting cooperation, rather than a demand). It is a path to compassion, empathy and self-awareness.

This video describes the steps of non-violent communication in greater detail. Practising it a few times helps us become more aware of the way we communicate and how we receive the communication of others. The slide deck accompanying this pack includes an example from everyday life used in the Leadership for Collaboration workshops to practice non-violent communication.

Public narrative

Public narrative is a leadership art that draws on the power of storytelling to motivate others to join us in taking action. Bridging Leaders find it useful to cultivate the art of telling a story that moves others to action. Many people do this instinctively, but it can be cultivated and is a useful skill for Bridging Leaders at any level. The Public Narrative framework was developed by Marshall Ganz at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Public Narrative combines three types of stories – **Story of Self** (Why we have been called to act); **Story of Us** (Our collective values and identities); **Story of Now** (The urgent and timely challenge we face). The craft of Public Narrative is different to our conventional communications work of developing a message or script or creating a brand. It is about learning how to process information in a particular way. The specific focus of public narrative will shift as purpose in the ecosystem shifts.



There are several resources and tools in the public domain to learn more about Public Narrative. Additional resources at the end of this pack list a few. In addition to mobilizing others to participate in collective action, public narrative may be used to influence public opinion about an issue, by highlighting powerful stories that mobilize people to action. This powerful method of storytelling can be applied in many different contexts, for example, at workshops, when participants complete small group work, rather than asking them to return and read out a list of bullet points, you may invite them to use the Public Narrative framework to tell others what they did and why it is important to the issue at hand. It can be very empowering to do this.

Collective decision-making

In committing to inclusive collaboration, a Bridging Leader necessarily becomes more mindful about approaches to decision making that may serve collective interests. As roles are clarified, not every decision is a collective one, however, in collaborating with others across the ecosystem, there will be many decisions that either require wider consultation or participation. For some decisions, it is possible to get agreement for a small competent group to make decisions on a particular subject. For the wider collective's strategic priorities, it will become important to be able to involve the group and get consent to proceed (consent-based decision making). In these situations, it may not always be possible to get consensus and putting a decision to vote may not lend itself to the best collaboration. It is important for Bridging Leaders to build skills for decision making and to find tools to support group processes so that these decisions help the group collaborate rather than cause fractures.

One way to navigate group decisions with a diverse group is to expand ways to understand people's perspectives and opinions (whether they support or have reservations) on a particular proposed decision. There are tools to help with this. **The fist to five tool is a quality voting tool that can help a group transition toward consensus if they wish.**[5] Rather than a simple yes or no, participants have a chance to indicate how close they are to a "yes" or "no" in a large group. They signal how they are feeling about a decision using six options:



People raise their hands with the number of fingers they choose, indicating their level of support. It is important to debrief the exercise, especially for those who have raised one or two fingers, even if the vote stands due to majority support. If the vote is widely split, despite a winning "yes", there may be more work to do as the decision may not hold or implementation may get blocked. If there are a lot of 2s and 3s, it signals that the decision is likely a tempo-

[5]The description of the Fist to Five tool here has been adapted from the National Center for Family Philanthropy knowledge center web page

rary measure and may need to be revisited within a short time period. Note that it is very important to spend time giving people the information they need about the decision in advance in ways that can be absorbed by the different kinds of people involved. Ensuring clarity of communication and understanding of the issues upfront by stakeholders is vital for good decision making processes.

Taking action together

Experimentation is an essential approach for leading in complexity as it helps challenge assumptions, try out new ideas and methods, and engage in rigorous learning and reflection. **PROTOTYPING is a method to help experiment and take an idea forward to become something concrete**. It is a way to "explore the future by doing", somewhat like a draft of what a future initiative may look like at limited scale. It offers a way to try out an idea, rapidly adjusting glitches in real time with involved stakeholders to learn together about how it may play out, and possibly make necessary adjustments. A core team of stakeholders who come together to prototype a new idea would represent a microcosm of the system, ensuring a range of perspectives from observing application of the idea. Typically, a prototype goes through several iterations based on feedback from stakeholders involved. The purpose here is to develop and refine an idea and test assumptions to prepare to build a new initiative or a pilot. It is a useful tool to mobilize stakeholders toward action, and to practice collaboration while developing an idea. The ICBC project has not yet tried this tool, but several stakeholders believe it may be useful in experimenting with referral mechanisms for the delivery of integrated ECCD services. The Presencing Institute's toolkit includes a guide for Prototyping that readers of this resource pack may find useful.



APPLYING

FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS

IN THE ICBC PROJECT

In the ICBC project we experimented with a visioning exercise with a group of champions from the ECCD ecosystem for the cultivation of Bridging Leadership skills. After spending some time envisioning a possible future in which integrated ECCD services were widely available and successful in Bangladesh, we used the iceberg model to individually and collectively imagine what contributed to this successful ECCD ecosystem of the future.

The Bridging Leadership workshops at District Level included Learning Journeys where participants traveled together to visit community-based childcare centers, and to interact with stakeholders at different parts of the ecosystem to fuel collective learning and reflection on the system. This helped nurture trust and learning relationships between participants across community, government and implementing NGOs. They returned to a 3d mapping exercise to dialogue about the ecosystem, its relationships, barriers, and opportunities, and together they imagined a possible future. Introducing participants early on to levels of listening and dialogue and elements of inner work helped build meaningful and reflective conversations.

Participants of the ICBC project district workshops were also introduced to non-violent communication and had the opportunity to begin to practice it. This work has laid the foundation for more detailed work on collaboration and decision making which may fuel the implementation of a referral strategy for the project in its next phase.

Beyond the Leadership for Collaboration workshops, the ICBC project engages project functionaries and partners at different levels to participate in Whatsapp coordination groups and coordination and steering committees at national and district levels. These forums offer spaces in which some of these tools may be applied to shift practices toward inclusive collaboration for transformation.

Practice: *Find a quiet space to reflect --- Think about a time when you collaborated deeply and whole-heartedly with others toward a common purpose. It could be in your personal life with friends or family, or at work.*

What made this collaboration exceptional? Try to think beyond just WHAT you did to how you communicated, how you or others behaved, the quality of your relationships and spaces of interaction.

Make notes in your journal.

> *You never really **understand a person** until you consider things **from his point of view** until you climb into his skin and **walk around** in it.*

Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's book
"To Kill a Mockingbird"

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Giving and receiving helpful feedback is an important skill for building collaborative relationships. This topic has not been covered in the pack, but a good resource for anyone interested is available from the Barefoot Guide at https://www.barefootguide.org/tools-and-exercises.html

You can read more about **different forms of power** in this reflection on 11 Practical Steps towards healthy power dynamics at work published by Richard Bartlett on The Hum available at https://www.thehum.org/post/11-practical-steps-towards-healthy-power-dynamics-at-work

There has been a lot of recent work on developing **tools to shape Collective Impact**. You can read more about this work at https://www.sfu.ca/complex-systems-frameworks/frameworks/strategies/collective-impact.html. In addition, the Tamarack Institute has produced a Collective Impact Toolkit available at https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/collective-impact-toolkit

Read more about **the Collaboration Spectrum** at https://www.sfu.ca/complex-systems-frameworks/frameworks/strategies/collaboration-spectrum.html

Esha Husain and Joyce Malombe discuss **Leadership for the Holistic Development of Children** in a book published by Synergos – Bridging Leadership Voices, Page 151, with many insights on collaboration. https://syngs.info/files/bridging-leadership-voices-book.pdf

Eleven Practical Steps toward healthy Power Dynamics at work by Richard Bartlett at TheHum.org https://www.thehum.org/post/11-practical-steps-towards-healthy-power-dynamics-at-work

ReThink Health's toolkit on **Public Narrative** https://rethinkarchive.rippel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/RTH-DevelopingAPublicNarrative_10302017.pdf

Appreciative Interviews by Liberating Structures offer a positive, powerful and motivating way to unpack and dialogue around the conditions that contributed to success of an initiative. A facilitation guide for the use of this tool is available at https://www.liberatingstructures.com/5-appreciative-interviews-ai/

Videos

Chong-Lim Lee of Synergos shares **seven insights on working across divides** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AG7sI66RWZY&list=PLuEa_3bpLTOMbBFr9z0xDcUG2UUXS93nU&index=1

Medina Olalekan of Synergos shares **insights on Learning Journeys**: Experiencing a system through the lens of people within it https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-OpPGRWHpE&list=PLuEa_3bpLTOMbBFr9z0xDcUG2UUXS93nU&index=4

This video shares an example of **Radical Collaboration in South Africa – From the individual, to the collective, to systems change,** a case study from Synergos South Africa https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00zRxvjNYic

A video on non-violent communication that we have found helpful: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sjA90hvnQ0&t=94s