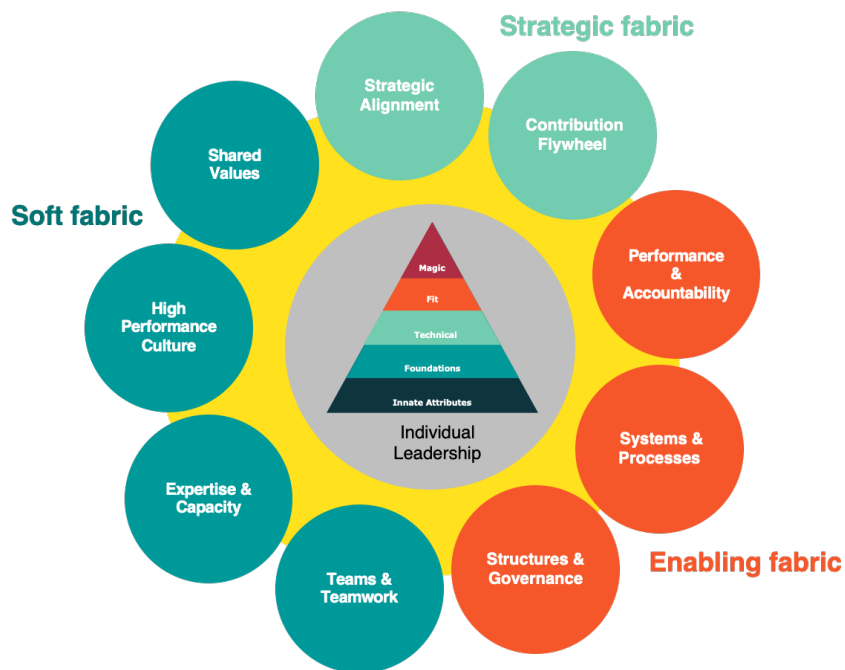


# 'THE MISSING CHAPTER'

## *Rebuilding iNGO Leadership*



*“Stop kicking the ball down the road”*

James Crowley  
in collaboration with Morgana Ryan and Patricia Mugeke

Nov 2024, DRAFT - Version 1.7

# CONTENTS

*Preface*

*A note of thanks*

## **Introduction**

**Part 1:** Taking stock

**Part 2:** Pillars of a high-performance leadership system

**Part 3:** Individual leaders and individual leadership

**Part 4:** What to do? Creating a leadership action plan for 2025–2035

**Annex A:** Interview quotes organised along top twelve themes.

**Annex B:** Quotes from notable political leaders, academia, and sporting world.

**Annex C:** Self-Assessment Tools (*work in progress*)

## Preface

*On April 2, 2024, an Israeli airstrike on an aid convoy in northern Gaza killed seven aid workers from the charity World Food Kitchen. This was another eye-opening milestone in the useless, desperate and some might say sinister war between Israel and Hamas. The roller coaster series of tragedies in this sad war are already beginning to drop from our news headlines; but - somehow, this one struck a chord. Perhaps, because these were not local aid workers, but a combination of British, Polish, Australian, US-Canadian as well as Palestinian nationals. More than 196 aid workers had already been killed in Gaza in this latest conflict.*

*That announcement also struck a chord because it reminded us of the essential and selfless work by aid workers in hundreds of situations across the globe, some, fleetingly in the news - often not, at least, not for long. Crises in Ukraine, Palestine, Myanmar, South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, DR Congo, Chad, Niger, Mali, CAR, Haiti +++ ... this list (ordered by 2023 casualties) is long! Highly skilled and dedicated aid professionals risk their own lives to do whatever they can, often far from their own homes, in the true spirit of humanitarianism, to help local affected communities deal with the threat of hunger, starvation, injury, injustice & discrimination.*

*This paper is NOT about the amazing efforts of these dedicated workers in the front line. Instead, we want to look under the cover of the unusual, complex and highly-charged entities who coordinate and manage these efforts. We want to focus specifically on the topic of iNGO leadership and how we might strengthen and rebuild the leadership capacities of these organisations. In terms of labelling – they are sometimes referred to as humanitarian and development agencies, but often, for short, as iNGOs [international, Non-Government Organisations]. This is the label we will use in this paper.*

*This paper<sup>1</sup> is, unavoidably, a critique. We are honest and direct in our observations, criticisms and reflections, informed heavily by our work with more than thirty of these large organisations over the past eighteen years. We also listened intently to the candid inputs from friends and colleagues across the sector. However, the final conclusions are our own honest views – and all blame and criticism should be directed only to us. We have tried our utmost to be constructive ... looking to offer suggestions and a way forward for every challenge. This is a vital sector for our troubled world. However, there is much work to do to rebuild the leadership and leadership capacity in these entities to be able to contribute effectively during the decades ahead.*

---

<sup>1</sup> The origins of this paper were a co-creation with Tosca Bruno-van Vijfeijken, Morgana Ryan and Patricia Mugeke.... Tosca conducted a few initial interviews as well in the beginning phase, though had to stop contributing during Covid due to other work priorities. She later was one of many commentators on various drafts of the paper.

## *A note of thanks*

We would like to express our sincere thanks to a group of individuals who were most generous with their time, and provided a fascinating set of reflections, ideas and often self-criticisms. We are extremely grateful for this candid and constructive input. These individuals hold, or have recently held, key roles in a variety of development & humanitarian organisations, north and south. In terms of selection, these are all individuals who we knew personally from our work in the sector over the past decade, and whom we knew we could trust for well grounded, honest and candid input. You will have noted a small selection of quotes throughout the paper, especially in Part 1, where we unpacked the findings across twelve themes. A longer set of quotes organised along these same twelve themes is included in Annex A.

Roughly in alphabetical order. Thanks to: **Amitabh Behar**, Interim Executive Director at Oxfam International, formerly Executive Director of National Foundation of India, vice Chair at CIVICUS. **Michael Duggan**, Director at Salesforce, formerly CIO & Deputy COO at Oxfam International; previously CIO at Trocaire. **Maja Daruwala**, Executive Director at Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, India; Trustee at Oxfam GB. **Jim Emerson**, Interim CEO, The Power of Nutrition; 29 years at Plan International (CD, RD, COO & CEO) also more recently held a variety of roles as Advisor to SG at SOS Children's Villages Intl; CEO at VSO and INTRAC, S.G. at ChildFund Alliance; Strategy Advisor at BRAC as well as Regional Director at Save the Children - West Africa. **Matt Foster**, Head of International Development at Open University, formerly Head of Strategy & Performance at VSO. **Mark Goldring**, Director at Asylum Welcome; formerly - CEO Oxfam GB; CEO Mencap; CEO Voluntary Services Overseas. **Ian Gray**, Gray Dot Catalyst; formerly International Programme Director at Toybox; formerly at WorldVision UK - Head of Humanitarian & Emergency Affairs, Assoc. Director of Strategy, Associate Director of Policy & Programme Innovation. Professor **John Hailey**, Centre for Charity Effectiveness, City University of London; formerly founder & Director at INTRAC. The late **Jeremy Hobbs** (RIP), Managing Director, Development Essentials Pty Ltd; formerly Executive Director of Oxfam International; Executive Director Oxfam Australia. **Ray Jordan**, a self-confessed sector disrupter and former international NGO CEO at Gorta Group and Self-Help Africa. **Penny Lawrence**, Executive Coach; Chair at Refugee Action and formerly Deputy CEO Oxfam GB; previously Head of International Programs at VSO. **Siobhan McGee**, Deputy Director, Evaluation and Audit Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland. Formerly CEO of ActionAid Ireland and member of the ActionAid International Federation Leadership Team. **Jonathan Mitchell**, Senior Leader in the iNGO Sector, who has had held a variety of executive roles at CARE USA & CARE International, and more recently at Plan International, ODI and Oxfam. **Patricia Mugeke**, Transformation Lead at Action Aid International. **Vivian Omari**, Performance Framework Implementation Lead at Action Aid International. **Yeshe Smith & Shannon Shultz** from AusAID. **Danny Sriskandarajah**, CEO Oxfam GB; formerly head of CIVICUS and Director General of Royal Commonwealth Society. **Tosca Bruno-van Vijfeijken**, Five Oaks Consulting and Author of *Between Power and Legitimacy: The Future of Transnational NGOs*. **Emmah Wandere**, International Service Sharing at Action Aid International. **James Wangombe**, International Fund Raising at Action Aid International. **Bharath YJ**, Country Model Transformation at Action Aid International, Asia.

Finally, thanks to few important individuals in this long journey of discovery; starting with **Gib Bulloch**, Intreprenuer, founder of Craigberoch, founder/former leader of Accenture Development Partnerships (ADP). Thanks also as **Louise Mackerson-Sandbach**, **Mary Woodgate**, **Lionel Bodin**, **Roger Ford** and the team that continue to lead this innovative organization in Accenture. Thanks to **John Downie** at Accenture. To **Author Larok**, the recently appointed Secretary General of Action Aid International. A special thank you to the indefatigable and inspirational **Paddy Maguinness**, now helping to restart the peace process in Haiti, formerly 27 years at Concern and MD at Traidlinks. Last, but not least, to our patient and long-suffering review and editing team, Deborah, Aisling & Rebecca Crowley.

## INTRODUCTION

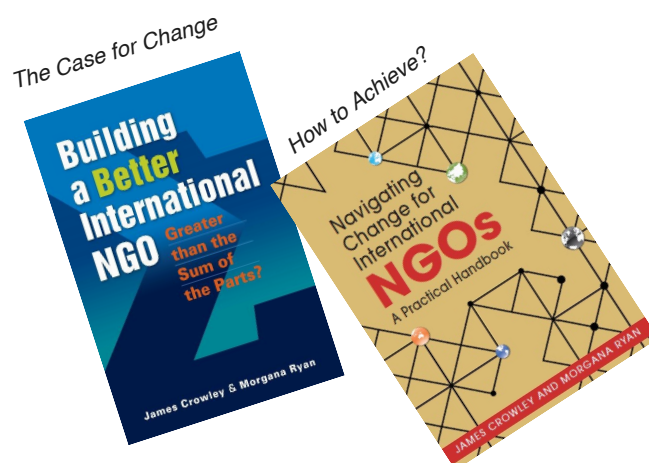
Morgana and I have been observing, studying and reflecting on the leadership challenges in large NGOs for over 18 years. In our work to develop our two earlier publications “Building a better international NGO” (2013) and “Navigating change for international NGOs” (2016) the issue of leadership - in its broadest sense - lingered uncomfortably.

In this paper, we are attempting to tackle some very tricky questions in a sector we live in and love, e.g. *Why are NGOs so hard to lead? Is the leadership capacity currently in place up to the job? What are the most important ingredients of strong NGO leadership? How is the changing external environment impacting the type of leaders and leadership needed for a modern NGO? How do we start the journey to get to a better place?*

---

### Earlier publications (2013 and 2016)

---



Of course - over the years, we have observed some impressive examples of strong leadership ... I recall the trojan efforts of the entire leadership team at AMREF during 2006/07, when they set out to scale up their contribution to strengthen health systems across Africa. This was the first serious attempt I came across to fundamentally rethink a theory of change (*though at that time, they did not use that language*). Shortly after, Morgana and I were hugely impressed by efforts at CRS to turbo charge the exploitation of new technology to extract insights from information for programme innovation, learning and adaptive management. The injection of a senior technology executive from the private sector proved a huge catalyst in their own leadership system – and then became a beacon for the wider sector since 2010, through the annual ICT4D conference (*Information Communication Technology for Development*). And - in very recent times we are watching with hope and optimism the impressive progress at Action Aid International, under the stewardship of the new though homegrown Secretary General, Arthur Larok, in their determined efforts to instil a high-performance culture across all corners of this ambitious federation.

However, strong leadership often seems elusive! As we deliberated in the preparation of these two earlier publications, we often debated what was driving what. Over the past few years, we began the journey to explore this leadership conundrum, reflecting on our practical experiences, interrogating a range of leadership literature as well as speaking in-depth to a range of individuals who hold, or have recently held, key roles in a variety of development & humanitarian organisations, north and south.

The intent of this paper is simply to provide a set of perspectives, ideas and tools to help strengthen both individual and collective leadership for the decade ahead. The paper is broken into four parts:

**Part 1, Taking stock**, attempts to assess the current state of leadership in our international NGOs. This draws from three sources; our own observations over the past eighteen years; what we heard from 20+ fascinating interviews and finally what we can glean from some of the most important strategic shifts or megatrends that will shape our future.

**In Part 2**, we try to piece together the fabric of a strong ‘leadership system’ – drawing out what we regard as the most important pillars.

**In Part 3** – we tackle the central issue of selecting & developing individuals and especially on how we might build a stronger ‘bottom-up’ pipeline of individual leaders for the future.

**Finally in Part 4** – What to do? .... we try to bring all of this together to create a plan of action.

A huge thank you to all our interviewees, for your time and particularly for your open and candid perspectives. Your inputs have been a tremendous help in shaping our analysis and thinking. We have included many of your direct quotes, especially in Part 1 – which bring much life and colour to this paper.

The paper sets out a set of conclusions at the end of each section. However, if we had to boil down our conclusions into a few core messages - it would be as follows:

- A. Leadership is a broad ‘system’ with many interlinked pieces - and much more than about a few high-profile individuals; though, of course, individual leaders at all levels are important components of any **‘leadership system’**.
- B. The 'leadership systems' of many large NGOs are **fragile, stretched, tired, and in some cases simply broken**. Some, we believe have been broken for some time. Boards, executives and leaders throughout need to pull together to rebuild these leadership systems.
- C. A weak or broken ‘leadership system’ can allow organisations to drift into what we call a **‘low-performance culture’** – which can be crippling and contagious. A low performance culture could undermine all of the pillars of your leadership system. Beware, every appointment you make can reinforce or undermine your performance culture.
- D. Do not be hood-winked by the temptation to seek quick-fix, heroic external appointments, to paper over the cracks in your leadership system. Instead, build a solid **bottom-up pipeline** of leadership talent. .... We have suggested a bottom-up ‘leadership attribute pyramid’ in Part 3.
- E. The need for what we do is enormous - poverty, conflict, injustice, inequality, hunger. However - **the role of large NGOs is under more challenge** and scrutiny than ever before. We need strong leadership and leadership systems to navigate a route and contribution - to have any chance to deliver on what is needed in the decades ahead.

-----

## PART 1 – TAKING STOCK - PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

### Our own reflections

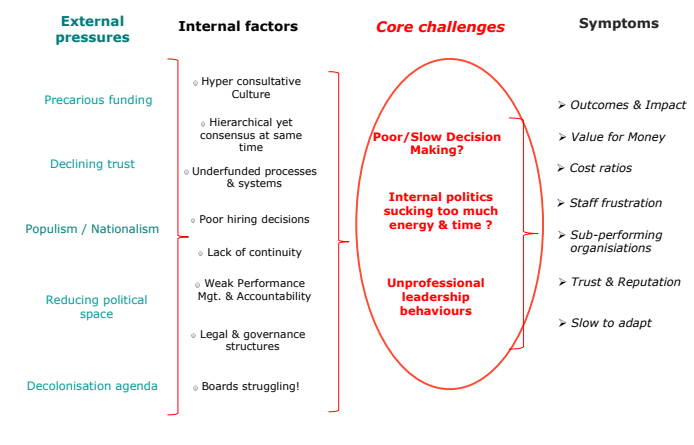
We began by reflecting on our own experience, learning and frustrations from our work in the sector – things we came across time and time again. We questioned why we see poor/slow decision making, why internal politics seems to be sucking so much energy and time; why some of the leadership behaviours we sometimes see – are far below that one might hope - and surprisingly can seem well below what one might observe in the private sector.

Are these leadership challenges a natural consequence of the considerable external pressures and demands - precarious funding, declining trust, the rise of populism & nationalism, reducing 'political space', the decolonisation agenda and the ever-growing drive towards more localisation of aid. Perhaps - these leadership challenges are also linked to the internal characteristics which seem to permeate many of these organisations, topics that we tackled head on in our earlier publications; horrendously complex legal and governance constructs, hyper consultative cultures, underfunded processes and systems, weak performance & accountability frameworks, and struggling boards who can find it difficult to keep track of what's actually going on.

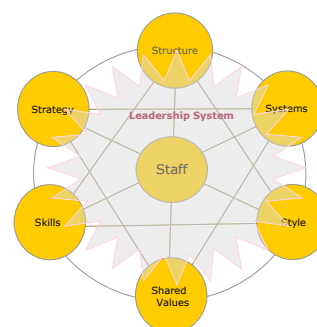
Or perhaps, are leadership frailties making these issues more demanding than they really need to be? i.e. is this a question of individual leaders and leadership? or is the issue more systemic in these organisations and the sector we find ourselves in today.

Our early reflections led us to the first simple hypothesis - that leadership in any organisation is not just about one or two individuals. We believe that leadership is a broader topic, including individuals and teams, as well as aspects such as habits, norms, behaviours, standards, policies and even processes & systems. We began to refer to this as the "leadership system" – along the lines of the well-known 'Seven S' model<sup>2</sup>. As the chair and Board member, you are a part of that system - whether you like it or not! Of course, your CEO or Secretary General is a very important part of this system, as is the 'Senior Leadership Team' as are all the other important teams at international, country and field levels. The layers of policies and processes around recruitment, career development, performance management, and decision making are also important parts of the fabric of your broader leadership system.

#### What we have observed over past 18 years!



#### Not just about individual leaders - but a broader 'leadership system'



<sup>2</sup> Developed in the late '70s, Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, consultants from the McKinsey consulting firm. Believed to be based on an earlier 'Star Model' from Jay Galbraith in the 1960's.

## What we heard from external contributors

We spoke to a diverse set of leaders in the sector, from the global 'North' and 'South' - and got some forthright and soul-searching views. These are individuals who hold (or recently held) some of the most challenging leadership roles in our sector. We are extremely grateful for their time and particularly for their candid input. As an aside, we would like to put on record that, despite the challenging and self-critical tone of the inputs and quotes below, all of the interviewees retain a huge sense of passion and commitment to the sector.

We summarised what we heard into twelve key themes.

The first three relate to the formidable context in the sector today. Repeatedly, we heard that these senior roles have become pretty much impossible jobs. As Professor John Hailey<sup>1</sup> elegantly put it *"the complexity and conflicting demands is making it harder and harder to lead these organisations. It will take amazing people in commitment and resilience to be able to make a difference - I would not want to do it"*. Vivian Omari<sup>1</sup> of ActionAid put it slightly differently *"iNGOS are difficult to lead - are deceptive, not businesses but at core very much business - can feel very difficult - to be successful - a lot to package in one person"*. Mark Goldring<sup>1</sup> expressed similar sentiments *.." leaders are getting more and more boxed in ... fear of making a mistake dominating more and more ... the freedom to go out and make a real difference not there as was previously"*. And when we look beyond the boundaries of individual organisations, the challenge gets more complex - as Bharath YJ<sup>1</sup> put it succinctly *"Multi-polar leadership is needed especially if social movements are to be successful"*.

---

### Top 12 themes from external interviews

---

Formidable Context

1. Impossible jobs
2. Questioning of leadership over recent decades
3. Self-doubt on future 'value-add' of large iNGOs

Structure & Power

4. Desperation for simplification
5. Design of structures and teams
6. Informal, dissipated power

Change

7. Weak enabling glue
8. Performance & Accountability
9. Board members struggling to fulfil role
10. Change near impossible

People

11. Selection of right people
  12. Continuity of individuals/talent
- 

<sup>1</sup>See "A Note of Thanks" for a list of interviewees



Perhaps, against this background, we should not be surprised that the assessment on how leadership has done over the past decade is less than glowing. *As one very seasoned leader in the sector put it bluntly - "the last 10 to 15 years of leadership have not served the sector well".* But we believe such self-critical sentiments (*and there were many*) need to be put in context – as mentioned above, these have become remarkably difficult roles.

Compounding this challenging context is the debate on the real future or ‘value-added’ of some of these large international organisations - especially the more generalist variety. As Mark Goldring<sup>1</sup> remarked *"the role of NGOs is under more question than ever before .. the contribution is nowhere near as significant as we think it is"*. Penny Lawrence<sup>1</sup> went further, *" maybe aid as a neo-colonial response to inequality has just had its day"*. Another interviewee talked about a *"context of very damaged trust"* and pondering if, perhaps; *"the South just does not need us"*.

Themes 4, 5 and 6 touch on the complexity of structures and decision making, as well as the crucial importance of soft power for anyone who is serious about taking a leadership role. Jeremy Hobbs<sup>1</sup> put it simply; *"the big federation model isn't sustainable - it's just too complicated"*. Siobhan McGee<sup>1</sup>, now at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland with a wealth of experience from a number of NGOs, elaborated; *"The structure and composition of International Leadership teams in Federations or Alliances are necessarily a 'fudge'; they must reflect the broad membership base, the complexity of the network's relationships and interdependencies, and factors such as financial contribution; it's completely different scenario to that of a singular structure or smaller system."*. Ian Gray<sup>1</sup>, from his experience with some large iNGOs, talked passionately about the challenge of *"drowning in policy & bureaucracy"*. Another old hand in the sector, Jim Emerson<sup>1</sup>, put it very simply; *"the current leadership construct is just about enough to keep the wheels on the road, to survive "*. He continued; *"a lot of what goes on at senior leadership and Board level is superficial"*. Because of this complexity, there is a risk that too many roles become less and less meaningful, as Ray Jordan<sup>1</sup> expressed bluntly; *"the main focus is on reporting and compliance rather than doing a real job"*.

There were several references to the importance of soft power in getting things done; Jim Emerson talked passionately about the; *"importance of informal as well as formal (authority) leadership"*. Another executive suggested *"good leaders are those comfortable with uncertainty, complexity and low power differentials - able to navigate flat structures"*. And Penny Lawrence went on; *"we need to move to a distributed leadership model - avoiding big bureaucracy, with a network of leaders working together to navigate towards goals"*. Jonathan Mitchell<sup>1</sup> reinforced this and warned; *"Informal power is hugely important in this sector – appointing leaders from outside, without these skills are unlikely to succeed - many examples, where appointing the wrong outsiders almost brought bankruptcy"*.

There were many comments relating to the challenges in building a strong performance & accountability culture (theme 8), a topic we will return to in Part 2. One interviewee talked about the existence of a; *"flabby, low performance culture at several levels, from the very top to the field"*. Penny Lawrence put a balanced twist on this theme; *"Yes – we need principled/purpose driven organisations, but need to be able to operate practically and effectively"*. John Hailey chipped in with the qualification; *"performance management is a major weakness - not because people don't want*

---

<sup>1</sup> See "A Note of Thanks" for a list of interviewees

<sup>1</sup> See Annex A for list of Phase 1 Interviewees

*to but they just don't have the skills to do it properly – we need to invest". Patricia Mugeke<sup>1</sup> emphasised the value of building a; "Performance and accountability framework as an essential tool to help drive culture and discipline change" ... however, she qualified that this needs to be built extremely carefully, as; " countries that look weak or strong from a distance may not reflect the reality of programming work or impact on the ground".*

Theme 9 speaks to the very crucial role of boards and their uphill struggles in fulfilling their leadership mandate. Matt Foster<sup>1</sup> commented pragmatically, *"Boards are mainly about survival, - more about making sure they don't ruin anything; spot obvious issues; truthfully not exposed enough to really have a good feel for what goes on - how could they?"*. Ray Jordan<sup>1</sup> questioned *"are trustees aligned to the mission - or merely custodians of the past?"*. Ian Gray commented; *"Most are scared – very defensive – just stay out of trouble"*. Siobhan McGee elaborated that *"Board competence and members' contribution can be a 'lucky-bag'; with one or two mis-steps, it can very easily deliver a net negative effect rather than the intended strategic oversight, accountability and risk management role that a board ought to fulfill."* Finally, in some programme countries, there can be an added complexity – as one interviewee remarked in relation to the; – *"issue of nepotism in boards which makes them want to focus on only their communities without being strategic ... some seeing NGOs as a source of income despite signing on to work as volunteers and hence they will push for unnecessary meetings so they can claim per-diems, transport and hotel accommodation"*.

Almost everyone talked about the difficulty of delivering real change, especially when trying to strengthen the enabling glue of these unusual organisations. Peter Walton<sup>1</sup> of Care Australia commented, *"Status-quo rules supreme - try a bit harder doing what you've always done and hope that will be enough"*. Johnathan Mitchell commented; *"NGO leadership have talked about fundamental change for over 10 years but little action to show for it" .. adding that "... the natural forces of momentum, self-preservation and donor pressures mean that fundamental change is very hard "*. Ian Gray commented, probably from a few battle-scars based on his experience with some very large iNGOs; *"Absolutely no incentive to change ... risk /reward out of kilter ... survival is the goal"*, adding with a bit of a frown - *"Everything is a negotiation - battle after battle"*.

Themes 11 and 12 get to the challenge of selecting the right people, as well as the issue of continuity of people and ideas. Emmah Wandere, brought this topic back to the timeless qualities of communication, consistency and adaptability; *"Communication .. and ability to communicate is very important" .. "Can't stress enough the importance of consistency" ...." and adaptability - especially in a world where context is constantly changing "*. James Wangombe added in a similar vein ; *"transparency & consistency is vital - gives confidence - truth matters, voice needs to match deeds"*. He went on; *"organisations that seem to work, their leader leads from the back and support others to take the spotlight... speak about 'us' and not 'I'"*. Vivian Omari built on this *"Good leaders tend " not to be cluttered in thought, not cluttered in who they are"*. However, she went on to stress that *"fit with context is very important - a leader can be good in one situation but not in another .... Good leaders can read environments and bring out what matters"*. Yeshe Smith & Shannon Shultz spoke of the risk of inherent racism for example in *"over prioritising western skill sets (like good grammar and document management) versus political and cultural insights"*<sup>2</sup>. All of this links very strongly with the importance of continuity, as Jim Emerson emphasised *"continuity is essential in a context where a network of relationships is so important"*. More on this later when we get to individual leaders and individual leadership in Part 3.

---

<sup>1</sup> See "A Note of Thanks" for a list of interviewees

<sup>2</sup> May be useful to refer to Tema Okun's Mythical Paper on 'White Supremacy Culture' (2021):

In Annex A, we have included a longer set of quotes from our external contributors, aligned with each of these 12 themes above. These will allow you to delve deeper into these responses and better appreciate the level of emotion and self-challenge that ran through these discussions.

## ***Strategic shifts & mega trends***

As we look to the future, we know the world is not standing still. We tried to pick out some of the most important shifts or mega-trends which might affect the kind of leaders and expertise needed in the decade ahead. We believe the following six deserve particular mention, labelled cheekily as the six Ds; Digitalisation, De-carbonisation, De-colonisation, De-globalisation, De-Democracy and Dis-Information. Some of these present important opportunities though they also bring very considerable challenges!

Digitalisation and AI provide opportunities for more creative and effective programmes. Potentially, it can also provide some pathways for developing countries to reinvent their economies to catch up and who knows – even overtake more established economies. However, are NGOs up for this task? – specifically, does the current cadre of NGO leadership have the expertise, not to mind the head-space, to engage effectively in this arena?

Decarbonisation and associated opportunities from the ‘green industrial revolution’. Could this shift, optimistically, provide an opportunity for some developing countries to make a leap forward, especially where they have important natural advantages – an obvious example is in solar energy. However, we know too well that a lot of the effects of climate change will cast a particularly dark shadow on many of these countries. Are NGO leadership teams equipped to deal with the upsides as well as the challenges of this important trend?

The Decolonisation agenda, and all that entails, provides a window for local teams in developing countries to take a deeper ownership of their own agenda – not waiting for northern solutions, expertise and money. But does the leadership and governance of southern branches of international NGOs have the confidence, ambition and capacity to grasp this opportunity?... The jury is still out! – especially as much of the power still comes, implicitly or explicitly, with the flow of money from the so-called ‘north’. And efforts to build strong and capable local governance in several developing countries is not without its challenges.

Democracy – or maybe better put ‘De-Democracy’, a worrying trend, with the rise of populism and autocratic drifts in countries that were regarded, until recently, as bastions of democracy and free speech – such as India, Brazil, Turkey, Hungary +++ ... there are many!!! ... arguably the US and UK are not immune from factions who display these tendencies. This will continue to shrink, even further, the space for civil society to operate. A good example is India, where Oxfam and Amnesty are amongst the many international NGOs whose licences have not been renewed because they receive funds from abroad. Since 2018, the licences of nearly 20,000 NGOs have been cancelled, as part of a campaign by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) against NGOs and social activists, particularly those working on issues of inequality with the rural poor, the low castes and marginalised.

---

### **Strategic shifts & mega-trends – the 6 Ds**

---

**D-digitalisation** – Technology and AI

**De-carbonisation** – Climate change & green industrial revolution

**De-colonisation** – of Aid and Power

**De-globalisation** – Nationalism /Populism/ Protectionism

**De-democracy** – Under threat from populism and autocracy

**Dis-information** – fake news, foreign manipulation & interference

---

### *Opportunities & Challenges*

---

De-globalisation – the fairly recent and significant reverse of the globalisation trend that we have experienced for several decades – which was, until recently, seen as an important driver of growth, economic wealth and prosperity. International trade was regarded as a win-win for all, where we all benefit by a growing global pie. The reverse, illustrated by Trumpism, Brexit, populist/nationalistic tendencies, problems with global supply chains and a lack of confidence in global growth leads to a ‘zero-sum game’ philosophy ... “*I win if you lose*”. This is worrying news for the spirit of humanitarianism – helping those in need wherever they are, and what-ever the cause. All of this will increase the stress on international leadership systems, and especially international fundraising, the lifeblood of all international NGOs.

Dis-Information is a worrying trend, making communication difficult and muddying the waters in the public’s understanding of global problems and possible solutions. It is also a significant threat to the process of good democracy, made easier by the proliferation of social media, and is used increasingly as an international weapon by rogue states.

Finally, if there were to be a seventh D, perhaps not at the same level of the previous 6, one could think about the big shift to remote working or De-Camping. This change, significantly stimulated by Covid, has surprised many in terms of its scale and longevity, and seems to have changed the game in several sectors. For international NGOs, it could present opportunities in terms of flexibility, horizontal teams and teamwork (within and beyond organisational & country boundaries) as well as access to scarce talent and know-how. However, we do not know yet where this shift will eventually land – given the growing debate about productivity, team building, the creative process and the very significant problem of loneliness when working at home for extended periods.

How will these shifts affect the leadership of iNGOs in the decade ahead? Proper answers are beyond the scope of this paper. However, we know for sure that the kinds of leaders, leadership teams and expertise that we need might be a bit different to what we have become accustomed.

## ***Conclusions from Part 1 – Taking Stock***

Looking across our own experience, analysis and learning, and the findings from a fascinating set of interviews, what do we see as the most important conclusions? We have landed on five.

*Conclusion 1* puts the spotlight directly on the ‘leadership systems, reaffirming what we had hypothesised from the outset - that leadership is a complex and broad-based system with many interlinked components - and much more than about a few high-profile individuals. These important individuals are, of course, a central part of any leadership system but nonetheless just one part. In Part 2, we will piece together what we see as the most important pillars of the fabric of a good leadership system.

*Conclusion 2:* The 'leadership systems' of many large NGOs are fragile, stretched, tired, and in some cases simply broken. Some, we believe have been broken for some time. Where this is the case, boards, chairs, chief executives and leaders throughout each NGO need to pull together to rebuild these leadership systems, to have a chance to deliver on mission and objectives. There is

---

### **Part 1 Reflections / Conclusions**

---

1. **Leadership systems** – not about 1 or 2 individuals
  2. **Leadership systems** - weak/stretched/tired/broken (Part 2)
  3. **Drowning in complexity** of governance/structures/priorities/politics+
  4. **Low-performance culture** locked in
  5. **Concerns on role/contribution** & strategy
-

absolutely no point in beating-up well meaning, in most cases talented and dedicated individuals - who battle with the complex and challenging 'leadership systems' in these large and stretched organisations.

*Conclusion 3:* We believe that some NGOs are simply drowning in complexity - some of this unavoidable, some not. Complexity in structures and governance; complexity in policies, principles, priorities, themes, language; complexity in strategy & programmatic approaches. Each new idea or initiative tends to add layer upon layer – and soon it becomes hard for anyone to see the 'wood from the trees'. Eventually, only those who can navigate this internal organizational complexity will be able to survive and prosper. Unfortunately, some great people may not fancy this environment and will seek opportunities elsewhere.

*Conclusion 4:* A weak or broken 'leadership system' can allow organisations to drift into what we call a low-performance culture – which can be crippling and contagious. We believe strongly that a high-performance culture (*behaviours, attitudes, habits, expectations +*) is a crucial pillar of the 'soft fabric' of any leadership system. On the other hand, a low-performance culture can undermine all of the other pillars of your leadership system. Beware, every appointment you make has the opportunity to reinforce or undermine your performance culture. In Part 2, we will further explore this topic – and set out some of the typical symptoms – which we have come across more often than we might like to admit over the past eighteen years. I wonder if you will be able to recognise any of these in your own organisation?

*Conclusion 5:* Some iNGOs are beginning to experience (or in some cases already have), a looming crisis in terms of their role and contribution. This was a resounding view of many of the seasoned senior leaders we spoke with during the interviews. And this challenge will be compounded by the emerging strategic shifts & mega-trends which are further changing the landscape, which each present opportunities as well as significant new challenges. For some, there is an urgent need to rebuild momentum in what we refer to as the '*contribution flywheel*', which is slowing or in some cases stalling – a concept we will expand on in Part 2. This is a take on the idea of '*economic flywheel*' originally introduced by Jim Collins in his much-read book "Good to Great"<sup>3</sup> ... [*also strongly recommend his spin-off publication "Good to Great and the Social Sectors"*<sup>4</sup>]

---

<sup>3</sup> *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't* is a management book by [Jim C. Collins](#) that describes how companies transition from being good companies to great companies, and how most companies fail to make the transition. The book was a bestseller, selling four million copies and was published on October, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> **GOOD TO GREAT AND THE SOCIAL SECTORS** Why Business Thinking Is Not the Answer, by Jim Collins, November 2005.

What are the implications of these conclusions?

*Implication A:* ... We need to work hard to refresh, strengthen or in some cases rebuild these 'leadership systems'. If broken, there is absolutely no point in persecuting talented individuals with unreasonable or unattainable goals... This is a segway into the subject of Part 2 where we will flesh out what we see as the most important pillars of a strong Leadership System.

*Implication B:* Given the scope and scale of the challenge, we need exceptional people in the key roles, to survive, to perform and at the same time to lead the transformation of these fragile leadership systems. They need to be patient, respected, visionary, practical and resilient. In fact, organisations where the leadership systems are always likely to be stretched and brittle, the calibre, style and substance of individuals in key roles matters even more. Another big implication of these early findings, even with exceptional individual leaders, is the importance of excellent teams & teamwork at every level. We need outstanding teamwork to overcome the complexity we mentioned above. And we know that good teamwork is a corner stone for all high-performance environments. This is the subject of Part 3.

*Implication C:* Finally, we need to stop kicking the ball down the road. – yes, interrogate honestly where your leadership system is at, the kinds of individual leaders and talent pipeline you have today, and reflect on what you will need to be successful in the future. Prepare a practical action plan to bring all of this together and start strengthening your leadership system for the decade ahead. This is the subject of Part 4.

---

## Implications for decade ahead

---

*Implication (A) – Rebuild leadership systems – stop beating up talented individual leaders* → **Subject of Part 2**

*Implication (B) - Need exceptional people in key roles; And excellent teams and teamwork* → **Subject of Part 3**

*Implication (C) – Stop kicking the ball down the road – A plan of action* → **Subject of Part 4**

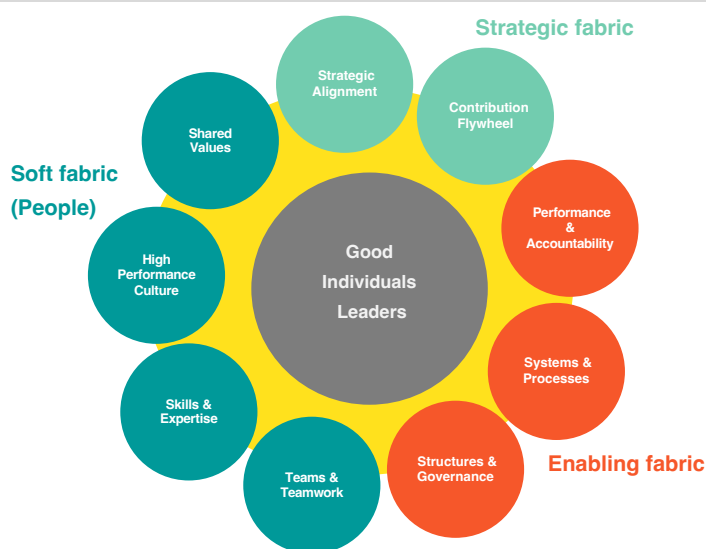
---

## PART 2 – PILLARS OF A STRONG ‘LEADERSHIP SYSTEM’

We landed on the concept of a ‘leadership system’ as a way of thinking about the challenges we see in our sector and to avoid the trap of ‘over-focusing on’ or even ‘beating-up’ talented individuals who lead or have led these organisations in recent years. Based on our analysis and conclusions in Part 1, we tried to identify what we see are the most important pillars of a strong ‘leadership system’. Yes, selecting, supporting and retaining good individual leaders is one very important pillar, but there are several others. Put simply, our thesis is that a strong leadership system is the product of strong individual leaders and a high-performance environment. A high-performance environment has many ingredients or pillars. In the diagrams opposite, we have picked out the pillars which we feel are particularly important. These can be loosely grouped into three areas. The first four speak to the ‘soft fabric’ around culture, values, teamwork and expertise. The next three cover the more tangible, ‘enabling fabric’ - structures, processes & systems, performance & accountability. Finally, we have the crucial ‘strategic fabric’ – strategic alignment on role, purpose and approach, and finally what we call ‘*contribution flywheel*’.

A few brief comments on each of these pillars. We start, kind of in reverse order, with the pillars of the ‘strategic fabric’, then set out the pillars of the ‘enabling fabric’ and end with what we believe are the most important pillars of all – the non-negotiable ‘soft fabric’. We will close with Pillar 1 – which will then become the main topic of the next section (Part 3). I guess you thought we would never get there!

### Pillars of a high performance ‘leadership system’



### Pillars of the Strategic Fabric

**Pillar 10 – Strategic Alignment on Purpose, Contribution & Approach.** Any good strategy requires rigorous analysis of external realities as well as internal beliefs & capabilities, with clear choices being made and bought into by all. However, the key piece - often so elusive - is the challenge of deep alignment - not just around purpose and focus but on beliefs about how change most effectively comes about – often referred to as a ‘*theory of change*’. Easier said than done sometimes in the political and opinionated culture of some of these organisations! Far too often, we see deep misalignments confounding day-to-day decision making and performance. This topic is discussed in depth in Chapter 5 of our earlier publication ‘*Building a Better international NGO*’. There, we lay out a pragmatic approach to help NGOs work through the process of reflection, making clear choices and gaining alignment, to create a pragmatic, meaningful and implementable strategic plan.

**Pillar 9 – Contribution Flywheel.** Whilst Pillar 10 speaks primarily to internal clarity & alignment, this pillar is more externally oriented. We are testing whether the combination of this strategy and

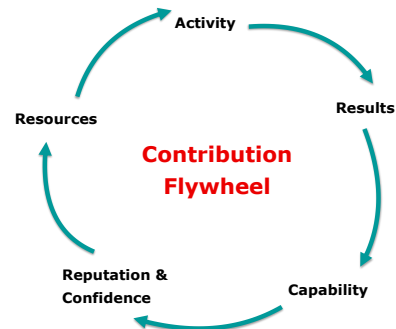


the quality of its implementation has genuine traction. To describe this pillar, we would like to introduce the concept, of ‘*Contribution Flywheel*’. A positive flywheel is defined by ever growing **momentum** in outcomes, credibility and available resources. Put simply; Good **Projects** build greater **Capacity** as well as positive **Outcomes** (*happy stakeholders*) which builds **Credibility** that in turn will attract more **Resources** (funds & expertise) which will support more projects, more capacity, greater outcomes and so on. In reality, this is not very different from any business. Flywheel momentum drives collective confidence ... which in turn enhances performance, outputs and impact.

---

### Contribution Momentum

---



We believe that this contribution flywheel can become a bit ‘stuck’, perhaps even at a sector level, but definitely for some individual organisations. This should be a major concern for all boards and leadership teams. When we look to the future, senior leadership teams and boards need to challenge themselves to see if the momentum of the past will carry through, especially given the major shifts and mega-trends we can already see. One interviewee commented “*I am absolutely astonished that there has been so little real innovation within our sector over the past decade*”. And as Penny Lawrence, Chair at Refugee Action and ex Deputy CEO Oxfam GB emphasised “*In practice most leadership attention seems to be drawn into talking about tackling decolonisation, anti-racist practice, safeguarding - rather than driving more radical new solutions and ideas to change directions and approaches*”.

## Pillars of the Enabling Fabric

**Pillar 8 – Structures & Governance** (*incl. decision making process*). Designing effective structures and governance is not easy, when you span so many different contexts, often across fifty to one hundred nation states, and sometimes across a wide range of programmatic areas. We know that all structural options have their own pros and cons, and hence need to be very carefully matched for each specific situation and set of priorities. This is a topic we have explored in depth in Chapter 3 of our earlier publication ‘Building a Better International NGO’. There, we discuss the key issues and drivers and analyse the pros and cons of a variety of different structural options.

**Pillar 7 – Systems & Processes**. These are essential ingredients for any efficiently functioning organisation. This seems to be a real challenge for some – made harder by the complexity of governance, as well as the diverse scope of countries included in many organisations and federations. We are referring here to the standard processes and systems that underpin any large organisation, such as Finance, HR, IT, M&E, knowledge management, planning & performance management. Though there are a few donors who are willing to invest in these areas, funding and completing these projects can be a real struggle – requiring a lot of discipline and determination.

**Pillar 6 – Performance & Accountability**. When NGOs get past a certain size, we believe that it is near impossible to maintain a high-performing organisation without a consistent, thorough and pragmatic ‘performance and accountability framework’. Apologies for the label but that is what it is! This has been one of the consistent take-aways from almost every one of the iNGOs we have worked with over the past 18 years. This is a practical step for any organisation seeking to establish a high-performance culture. (See Pillar 2 below). As an aside, external accountability, a much used and discussed term, has little credibility unless it is grounded on an effective internal performance & accountability framework. This topic is explored in detail in chapter 6 of our earlier publication,



*'Building a Better international NGO'*. Many have made some good progress on this area over the past decade - though others are just beginning to establish this crucial pillar.

## **Pillars of the Soft Fabric**

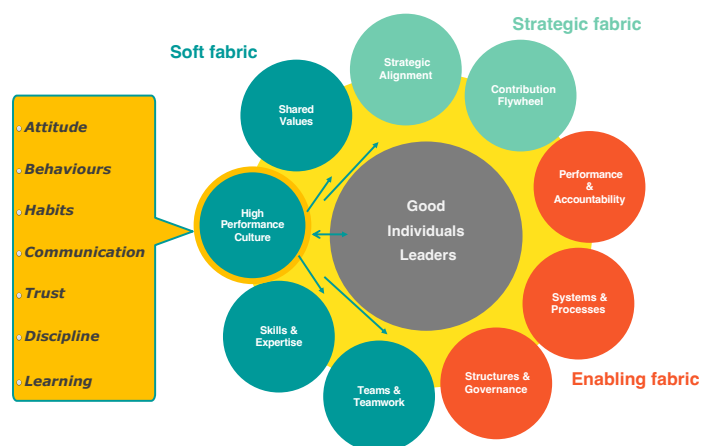
**Pillar 5 – Teams & Teamwork.** Whatever the structure, whatever the governance model, whatever the strategy, we cannot stress enough the importance of high performing teams and good teamwork. We need well designed, motivated and high performing teams to be able to operate effectively in the complex and dynamic world we work in. Appropriate representation of the important stakeholders (not tokenism), genuine/ honest participation, clear decision-making mandates and discipline are all hallmarks of any high performing organisation. These ingredients can be illusive in the day-to-day political cauldron within some of our large NGOs.

**Pillar 4 – Skills, expertise & capacity.** How good are we? In reality, what are we actually good at? Do our skills and capacity align with our aspired programmatic approach? Many organisations speak about *'a rights-based approach'*, *'working in partnerships'*, *'empowering local community-based organisations'* (CBOs) and *'supporting social movements'*. However, sometimes one could question if these align with the actual competence at local and international levels? Perhaps, in some organisations, is the significant body of the know-how still more aligned to traditional service delivery work, for example, helping to fund and build classrooms and clinics? Furthermore, if we really want to work with and through partners, a logical and much-favoured approach - how, in practice, do we ensure that we continue to learn and maintain meaningful expertise and know-how? Similarly, when we talk about capacity building of our partners, are these well-intended words, or do we really have the expertise to deliver on this? The topic of core competence is discussed in Chapter 4 of our earlier publication – *'Building a Better international NGO'*.

**Pillar 3 – Shared Values.** As we developed early drafts of this paper, we resisted including values as an explicit pillar – even though we fully believe in the role that shared values plays in the DNA of every high performing organisation – large and small. When I worked at Accenture, I was very aware of the emphasis on shared values – drilled into every training and embedded in every performance appraisal; - values such as stewardship, client service, and ones that did not have neat names – like working all night or all weekend to meet a client deadline. However, in the suite of NGOs we have worked with since 2006 – we felt that, now and again, the concept of values and shared values was sometimes abused, sometimes got lost in language and platitudes - did not always feel authentic. As a result, we hesitated to include it until this latest version. But we know deep down that it is essential ... and needs to be an explicit pillar of any good leadership system.

**Pillar 2 – A high-performance culture.** We would like to emphasise the crucial importance of this critical pillar – which we have labelled *'High-Performance Culture'*. This is a pillar I was intuitively aware of during my career at Accenture – though one I first became obsessed with during regular visits to a small but busy local paint shop over 35 years ago, close to where we live in North London. Each time I visited the store – year after year – I observed the same pattern and standards. When each customer (often bemused & dithering) entered the store – a member of a team of fairly tattily-dressed assistants

**A high-performance culture is a crucial pillar**



immediately offered to help - calmly and quickly understanding exactly what was needed - guiding the customer to the correct isle, providing a bit of clarification and advice and guiding him/her to the counter for payment. Before you knew it – you were out the door with everything you needed – even the items that you never knew were necessary. I was constantly amazed how each of these individuals, without exception, year after year, managed to develop the attitude, the urgency, the knowledge and especially the empathy to perform so consistently and impressively. One day I will do a proper case study – as the shop still operates to the same standards to this day.

As illustrated by the diagram above, a high-performance culture has several dimensions – attitudes, behaviours, habits, trust, discipline and learning. This list is not definitive. And of course, this pillar impacts, and is impacted by, the health of the other pillars. In fact, a strong performance culture can help organisations get by with a raft of weaknesses in other areas.

On the other hand, when we speak of a low-performance culture, what exactly do we mean? The following, practical symptoms are a few illustrative examples (not an exhaustive list) – though symptoms we have witnessed in too many situations. For example,

- ... It's OK to allocate/hide fixed or overhead costs as program expenditure!*
- ... It's OK to want to be on a team, but not sincerely to be part of that team!*
- ... It's OK to pay lip service to collective goals, priorities, and initiatives – whiles ploughing on in my own country or function on what I think is best!*
- ... It's OK for low-performance individuals or functions to be tolerated without anyone seeming to care, or willing to take action!*
- ... It's OK for severe misalignments in beliefs and approaches to be left unresolved and to linger, causing lots of wasted effort and confusion!*
- .... It's OK to run a country office where little or no funds are left over after overheads & salaries - to do any substantive program work!*

Perhaps you may have experienced some of these? Tosca Bruno-van Vijfeijken spoke candidly to this broad topic and *“wondered whether there was something implicit in the psychological contract that many NGO staff seem to think they have with their employers: as long as I have passion for the cause and I am willing to work long hours for relatively low pay (i.e. lower than what I could earn in the private sector), I will have a job. No mention of actual outcomes. Tosca went on to wonder if the attitude/actions of donors don't help when they embrace the \*feeling\* that something good is being done with their money, even if they know full-well that not that much can be done”*

-----

**Pillar 1 – Good individual leaders.** Finally, to the heart of the leadership system, the task of selecting, developing, nurturing, and retaining individual leaders not just at C level, but in all the important leadership roles throughout these large and complex organisations. The reality of these stretched and fragile leadership systems, in many of our NGOs, creates a hugely demanding context for any individual. We believe that good individual leaders can, through their actions, inactions and decisions either reinforce/build or alternatively undermine a high-performance culture. This is the topic of Part 3 of this paper.

## Conclusions from Part 2

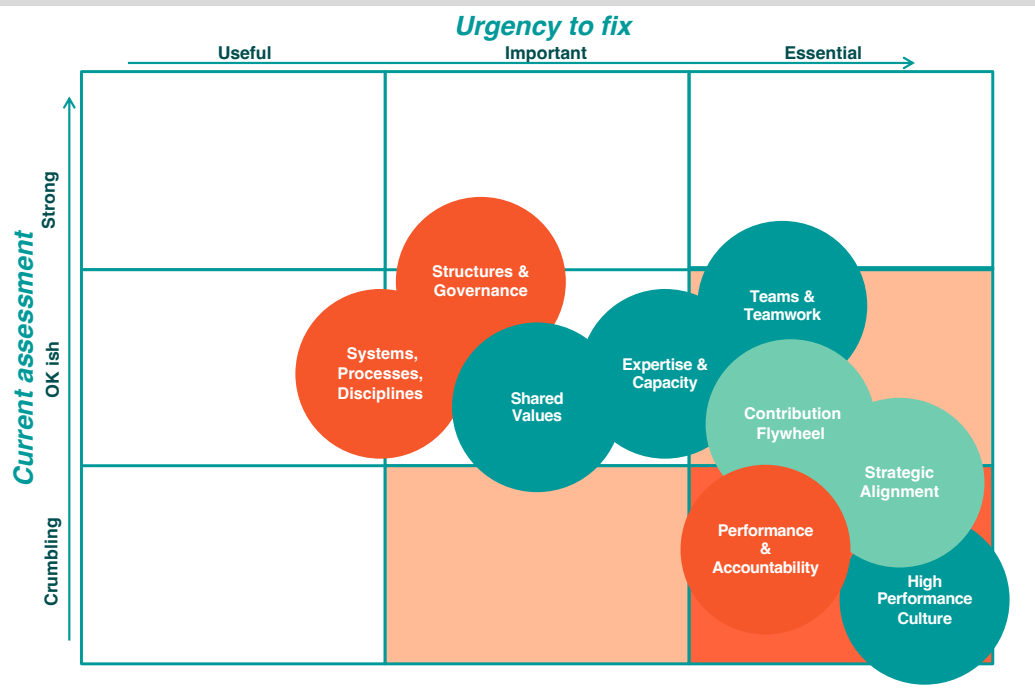
When we look across the entirety of the pillars of any leadership system, what conclusions can we draw? ... (note that numbering builds on conclusions from Part 1)

**Conclusion 6: PRIORITISE: BE HONEST, PRAGMATIC & REALISTIC:** It is inevitable that some of the pillars of your leadership system are weaker or stronger than others. Yes - build on your strengths. But if some of the pillars are crumbling – recognise what needs to be done, pull together and start the journey to a better place. In Part 4 we will provide some suggestions to help with your self-assessment and prioritisation for this important journey – such as the (illustrative) prioritisation grid shown below.

**Conclusion 7: SOFT FABRIC RULES:** The health of the pillars of the soft fabric is vital for any organisation and especially important given the nature of our sector – as it is very likely that some of the enabling pillars will be stretched, and deprived of the investment that they ideally might need.

**Conclusion 8: A HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE:** We believe that a high-performance culture is the most important pillar of all. If this is not strong, progress on any front will be near impossible. As mentioned earlier, your performance culture feeds, and is fed by, all of the other pillars. A high-performance culture will find a way to work through strategic misalignments. It can facilitate the gradual strengthening of the enabling fabric. A strong performance and accountability framework can help your performance culture – but probably can't create one! .... Unless, of course, individual leaders throughout have the appetite and determination to stay the course.

### Prioritising pillars needing strengthening



## PART 3 – INDIVIDUAL LEADERS & INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP

Finally, to Pillar 1, the core of any leadership system. Strong individual leaders and good leadership capacities and behaviours are often mentioned as important factors in the success of any organisation, small or large. Good leaders can make an enormous difference. They provide clear direction and give confidence - internally and externally. They have an important bearing on the working atmosphere so that individuals and teams can perform at their best. This is as true for organisations in the international development and humanitarian arena as in any other sector.







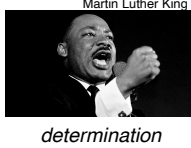









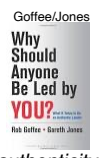

Most of us can remember some specific individuals, who demonstrated outstanding leadership at some point in our lives, those to whom we worked directly, or maybe one or more layers above. Good leaders care, trust, challenge and push us, coach us, make you feel safe to be yourself and be your best, make you want to give the most you can. They do not have big egos, but instead create space for individuals and teams to emerge and perform. They are likely to be respected in their technical domain, though may not always be the most technically gifted. However, they have that something, which is hard to define precisely - but you know it when you experience it.

However, in our sector, - we believe that strong, inspirational leadership is not as common as we would hope. One might expect that individuals, who have decided to dedicate their talents to such noble efforts, often with financial rewards that are a fraction of what they could achieve elsewhere, would be truly inspiring individuals and leaders. Yes, of course there are some examples of wonderful leaders, not just at the executive level, but at various levels and corners of many agencies. But ... sometimes we can be surprised, even disappointed, and now and again ... !!

### Attributes of strong individual leaders

How can we choose, nurture and retain individual leaders in our sector that can make a real difference? To begin this topic, we felt it might be helpful to step outside the NGO space and

#### What can we glean from some impressive individual leaders?

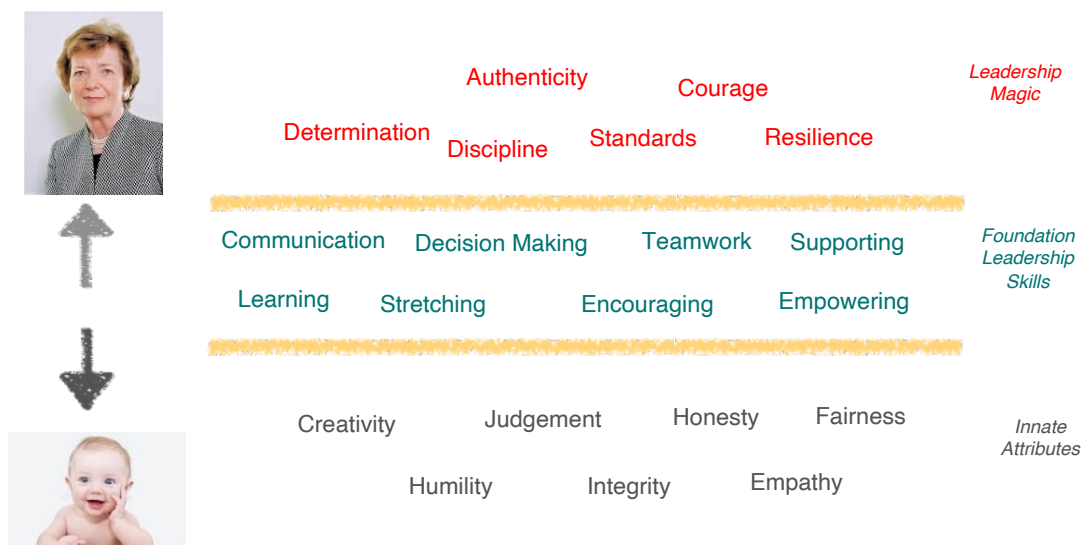
|   |  |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
|  <p>Mahatma Gandhi</p> <p>"The future depends on what we do in the present"</p> <p>- Gandhi</p> <p><i>discipline &amp; resilience</i></p>                  |  <p>Greta Thunberg</p> <p><i>bravery &amp; authenticity</i></p> |  <p>Kamala Bhasin</p> <p><i>commitment &amp; determination</i></p> |  <p>Simon Sinek</p> <p><i>teamwork</i></p>     |  <p>Jim Collins</p> <p><i>The right people</i></p>  |  <p>Alex Ferguson</p> <p><i>principles</i></p> |
|  <p>Martin Luther King</p> <p><i>determination</i></p>   |  <p>Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala</p> <p><i>empowerment</i></p>           |  <p>Jacinda Ardern</p> <p><i>basic human principles</i></p>        |  <p>John C. Maxwell</p> <p><i>Learning</i></p> |  <p>Sally Helgeson</p> <p><i>inclusion &amp; connection -</i></p>   |  <p>Brian Cody</p> <p><i>standards</i></p>     |
|  <p>Nelson Mandela</p> <p>"LEAD FROM THE BACK - AND LET OTHERS BELIEVE THEY ARE IN FRONT"</p> <p>- Nelson Mandela</p> <p><i>courage &amp; optimism</i></p> |  <p>Shanta Sinha</p> <p><i>commitment</i></p>                   |  <p>Indra Nooyi</p> <p><i>inclusivity</i></p>                      |  <p>C Y Wakeman</p> <p><i>empowerment</i></p>  |  <p>Goffee/Jones</p> <p><i>Why Should Anyone Be Led by YOU?</i></p> <p>Rob Goffee • Gareth Jones</p> <p><i>authenticity</i></p> |  <p>Pep Guardiola</p> <p><i>teamwork</i></p>   |

explore the messages and insights from a few of the heroic leaders from the past, a few impressive leaders of our times, from the world of leadership academia and also a few successful leaders from the world of sport. What insights and ideas can we glean?

One thing that struck us was - a) the simplicity, and b) the alignment - on many of the themes. Mahatma Gandhi is renowned for “discipline & resilience”; Martin Luther King - “determination”; Nelson Mandela - “courage & optimism”. Kamala Bhasin, the South Asian feminist and author speaks a lot about - “commitment & determination”, Jacinda Arden demonstrated the merits of “basic human principles”, Greta Thunberg - “bravery & authenticity”. Dr Shanta Sinha, the child rights activist emphasises “commitment”; Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala - “empowerment”. Mary Robinson puts the spotlight on the value of “charisma and an inner moral compass”. In academia, Simon Sinek talks extensively about “teamwork”; John C. Maxwell - “learning”; C Y Wakeman - “empowerment”; Gareth Jones - “authenticity”, Sally Helgesen - “inclusion & connection”; Jim Collins – “having the right people on the bus”. We see many of the same themes in the world of sport. Alex Ferguson likes to emphasise the importance of “principles”; Pep Guardiola - “teamwork” and Brian Cody -

When we looked across our findings, there were some very strong and repeating themes – leading to an interesting set of attributes. What struck us is that these fall, very loosely, into three broad groupings. The first, which we call ‘innate attributes’, are part of who we are, we may be born with, or at least they become evident during our childhood, such as humility, empathy and integrity. Through our school years and early careers, if we are so inclined, we begin to build the next level of attributes, that we call ‘leadership foundation skills, such as teamwork, communication, decision making, supporting and empowering others. At the top level, under the label ‘leadership magic’ we can see some very special attributes - such as courage, standards, determination, resilience, and authenticity – which Gareth Jones subtly refers to as “the ability to be yourself but with skill”.

## Leadership attributes often mentioned



Good leaders are likely to develop their own form of *'leadership magic'* throughout their careers – though some attributes may only become prominent with significant experience and maturity.

To complete our attribute pyramid, we need to add two other important layers or ingredients which we have labelled; – *'Technical'*, and *'Fit'*. Technical competence and credibility are almost always important - which could include sector knowledge, technical programme/functional expertise or management skills. Fit is simply about the alignment of beliefs and priorities of an individual with the organisation. Putting all of this together, we have framed the *'leadership attribute pyramid'* below as a practical way of combining these levels, so we can begin to make sense of what it takes to become a good leader.

As an aside, we are not suggesting, that this is a definitive or exhaustive set of attributes. Readers might feel there are others that should be included, or that a specific attribute should be at a level higher or lower than in our suggested pyramid. We will not argue. However, you can see that we are beginning to frame a kind of hierarchy – similar to the logic behind Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, - i.e. the upper levels are only important if the attributes at the lower levels are solid.

Hence, to summarise, the five levels in our pyramid, starting at the bottom are:

- A. **Innate attributes** ... such as integrity, humility, empathy, which we establish during childhood, though of course we can develop and improve through hard work and experience. Deficiencies at this level can be detrimental - and can lead to a corrosive and overly politicised working environment.
- B. **Leadership foundation skills** ... such as communication, teamwork, decision making, learning, and a bias to support and empower others. These are skills we develop early in our careers and continue to strengthen throughout our lives. Deficiencies in these areas are likely to create

---

## Suggested leadership attribute pyramid

---

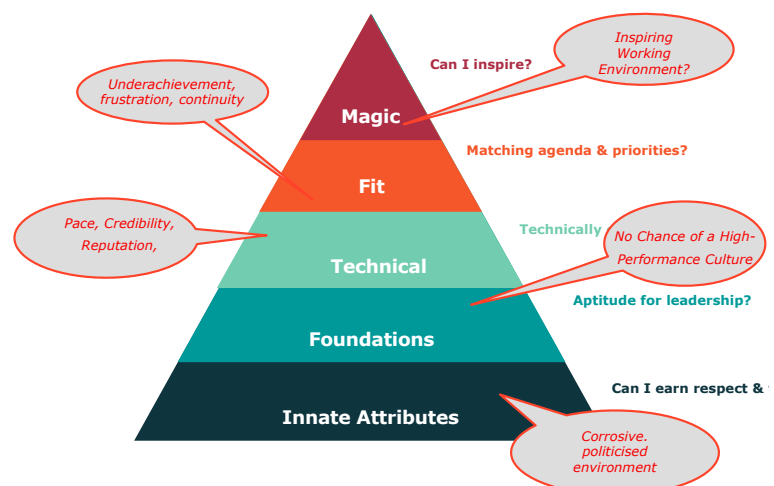


significant problems and will undermine efforts to create of a high-performance culture and a strong leadership system.

- C. **Technical Competence** ... built up over time through education and experience. This could include sector knowledge, technical & functional skills as well as managerial skills. It could also include local cultural and contextual knowledge. Deficiencies at this level can lead to a weaker pace and performance and be a risk to reputation and credibility.
- D. **Fit** ... of individual with organisation’s needs & priorities. If Levels A, B and C are strong, we know that a good fit between an individual leaders’ preferences and passion with the strategy and priorities of an organisation is likely to be an important determinant of success. Does the personal situation of the individual, (personal priorities/family/health) align with the demands of the role at this time? Is the individual willing and able to throw her/himself into the role completely? Mismatches can lead to frustration and underachievement, high turnover with the inevitable loss of continuity. However, now and again excessive emphasis on Fit can be a double-edged sword – as Tosca Bruno-van Vijfeijken emphasised – *“some iNGOS hire far too many people with a strong cultural fit leading to an unhealthy level of homogeneity in thinking and ideas”*.
- E. **Leadership Magic**. If Levels A through to D are strong, does the individual have the potential magic to help super-charge performance and impact. Leaders with that special magic have the courage to face up, see things in a different way, sometimes have the knack of spotting a different route, or perhaps to call the unpalatable truth; Leaders with that magic have the confidence to be themselves, know their own strengths and weaknesses and are authentic. Significant deficiencies at this level for key individuals is likely to result in a duller (might still be solid) organisation though potentially a less inspiring working environment. This level is by far the most difficult to define, as magic can come in many forms (*Note the interesting contrast of styles at Apple when ‘the steady’ Tim Cook took over, pretty seamlessly, from the ‘outgoing and charismatic’ Steve Jobs*).

We believe the layering in this pyramid is important. Strong leaders with longevity and impact are likely to possess good innate attributes, strong leadership foundational skills as well as reasonable technical competence. Time has a habit of uncovering serious gaps - sooner or later. Leaders who are initially chosen for perceived Fit or Magic can find it difficult to maintain their support for long if they have serious deficiencies at the lower levels. On the other hand, we believe that leaders with a strong foundation and good skills, but perhaps initially without obvious magic, can go on to build their own kind of magic over time. As mentioned before, magic can take a wide variety of shapes and forms. An interesting example is Angela Merkel, the former German chancellor, hardly a beacon of charisma, though was still strongly respected after seventeen years in post. Another interesting case example is Jacinda Ardern, the much-admired (former) prime minister of New Zealand. A very different example

**Symptoms - if some of these levels are weak!**





is Greta Thunberg, the environmental campaigner who has managed to connect in such an effective way on the issue of climate change. In the sporting world we can think about successful leaders such as Alex Ferguson at Manchester United, Pep Guardiola at Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Manchester City and Jurgen Klopp at Liverpool. These individuals all seem to possess very solid attributes at the lower levels of our attribute pyramid.

When we consider how this framework applies to our sector, it is useful to remember the contextual realities in which leaders live. These are not excuses. As discussed in Part 1, these are very challenging and multi-dimensional briefs. We know that the high-performance culture and broader environment is not always what we might hope for – there are often a range of significant weaknesses in several of the pillars of the leadership system. And with such complex structures and governance constructs - very senior leaders often have limited unilateral power – relying heavily on soft power to get things done.

### **Conclusions from Part 3**

*[Numbering continuing from those set out at the end of Part 2.]*

**Conclusion 9: RECRUITERS BEWARE:** Interviews, despite best efforts, can be overly influenced, sometimes hood-winked, by attributes at the top of the pyramid (*i.e. Apparent Magic and Fit*) to the detriment of attributes of levels 1, 2 and 3. (Unless of course interviewers are very skilled or have a very structured interview approach)

**Conclusion 10: LEADERSHIP MAGIC BEWARE:** Leadership Magic can appear in many forms and might take time. Sometimes it may be more about excellence in some of the foundation attributes – rather than something completely unique.

**Conclusion 11: CONTINUITY** of individuals and ideas is vitally important in our sector. If we don't make the effort and investment in a long-term leadership/talent pipeline, we might end up parachuting in too many external hires to fill key roles, taking a gamble on fit and magic at the expense of innate attributes or foundational leadership skills at the base of the pyramid. Yes, external hires, strategically placed can be invaluable for fresh perspectives and missing know-how. But, in our sector, where soft power and relationships are so essential in getting things done, excessive reliance on external hires, especially for CEO/SG roles, can be a big gamble.

**Conclusion 12: TEAMS & COMBINATIONS:** Yes – whilst we need exceptional people in key roles, it is highly unlikely to find, in any single individual, all the desired skills and expertise. Hence, choosing synergistic combinations often makes good sense. An example is the CEO/ COO combination - where it can be unusual to find, in one person, all the desired skills and attributes. A combination can also help to provide the bandwidth to deal both with the internal facing and external facing demands of these challenging roles.

**Conclusion 13: TECHNICAL COMPETENCE:** Technical competence of individual leaders matters – and is too often undervalued. Good leaders need not be the most technically gifted in their sphere – but they need to be credible and respected. Good technical skills enhance credibility and signal to the broader organisation that technical competence is a valued step to progress to more senior positions. On the other hand, bringing in highly paid external appointees, without strong technical skills, will signal the opposite and is likely to undermine the long-term leadership talent pipeline. Looking to the future, we anticipate that the major shifts and megatrends (introduced in Part 1) are likely to feed through to the skills and attributes that we need from leaders at all levels in these organisations. The ramifications of the decolonisation agenda, the opportunities from digital and



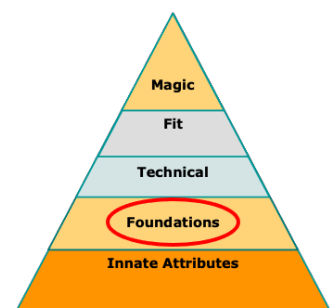
new technologies, the challenges and opportunities of climate change and the green industrial revolution all have implications for the range of skills we will need in the future.

**Conclusion 14: NEW APPOINTMENTS.** The selection of individual leaders has a significant effect, (direct and indirect) on the performance culture. Hence, a good question for any key appointment is “will this help or hinder the creation of a high-performance culture in the organisation?”. If the answer is positive – you are unlikely to make a poor appointment. We would like to emphasise again, – a high-performance culture is the key pillar of the broader leadership system – and permeates the health of all the other pillars.

**Conclusion 15: BOARDS BEWARE:** Your behaviours, appointments and decisions set the tone! including and especially your appointments for CEOs and Secretary General roles. How and whom you choose is likely to be mimicked in a host of other leadership appointments further down.

### **Topics requiring further thought – (beyond the scope of this paper)**

**Feminist leadership:** The debate and adoption of feminist leadership principles has gained powerful momentum in our sector, as illustrated by the ‘Seven principles from The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) [ Balance Power, Transparency, Accountability, Collaboration, Diversity of thought and representation, Empathy, Self and Community Care’. Feminist principles have been adopted by several agencies, such as Oxfam, ActionAid amongst others. Unsurprisingly, in our deliberations on this paper, the question arose of how these principles align with the leadership pyramid suggested above. In practice, these principles touch on several levels of this pyramid. However, we believe that the frame of leadership principles is a very powerful way of amplifying, the first and second levels of our pyramid, and especially the ‘*Foundation Leadership Skills*’.



**Adapting leadership to context:** Finally, what about the role of context? specifically geo-political context? Does good leadership look any different in one context or location than another? In truth, this paper has been written on laptops mainly in London, Melbourne and Nairobi. Would it be very different if penned in Delhi, Kinshasa, Accra, Rio or Kathmandu. We considered this question initially from a simplistic ‘North’ v ‘South’ perspective, exploring whether the kinds of leaders and leadership needed is in any way different in either setting. Frankly, addressing this question properly is well beyond the scope of this paper. However, as Patricia Mugeke<sup>1</sup> of Action Aid firmly stated “good leadership does not really look any different in the ‘Global South’ than anywhere else .... It’s just that leaders in any context need to understand that context deeply “. On reflection, we realize that appreciating these differences is far more complex and nuanced than ‘North’ versus ‘South’. Patricia went on with a practical illustration; - “Some contexts like Somaliland for example have strong clan systems that filter their way into workplaces. Rwanda is the same - Hence, it is not possible to cluster management of countries such as Rwanda, DRC and Burundi due to culture & contextual issues around political relations”. Another example - leadership in deeply socialist or communist settings might look and feel very different. All agencies who are truly grounded in these contexts will need to adapt to the realities of that local cultural and power system.

---

<sup>1</sup> See ‘A Note of Thanks’ for a list of interviewees

## PART 4 – CRAFTING A LEADERSHIP JOURNEY PLAN FOR 2025-35

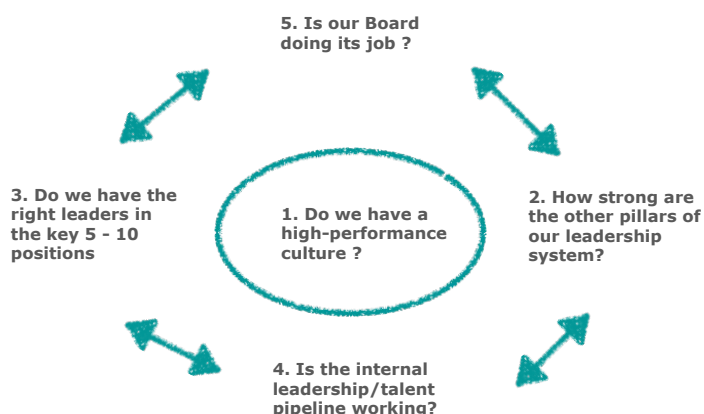
To conclude, how do we bring all this together, to begin to create a leadership journey plan for the decade ahead, connecting the demands of building and strengthening the leadership system in your organisation, with the selection, development, nurturing and retention of good leaders. To begin this reflection, we propose five fundamental questions for leadership teams and boards.

- 1. DO WE HAVE A HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE?** ... Do we tolerate big egos, fiefdoms, internal politicking? Is there an honest, sincere and tangible focus on results, achievement, progress? How good is teamwork across the organisation? How are the levels of trust and mutual support? What calibre of leadership behaviours can we observe every day? Is a can-do attitude the dominant force or are we hiding behind excuses and complexities? *(Please refer to self-assessment 1 - Annex C)*
- 2. HOW STRONG ARE THE OTHER PILLARS OF YOUR LEADERSHIP SYSTEM?** Is there genuine alignment internally around purpose, intended contribution and programmatic approach? ... or are we hiding our differences in fuzzy language and jargon that no one really understands? Do we have deep skills and expertise in the areas that are essential to our strategic goals and priorities? Do we have structures and governance that functions effectively? Are our processes and systems fit for purpose? Do we have a performance and accountability framework at organisational as well as at individual levels – that has genuine traction, and encourages a forward looking and learning set of behaviours? And finally, do we have that wonderful thing called ‘flywheel momentum’, where growing results drive more resources, more programs, enabling ever stronger capability, reputation, and more impact driving ever further resources? *(Please refer to self-assessment 2 - Annex C)*
- 3. DO WE HAVE GOOD LEADERS IN THE TOP 5 to 10 POSITIONS?** We invite you to reflect on your current cadre of leaders using the bottom-up leadership attribute pyramid suggested in Part 3. *(Please refer to self-assessment 3 - Annex C)*
- 4. IS YOUR INTERNAL LEADERSHIP/TALENT PIPELINE WORKING?** Are your best young talent able to see opportunities and a progression to keep them committed to the organisation for the long haul? How strong is the feeling of loyalty and camaraderie across the workforce? How honest are we with those who do not fit or whose behaviours and/or performance is not what we need? Are we constantly looking outside because we believe the talent is better elsewhere? Is our turnover too high? Or is it too low? Are we taking due account of talent pipeline management in all our decision making?

---

### Five questions : Crafting a leadership Journey plan for decade ahead

---



- 5. IS YOUR BOARD DOING ITS JOB?** The Board is an integral part of any leadership system, setting strategy and monitoring performance. The Board has a secondary and crucial job of being the custodian
-

of all parts of your leadership system? But - does your board have a solid understanding of what is really going on? Our experience suggests that many boards are at sea, often drowning in paper and reports with little grounding on how well their organisation is actually doing? ... trying to stay out of trouble, avoiding reputation risk, safeguarding the legacy of yesterday.

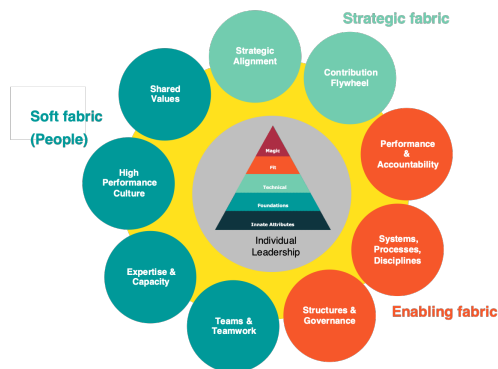
### ***Who is best placed to drive the change?***

The million-dollar question! ... Who is best placed to lead the charge to unlock the current situation, to kick-start the work to strengthen or rebuild the leadership system? We have repeatedly debated this tricky question! This is a non-trivial challenge. Despite conclusion 15 above, one could argue that boards, despite their own frailties, potentially hold the key. No pressure! Boards have a unique position within the leadership system, as they are both participants and custodians at the same time! Strong, informed boards should have the opportunity to stand back and understand the strengths & weaknesses of the entire leadership system. Perhaps, one could argue that the CEO or Secretary General should be the driver – assuming of course that he/she is not part of the problem! What about the senior leadership team? ... Perhaps, along the theme of BOTTOM-UP from Part 3, we might see the drive from intrapreneurial spirit and action from within? ... perhaps, it is easier to wait for donors or other key stakeholders to spot some of the challenges and begin to take action!

---

## **The Who? ... is best placed to kick-start the change?**

---



**A. The Board?**

**B. The CEO or Secretary General?**

**C. The Senior Leadership Team?**

**D. Intrapreneurial spirit and action from within?**

**E. Wait for pressures from Donors or External Stakeholders?**

---

## CLOSING REMARKS

The sub-title of this paper reads – “*Stop kicking the ball down the road*”; This is a common Irish expression which speaks to the essence of what we often see in international NGOs. New projects are initiated with an optimistic degree of hope and excitement. These can be new strategic reviews, program strategies, governance reviews, IT strategies, new systems to name a few. We are not suggesting that these may not be useful and much needed. What we are saying is that these are sometimes kicked off as a way of saying we are doing something - though often the determination to see these projects through to full fruition can be a little unconvincing.

Perhaps, now and again, some of these projects are merely a diversionary tactic to buy time and avoid tackling the most important issue – developing and strengthening your high-performance culture. We call this ‘*kicking the ball down the road*’. And – to emphasise a central theme of this paper we see this kind of diversionary behaviour to be the antithesis of a ‘high-performance culture’.

If you believe you have a low-performance culture – deal with it! ... Identify and eliminate the pieces that are enabling it survive - the practices, the habits and perhaps, the people!.

-----

We offer these reflections and suggestions humbly. We are aware that this is an enormously complex subject - and that every individual agency will have its own history, nuances and dynamic. Our intent is not to provide you with a silver bullet. In fact, the implicit message throughout - is that there is ... NO SILVER BULLET. Neither ... is our intent to add any new unique angles to the large body of leadership literature. We are simply aiming to add a few practical reflections, suggestions and frameworks, tailored to our sector – and maybe ... to encourage you to start to strengthen your leadership systems for the decade ahead.

## Annex A – Selection of quotes from interviews across 12 themes

### Selected Quotes - Top 12 themes from interviews

1. Impossible Jobs
2. Leadership in recent decades
3. Value-added of iNGOs

4. Desperation for simplification
5. Design of structures and teams
6. Informal, dissipated power
7. Performance & Accountability
8. Weak enabling glue
9. Board Members struggling
10. Change near impossible
11. Selection of right people
12. Continuity of individuals/talent

**Impossible jobs**  
*"Impossible job for one individual to have all the capacities"*  
*"complexity and conflicting demands is making it harder and harder to lead these organisations - will take amazing people in commitment and resilience to be able to make a difference - I would not want to do it"*  
*"leaders are getting more and more boxed in ... fear of making a mistake dominating more and more ... the freedom to go out and make a real difference not there as was previously"*  
*"Good folk who emerge or appointed at top increasingly disempowered or sandwiched by body of staff, and demands of external stakeholders, and complexity of structures around them"*  
*"multiplicities of 'expectation' that are not managed. iNGOs are not independent of the politics and dynamics that are in high income/major money environments"*  
*"impossible jobs to lead these established organisations"*  
*"in global south - multiple pressures - funding, developing brand, issue attention, ability to sustain own passion - have to be Mandela and cook & washer"*  
*"leaders are just stretched too thin"*  
*"Not about poor leadership, it's about having built systems that are impossible to manage"*

**Robust Self-critique**  
*"last 10 to 15 years of leadership have not served the sector well"*  
*"not enough people have a burning sense of passion as might expect - think was more the case in past"*  
*"alternative view is those with too much passion - challenges in leading an organisation of activists"*  
*"These organisations are very hard to lead - the motivational factors have changed - now more about \$ than why we exist. More just a job than motivation by purpose"*  
*"peers are good hard working people but don't inspire"*  
*"I recognise that as an iNGO leader I was too complacent - taking public trust for granted"*  
*"first founder leader, passionate, dynamic, has idea who's time had come, creating a need-based organisation; led from front, staff admired them, were loyal, string cohesion; However when institutions became bigger, formalised, bureaucratised, the power of this type of leadership evaporated"*  
*"very little loyalty in iNGOs - am amazed about the loyalty and passion of staff in the private sector"*

**Added Value by iNGOs**  
*"the role of NGOs is under more question than ever before - contribution is nowhere near as significant as we think it is"*  
*"maybe aid as a neo-colonial response to inequality just has had its day"*  
*"context of very damaged trust"*  
*"south does not need us"*  
*"iNGOs have failed to bring their supporters with them and now big gulf"*  
*"iNGOs can sometimes be valuable in terms of innovation, working with communities or reaching the most marginalised, but in terms of delivery ... in reality it takes a huge effort to deliver a set of small projects ... little islands of activity when compared with the role and scale of business, local governments and bilateral programmes"*  
*"more impressed with those with clear mandate e.g. MSF or ACF"*  
*"Feeling need much more nimble, empowering entities, maybe from the fragments of old models"*  
*"The system as we know it is about to die"*  
*"There was a time when iNGOs were useful and influential actors - that era is over - whole model of Northern NGOs has collapsed"*

### Selected Quotes - Top 12 themes from interviews

1. Impossible Jobs
2. Leadership over recent decades
3. Value-added of iNGOs
4. Desperation for simplification
5. Design of structures and teams
6. Informal, dissipated power
7. Performance & Accountability
8. Weak enabling glue
9. Board Members struggling
10. Change near impossible
11. Selection of right people
12. Continuity of individuals/talent

**Desperation for Simplification**  
*"Big federation model isn't sustainable... it's just too complicated"*  
*"drowning in policy & bureaucracy"*  
*"very interested to see what a modern flat organisation would work, what would be the role of leaders at the centre versus distributed leadership"*  
*"break up/fragment these organisations into smaller entities that are much more focused and appropriate in today's context"*  
*"intrigued with interplay between organisational form and leadership style - feeling that striving for control/risk mitigation - contrasting with style of flat, more matrixed organisation - idea that may be stuck between two different worlds and being neither"*  
*"question if we have two structures superimposed - a poorly functioning flat, matrix structure without much glue, with a simple top down structure that folk are more comfortable with - even if know it does not work"*  
*"... a mismatch between the old control mindset and pretence of modern empowered organisation"*  
*"Not about poor leadership, it's about having built systems that are impossible to manage"*

**Structures & Teams**  
*current leadership construct is just about enough to keep wheels on road, to survive"*  
*"a lot of what goes on at senior leadership and Board level is superficial"*  
*"The structure and composition of International Leadership teams in Federations or Alliances are necessarily a fudge; they must reflect the broad membership base, the complexity of the network's relationships and interdependencies, and factors such as financial contribution; it's completely different scenario to that of a singular structure or smaller system."*  
*"main focus is on reporting and compliance rather than doing real job"*  
*"Probably twin positions of COO (corporate) and CEO/SG (more mission driven) might be good model"*  
*"Big disconnect between senior teams and cadre just below - symbolic actions - these top teams get overwhelmed - far too many decisions get fed up - mechanisms at lower levels, for decision making, sharing, prioritisation, monitoring + are not there"*  
*"Require huge levels of political capital and time to keep aligned. The amount of time required to sustain distributed structures and teams significantly slows down change"*

**Informal Power**  
*"importance of informal as well as formal (authority) leadership"*  
*"Informal power is hugely important in this sector - appointing leaders from outside, without these skills are unlikely to succeed (good examples of where appointing the wrong outsiders almost brought bankruptcy)"*  
*"Informal power especially important in this sector - good leaders are those comfortable with uncertainty, complexity and low power differentials - able to navigate flat structures"*  
*"Need to move to a distributed leadership model - avoiding big bureaucracy, where network of leaders worked together to navigate towards goals"*  
*"Multi polar leadership needed especially where social movements are successful"*

## Selected Quotes - Top 12 themes from interviews

1. Impossible Jobs
2. Leadership over recent decades
3. Value-added of INGOs
4. Desperation for simplification
5. Design of structures and teams
6. Informal, dissipated power

### 7. Performance & Accountability

### 8. Weak enabling glue

9. Board Members struggling
10. Change near impossible
11. Selection of right people
12. Continuity of individuals/talent

#### Performance & Accountability

"Lacking performance management with real meaning"  
 "Often see a real lack of discipline in both thinking and in action"  
 "Performance framework is an important (essential) key to help drive a culture and discipline change"  
 "Biggest intervention is 'First is being clear on organisations goals and objectives and indicators and driving that accountability through the organisation'.  
 "performance management is major weakness - not because people don't want to but just don't have the skills to do properly - need to invest!"  
 "Need a very strong CFO/COO to drive this accountability and performance culture"  
 "managing out under-performers is a huge issue"  
 "flabby, low performance culture is at several levels, from very top to field"  
 "Yes - need principled/purpose driven organisations, but need to be able to operate practically and effectively"  
 "worried that countries that look weak or strong from a far distance may not reflect the reality of programming work/impact on the ground"  
 "a must but needs to be done well, as could be worse than not having - could even be a hindrance to good relationships and decision making"  
 "skewed workforce - few heroes working incredible hours - with much larger group underperforming and dragging performance down"  
 "corruption is a major issue in several countries, need a management/leadership system that can deal with this"

#### Weak Enabling Glue

"Many of our senior leaders do not understand what a good operating model would look like"  
 "basic enabling mechanisms (decision-making, prioritisation, time tracking etc) for more sophisticated flatter organisations not really there or not working properly"  
 "HR capability dreadfully weak - a huge blockage"  
 "Need a more corporate mentality to manage the new kinds of money - much more discipline, process, efficiency"  
 "Plentiful supply of unrestricted in the past made us flabby, as could cover up problems"  
 "having a proper global technology platform is key bit of glue, M&E, common chart of accounts, project coding for all contracts, timesheets +++"  
 "big challenge with culture - heroes making terrible processes work and getting around dysfunctional systems - better to have an organisation that an average person can thrive in"  
 "feeling that availability of technology (despite its many possibilities) increased the availability of data and reports which can risk disempowering local staff - folk at centre think they can control everything"  
 "need to accept that the kind of money available is different than what it used to be - more institutional/grants, less unrestricted"

## Selected Quotes - Top 12 themes from interviews

1. Impossible Jobs
2. Leadership over recent decades
3. Value-added of INGOs
4. Desperation for simplification
5. Design of structures and teams
6. Informal, dissipated power

### 7. Performance & Accountability

### 8. Weak enabling glue

### 9. Board Members struggling

10. Change near impossible
11. Selection of right people
12. Continuity of individuals/talent

#### Board members struggling

"Boards mainly about survival, - more about making sure don't ruin anything; spot obvious issues; truthfully not exposed enough to really have a good feel for what goes on - how could they?"  
 "Most are scared - very defensive - 'just stay out of trouble' "  
 "...are trustees aligned to the mission - or merely custodians of the past?"  
 "Board competence and members' contribution is a lucky bag; with one or two mis-steps, it can very easily deliver a net negative effect rather than the intended strategic oversight, accountability and risk management role that a board ought to fulfill."  
 "Board effectiveness is a huge issue - politicised CEOs can run rings around Boards"  
 "Very often Boards are just not up to the job - little chance of knowing what to do... sometimes confusing role of Board and leadership team "  
 "Nature of the board members is important as they need to be passionate about development work but very much business oriented in insight and strategy. "  
 "need to emphasise the role governance plays in supporting leadership roles and especially the capacity sitting at governance levels and the politics around appointments - lack of sufficient information as well and proper systems to support decision making at this level"  
 "Unpaid Board Members looking to embellish their CV's or simply naive are unwilling or unable to put the commitment into transformation. In Europe the level of regulation and regulatory accountability is creating a highly risk averse board culture that lacks ambition"  
 "... board members who collect 'brands' for their CVs, especially from corporate background, -mainly dormant - don't add value"  
 "can add the issue of nepotism in Boards which makes them want to focus on only their communities without being strategic ... some Board members seeing NGOs as a source of income despite signing on to work as volunteers and hence they will push for un necessary meetings so they can claim per diems, transport and hotel accommodation".  
 "Boards are challenged - thinks the trustee model flawed - and still too many board members white, 60 to 70"  
 "But what is the alternative? "

## Selected Quotes - Top 12 themes from interviews

1. Impossible Jobs
2. Leadership over recent decades
3. Value-added of iNGOs
4. Desperation for simplification
5. Design of structures and teams
6. Informal, dissipated power
7. Performance & Accountability
8. Weak enabling glue
9. Board Members struggling
- 10. Change near impossible**
11. Selection of right people
12. Continuity of individuals/talent

**Change near impossible**  
*"Absolute no incentive to change ... Risk /reward out of filter - survival is the goal"*  
*"NGO leadership have talked about fundamental change for over 10 years but little action to show for it"*  
*"Natural forces of momentum, self-preservation donor pressures mean that fundamental change is very hard (individual donors still want familiar NGO brand in country)"*  
*"Status-quo rules supreme - try a bit harder doing at what always done and hope that will be enough"*  
*"Pace of what needed faster than ability to respond"*  
*"Big bureaucracies - impossible to shift ..."*  
*"Everything is a negotiation - battle after battle"*  
*"Fundamental concern that many organisations lack the resources to fund their change"*  
*The future is not organisational "failure" but zombie organisations that are captive by financial and donor constraints and just about kept alive by donors wanting an intermediary to protect themselves"*  
*"immense barriers to overcome in archaic system ... hard to do more than tinker"*  
*"leading very hard in treacle - the complexity and ambiguity means very little capability to pull the lever and make something happen"*  
*"intrigued why disruption has not happened - why start-ups decided to collaborate rather than compete"*  
*"Consensus/participatory bit is in the way of doing much. Weight of consensus can really pull you back, slowing things down - result in lowest common denominator - change is almost impossible"*  
*"Immense barriers to overcoming in an archaic system - hard to do more than tinker "*  
*"Very little optimism of ability of iNGOs to transform ..."*  
*"In practice 99% of leadership attention is drawn into taking about tackling decolonisation and safeguarding .. rather than driving new solutions and ideas... feeling inevitable if run by big bureaucracy"*  
*"can't do localisation if you won't explicitly address systemic racism in your organisations"*  
*"On localisation - Very hard to overcome deep conditioning about inferiority"*

## Selected Quotes - Top 12 themes from interviews

1. Impossible Jobs
2. Leadership over recent decades
3. Value-added of iNGOs
4. Desperation for simplification
5. Design of structures and teams
6. Informal, dissipated power
7. Performance & Accountability
8. Weak enabling glue
9. Board Members struggling
10. Change near impossible
- 11. Selection of right people**
- 12. Continuity - individuals/talent**

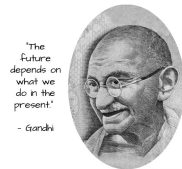
**Selection of Right People**  
*"Communication .. and ability to communicate very important"*  
*"Can't stress enough the importance of consistency"*  
*"Adaptability - especially in a world where context is constantly changing - customise the support provided to be able to adapt to change "*  
*"Listening essential, talked about example of very efficient cabinet secretary"*  
*"Boss and leader are very different things .. often confused .. leaders need to provide dynamic support, ust, not what are "YOU" doing... " need to be able to connect with Boards as well as provide support and steering for teams"*  
*"transparency & consistency vital .. gives confidence .. truth matters, voice needs to match deeds"*  
*"Ability to delegate, create space for each person to be a leader... signifies growth, trust, learning"*  
*"Organisations that seem to work, their leaders lead from the back and prop others to take the spotlight - speaks about 'US' not I!"*  
*"Heads of finance have been weak for a long time, as the activist style leaders have begin to occupy many the key positions more and more over past decade"*  
*"good leadership does not really look any different in south than anywhere else ... it's just that leaders is any context need to understand that context deeply "*  
*"Good leaders tend " to not to be cluttered in thought, not cluttered in who they are"*  
*"Good leaders can read environments and bring out what matters"*  
*"Fit with context important - leader "can be good in one situation but not in another"*  
*"Honesty is better - even if to be told your proposal is rubbish" (24)*  
*"historically - people have been selected based on values/beliefs and less about individual capabilities"*  
*"Mandarin class taken over increasingly by advocacy types (from humanitarian types) - squeezing out those who are minded to build stronger operating model with rational decision making"*  
*"whoever fronts/drives efforts to build in better enabling mechanisms need super credibility, commitment and patience"*  
*"maybe the anti-private sector bias may have gone too far"*  
*"In old "humanitarian centred world - maybe the kind of leadership that worked was not so complex - much more tricky in political/advocacy centred NGOs"*  
*"leaders in sector often driven by passion but don't have the skills to operate in a highly complex and competitive environment"*  
*"pay is a challenge to get people who have a chance of achieving in complexity of environment - churn is a huge as a consequence"*  
*"Need to be very careful with balance of internal v external recruits" (10)*  
*"sometimes especially at CEO roles, we can see a simple misalignment between personal motivations and the needs of the role"*  
*"Inherent racism of prioritising western skill sets (like good grammar and document management) versus political and cultural insights"*

**Continuity** -  
*continuity is essential - in a context where a network of relationships is key"*  
*"Can't stress enough the importance of consistency"*  
*"Outsiders can be useful in right roles - but tend to get thrown to wolves - not enough induction, understanding, time/patience - even if they are good"*  
*"either parachute in folk who have little chance - only to exit quickly; of folk hanging around forever, because context understanding, know how things work, and are wedded to the status quo"*  
*"Have changed view from emphasising leadership development towards better recruitment, induction and mentoring"*



## Annex B – Quotes from former political leaders, academia and sporting world

### What can we glean from heroic leaders from yesteryear?



-discipline & resilience-

#### Mahatma Gandhi

*"be the change you wish to see in the world - walk the talk"*

*"Only he can be a leader who never loses hope"*

*"It's easy to stand in the crowd but it takes courage to stand alone."*

*"Keep your words positive, because your words become your behaviors. Keep your behaviors positive, because your behaviors become your habits. Keep your habits positive, because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive, because your values become your destiny."*

#### Martin Luther King



- Determination -

*"A true leader is not a searcher for consensus but a moulder of consensus."*

*"We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope"*

*"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy ... "*

*""Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that"*

#### Nelson Mandela



- courage & optimism -

*""I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it"*

*"I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death"*

*"A leader...is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realising that all along they are being directed from behind."*

### Quotes from leaders from guru/speaker world ...



- authenticity -

#### Gareth Jones & Rob Coffee, London Business School

*"Authenticity - Be yourself with skill "*

*"Leaders and followers both associate authenticity with sincerity, honesty and integrity. It's the real thing - the attribute that uniquely defines great leaders."*

#### Sally Helgesen (Women's leadership)



- inclusion & connection -

*"Top-down leaders, by withholding power from those in the ranks, deprive them of the ability to use the expertise and information vested in them to respond directly and with speed to customer concerns."*

*"As women's leadership qualities come to play a more dominant role in the public sphere, their particular aptitudes for long-term negotiating, analytic listening, and creating an ambiance in which people work with zest and spirit will help reconcile the split between the ideals of being efficient and being humane. This integration of female values is already producing a more collaborative kind of leadership, and changing the very ideal of what strong leadership actually is"*

*"women, when describing their roles in their organisations, usually referred to themselves as being in the middle of things. Not at the top, but in the centre; not reaching down, but reaching out."*

#### Jim Collins (Good to Great)



- The right people -

*""Great vision without great people is irrelevant."*

*"the people we interviewed from good to great companies clearly loved what they did, largely because they loved who they did it with"*

*"Great vision without great people is irrelevant." "The principle is not getting the right people on the bus, it's FIRST GETTING the right people on the bus." "What are the brutal facts that we must confront? Because if we don't confront them, they will confront us."*

*""The good-to-great leaders never wanted to become larger-than-life heroes. They never aspired to be put on a pedestal or become unreachable icons. They were seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extraordinary results."*

*"Bad leaders look out the window to criticise and look in the mirror to praise, - Good leaders do the opposite "*



---

## Strong themes from respected leaders of our time ...

---



- commitment & determination-

**Kamala Bhasin - South Asian Feminist and author – issues of gender equality, education, poverty alleviation, human rights**

*"believed on the power of love, not the love of power"*

*"We want peace in South Asia, not pieces of South Asia"*

*"bringing us together under a common platform to fight patriarchy, capitalism and jingoism"*

*"she dedicated her life to inspiring thousands of human rights activists, trainers and friends all over South Asia so that we could work together, setting aside our differences, to create another world"*

*"Toxic masculinity, virus of race, caste, religious fanaticism, greed, disaster capitalism"*

**Jacinda Ardern – Ex- New Zealand Prime Minister**

*"The most important leadership principles can be found in what we teach our children – empathy, curiosity, bravery, and kindness," she said. These basic human principles are no longer expected of our leaders. It's time to shift gears"*

*"seek out reluctant leaders – uncover hidden talent"*

*"let the traits of decent human beings be the traits of decent leadership"*

*"Leaders should be clear about what they know – and what they don't know"*

*"The things that we have continuously taught our young, we have ceased to demand or expect in our leaders"*



-basic human principles -

**Greta Thunberg**

*"She makes sacrifices in her own life for a cause greater than herself, and she makes those sacrifices without self-interest and not to gain favours"*

*"She builds trust. She takes focus away from herself by asking people to rely on science rather than on herself"*

*"She practices what she preaches, and she is consistent, and those aspects builds trust."*

*"When faced with opposition regarding a tough issue, she still stands her ground."*

*"She creates a sense of belonging. The younger generation has always had a need to create an identity, a context, and a sense of belonging. In today's globalized, multicultural society, someone like Greta also becomes an opportunity for everyone to feel included."*



- bravery & authenticity -

---

## Strong themes from development world...

---



- inclusivity -

**Indra Nooyi- CEO Pepsi (first woman of colour and first immigrant to head a fortune 50 company).**

*"leaders need to be the ones spearheading transformation and persistently working behind the scenes to enable a culture of innovation by promoting inclusivity and amplifying everyone's voices—not just those at the top"*

*"leaders are always connecting dots – that's what makes you effective leader"*

*"5 Cs - Competency, Courage and Confidence, Communication, Consistency, and Compass"*



- empowerment-

**Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala – Economist; twice Nigeria Finance minister, No 2 at World Bank – Head of World WTO from 2021 - Forbes African of the Year 2020.**

*"the DG leads from behind, working with the talented secretariat staff to help members achieve results."*

*"unwavering commitment to poverty reduction, marginalized people, and gender equity"*



- commitment -

**Dr Shantha Sinha – leading child rights activist; founder of MV Foundation; led National Commission for Protection of Child Rights as its first chairperson from 2007-2013**

*"Every successful effort begins with the first step"*

*"without education – their fate was sealed"*

*"discrimination is always an issue of conflict, need to anchor on inner power and real hope"*

*"we are all paving the way for future generations"*

---

---

## Strong themes from the sporting world ...

---



- principles -

### **Alex Ferguson - Manchester United (1986-2013) -27 years - 13 titles, 38 trophies**

*"In the long run, principles are more important than expediency"*

*"You cannot lead by following"*

*"The experience of defeat, or more importantly the manner in which a leader reacts to it, is an essential part of what makes you a winner"*



- standards -

### **Brian Cody - Kilkenny hurling manager for 24 years, 11 All Ireland titles**

*"know the importance of humility because the baseness of ego is what sets leaders apart from others"*

*"creating standards of excellence for yourself and your team - being sloppy with people means getting sloppiness in return"*

*"know when to weed out people and make tough decisions"*



- teamwork -

### **Pep Guardiola, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Man City.**

*"I am here just to learn, to improve, to help my team improve"*

*"I don't like when a player says, 'I want freedom' .. because a player has to understand he is part of a team with 10 other players"*

*"everyone has to know what they have to do on the pitch. The relationships and behaviours off the pitch between team-mates have to be as good as possible"*

---

---

## Quotes from leaders from guru/speaker world ...

---



- teamwork -

### **Simon Sinek - Leadership guru**

*"A poor leader will tell you how many people work for them, great leader will tell you how many people they work for"*

*"managers expect us to work hard out of obligation - leaders inspire us to work hard with pride"*

*"Weak orders have the luxury of looking after themselves - Strong leaders have the honour of looking after others"*

*"Great leaders do not try to be perfect - they try to be themselves, and that's what makes them great"*



- Learning -

### **John C. Maxwell**

*"Don't ever separate success and failure. When you keep them right beside each other they will teach you two very important qualities: Humility & resilience. You'll become stronger when you embrace both failure and success "*

*The arrogance of success is to think what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow. Learners must set the pace as teachers and learners because learning and innovation go hand in hand"*

*"Encouragement is the oxygen of the soul"*



- empowerment-

### **CY Wakeman**

*"We over manage and under-lead, trying to control people rather than connecting to them and developing their potential"*

*"Whether you believe something possible of impossible - either way you will be right"*

*The power of a leader isn't what you tell them, its what you get them thinking about"*

---

## Annex C – Self-Assessment Tools.

### Self-Assessment 1: Your High-Performance Culture

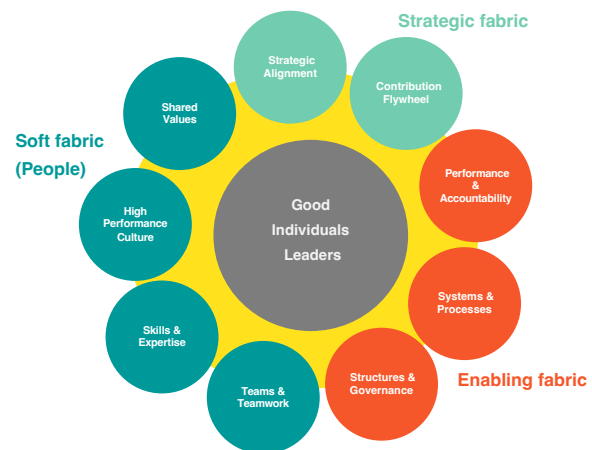
The first self-assessment is designed to examine this crucial pillar of your leadership system. We invite you and your team to challenge yourself to reflect if, (or not) you have a high-performance culture in your organisation. We have used the criteria that we felt are the most helpful – you may want to revise and add/subtract based on your own experience – feel free. The bottom line – and one of our most important takeaways from this research is the following hypothesis – i.e. the primary job of all leaders is to develop and strengthen a high-performance culture.

### Self-Assessment 2: All pillars of your Leadership System

This second self-assessment is designed to assess at a summary level, all pillars of your leadership system - as introduced in Part 2 of this paper.

As for all three self-assessments, we invite you to conduct the evaluations first individually, and then, if appropriate, in small groups to see where there are strong patterns in terms of strengths and weaknesses. We also encourage you, (perhaps -with post it notes – nothing fancy!) to do a forced ranking from strongest to weakest, to see which areas might be most in need of urgent attention.

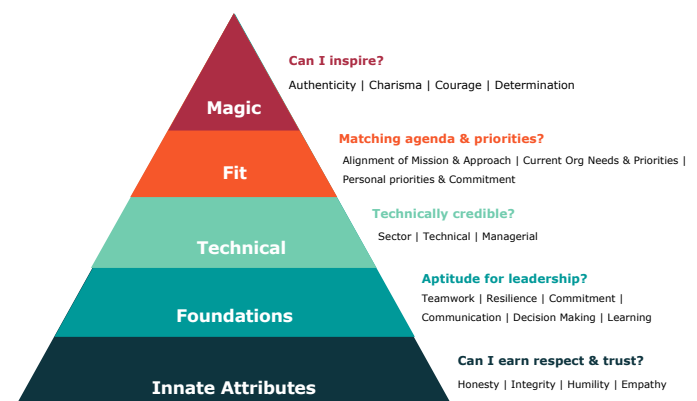
#### Pillars of a high performance 'leadership system'



### Self-Assessment 3: Individual leaders and leadership.

In this third self-assessment we invite you to critique the 4 or 5 leaders that affect your role, to explore their most important strengths and weaknesses. The intention here is, again, not to 'beat up' on individuals, who are probably doing their best, but to explore how selection, recruitment, retention and talent management approaches may need to be adjusted for the years ahead.

#### Suggested leadership attribute pyramid



# Self-Assessment 1: Your High-Performance Culture

## Creating extraordinary results with ordinary people

|                                  |  | evident in your function/unit? |        |               |        |        | Forced Ranking (1- 7) | Comment |
|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------|---------------|--------|--------|-----------------------|---------|
|                                  |  | Almost Never                   | Rarely | Now and again | Mostly | Always |                       |         |
| <b>1 Attitudes (Can-Do)</b>      | <b>A 'can-do' attitude prevails</b>  |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Commitment                       | Staff give 100% - jobs are an important part of their lives                |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Determination                    | Do what it takes atmosphere  |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Resilience                       | Culture of never give up   |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Everyone is a leader             | Every single person will take the initiative to make things work           |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| <b>2 Behaviours &amp; Habits</b> | <b>No room for egos - No Dickheads</b>                                     |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Humility                         | We value and practice humility in all our interactions                     |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Fairness                         | Everyone is treated fairly   |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Honesty                          | We are honest in our dealings with others - including own limitations      |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Consistency                      | We are consistent in our behaviours and actions                            |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Leaders care                     | Leaders genuinely care about our people and the organisation               |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| <b>3 Communication</b>           | <b>We communicate regularly, effectively &amp; honestly</b>                |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Individual interactions          | Interactions between individuals are professional and productive           |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Communication                    | Communication is timely, focused and effective                             |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Feedback                         | Candid and honest feedback is the norm                                     |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| <b>4 Trust</b>                   | <b>We feel that together, we're more than sum of the parts</b>             |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Trust within teams /fns          | Everyone understands why their work matters as aprt of bigger team         |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Trust across teams /fns          | Teams trust in other teams at country level and internationally            |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Trust in leadership              | Trust in the broader organisation, especially in leadership                |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Trust externally                 | Teams reach out to other organisations for help where needed/useful        |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| <b>5 Discipline</b>              | <b>We are absolutely clear what we are aiming to contribute</b>            |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Alignment on success             | We are clear and buy in to what long term success really means             |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Clarity and buy in to targets    | We have targets that align with long term success                          |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Standards                        | Standards are clear and respected  |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Shared success                   | We have a culture of shared success - more than creating individual heroes |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| <b>6 Learning</b>                | <b>This is a positive learning environment</b>                             |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Reflection & learning            | We have a habit of ongoing reflection and learning                         |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Honesty, see it as it is         | We are honest with ourselves - we avoid making excuses                     |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Listenin to external realities   | Constantly listening to changes in external realities that might effect us |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Spact to explore and trial       | We create space to explore and test new ideas                              |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Seeking Feedback                 | We are relentes at seeking feedback  |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Mentoring/coaching               | Mentoring and coaching is an important part of how we develop              |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| No blame culture                 | We do not have a blame culture   |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Fix weaknesses & gaps            | We are determined to fix weaknesses and gaps - do better every time        |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| <b>7 Positivity &amp; Fun</b>    | <b>This is a really enjoyable place to work</b>                            |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| A good employee experience       | We have an enjoyable and fun working atmosphere                            |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Humour                           | The atmosphere benefits from a healthy sense of humour                     |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Relaxed environment              | Space to perform, learn, grow  |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Passion                          | There is strong alignment of roles & goals and individual passions         |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |
| Momentum                         | Feeling of growing mementum in what we are seeking to achieve              |                                |        |               |        |        |                       |         |

### Suggested self-assessment group exercise

- 1 Rate each of the 7 ingredients at headline level. Use the detailed line items for reflection, or to make notes of partucalr exceptions or key issues.
- 2 Rank overerall (combined ranking) ... where 1 is the best (strongest) and 7 is the weakest.
- 3 Work individually at first and then share results and discuss in groups, to come up with shared scoring
- 4 Discuss how these strengths, weaknesses and rankings; How do these tally with broader strengths and challenges we face as an organisation
- 5 What is driving any weaknesses noted? What efforts have been made to address? Why have these not worked?
- 6 What is driving the strengths noted? What efforts have been made to help? Why have these worked?

## Self-Assessment 2: All ten pillars of your leadership system

|  | <----->            |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
|--|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|---|----------------|
|  | 1                  | 2           | 3                   | 4                    | 5                | <b>FORCED RANKING (1-10)</b>                            | <i>Comment</i> |
|  | <i>Really Poor</i> | <i>Weak</i> | <i>Yes &amp; No</i> | <i>Pretty Strong</i> | <i>Very Good</i> |   |                |
| <b>Pillars of the strategic fabric</b>                           |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>10 Strategic alignment</b>                                    |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| On our Purpose/Mission   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Our programmatic focus   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| On programme Approach (Theory of Change)                         |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Target Contribution  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Our Core Competence  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Geographical Footprint   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>9 Contribution flywheel</b>                                   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| Positive Momentum  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Responding to external trends/realities                          |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Courage to reinvent  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>Pillars of the enabling fabric</b>                            |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>8 Structures &amp; Governance</b>                             |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| Governance   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Operating Structures   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Decision Making  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>6 Performance &amp; Accountability Framework</b>              |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| Organisation level   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Individual Level   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>7 Processes &amp; Systems</b>                                 |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| Programme design & delivery                                      |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Institutional Fundraising  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Public Fundraising   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Enabling (HR/Finance/IT)   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Talent & Career Development                                      |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>5 Teams &amp; Teamwork</b>                                    |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| Appropriate Representation /Composition                          |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Organisation/efficiency of meetings                              |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Genuine participation - no politicking                           |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Transparency and communication                                   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Discipline / Follow through on decisions                         |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>Pillars of the soft fabric (people)</b>                       |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>4 Skills, Expertise &amp; Capacity</b>                        |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| Fundraising  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Programme design   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Programme implementation/M&E                                     |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Partnering /Collaborating  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>3 Shared Values</b>   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| On fundamental beliefs, principles, standards                    |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Values guide behaviours, decision making, interactions           |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>2 High Performance Culture (See detailed self-assessment)</b> |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| Attitude   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Behaviour & Habits   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Communication  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Trust  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Discipline   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Learning   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Positivity & Fun   |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| <b>1 Good Individual Leaders ( Top 5 to 10)</b>                  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  | <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> |                |
| Magic  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Fit  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Technical/ Fn/ Sector  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Foundation Leadership Skills                                     |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |
| Innate Attributes  |                    |             |                     |                      |                  |   |                |

## Self-Assessment 3: Individual leaders and individual leadership.

*How should we adjust our selection, recruitment and talent management?*

|                                       | A                                      | B                                      | C                                      | D                                      | E                                      | Force Rank (1-5) | Comment |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|------------------|---------|
|                                       | <input type="text"/>                   | <input type="text"/>                   | <input type="text"/>                   | <input type="text"/>                   | <input type="text"/>                   |                  |         |
|                                       | Missing<br>Weak<br>Strong<br>Excellent | Missing<br>Weak<br>Strong<br>Excellent | Missing<br>Weak<br>Strong<br>Excellent | Missing<br>Weak<br>Strong<br>Excellent | Missing<br>Weak<br>Strong<br>Excellent |                  |         |
| <b>Magic</b>                          |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Authenticity                          |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Charisma                              |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Courage                               |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Determination                         |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| <b>Fit</b>                            |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| With our Mission & Approach           |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| With Organisations Needs & Priorities |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| With individual priorities/commitment |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| <b>Technical</b>                      |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Management Skills                     |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Sector knowledge                      |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Technical Skills & Expertise          |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| <b>Foundation Leadership Skills</b>   |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Communication                         |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Decision Making                       |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Resilience                            |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Teamwork                              |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Empowering others                     |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Commitment                            |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Learning                              |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| <b>Innate attributes</b>              |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Judgement                             |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Creativity                            |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Fairness                              |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Humility                              |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Integrity & Honesty                   |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |
| Empathy                               |  |  |  |  |  |                  |         |

### Suggested self-assessment group exercise

- 1 Pick 5 leaders who most affect your day to day work. Leave anonymous to help honest assessment.
- 2 Score each according to the factors indicated; Missing, Weak, Strong, Excellent
- 3 Note general strengths and weaknesses, looking across all five individuals
- 4 Rank overall (combined ranking) ... where 1 is best (strongest) and 5 is the weakest.
- 5 Discuss how these strengths, weaknesses and rankings link with the broader strengths and challenges we face as an organisation
- 6 How might the recruitment, selection, talent & career development be improved to address what you found.