



2016 Report of Activities



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Complete audited financial statements are available online at synergos.org/about.

OVERVIEW

Our mission: The Synergos Institute is a global nonprofit organization that helps solve complex problems of poverty and inequality by promoting and supporting collaborations among business, government, civil society, and marginalized communities. Synergos creates the conditions for these partnerships to be successful by building trust, designing and implementing change processes, enhancing the effectiveness of bridging leaders and institutions, and sharing our knowledge and experience.

Through our partnership programs in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Namibia, Brazil, and Mexico, Synergos works in collaboration with a range of stakeholders that include national and local government, civil society, multinational corporations or local nonprofit organizations collaborating in sectors such as agriculture and education. We also serve networks, including civil society leaders such as the Senior Fellows and philanthropic families committed to increasing their impact, through programs that support leadership development and disseminate our approach to problem solving. Finally, we seek to advance our mission through Synergos Consulting Services, which offers strategic advice to companies, foundations, and philanthropists.

Our approach: In working with communities, leaders, institutions and partnerships we do not impose a particular set of fixed ideas about how best to solve problems. Our role is rather to help those we work with to generate, test and implement appropriate ideas that lead to sustainable and systemic change. The four key elements of our approach are:

- **Systems thinking** - ability to look at complex problems from diverse, and often conflicting perspectives to understand how elements influence one another within a whole
- **Collaboration** - recognizes the importance of collaborative process in social change and participation of the excluded stakeholders

- **Bridging leadership** - creates and sustains collaboration of diverse stakeholders
- **Personal reflection** - leads to increased awareness of self, others, and the system, as well as alignment of intentions and actions.

We bring this multi-pronged approach to our work in agriculture, nutrition, health, youth unemployment, social entrepreneurship, and social connectedness.

In the past year Synergos has supported major partnerships that are having a positive impact on basic education in Brazil, and on children and youth in South Africa, where we are helping local and regional organizations that serve children increase the resilience and social connectedness of vulnerable children. In Ethiopia we continue our efforts to improve the lives of smallholder farmers by building agricultural capacity, aligning stakeholders in government and along the value chain, and improving collaboration. In Nigeria we are taking similar action to align stakeholders and build capacity and collaboration around agriculture in three states. In Namibia, our health program has culminated in the opening of 29 new clinics, and we have launched a nutrition program in Omaheke region. In Mexico we are supporting a multi-stakeholder collaboration in Guanajuato state to support inclusive economic development in a region where an expanding automotive industry is creating challenges as well as opportunities. We are also supporting an emerging focus on Inner Work in our programming as a way to impact poverty by supporting the inner well-being of social change leaders. Our commitment to Inner Work is rooted in personal reflection, a long-standing feature of Synergos' approach to achieving social and economic progress.

In the Middle East and North Africa we continue expanding our social entrepreneurship network and program as a way to promote innovation, deliver social impact and create job opportunities. We also support leadership networks such as the Global Philanthropists Circle to amplify our work. Through our signature University for a Night and events designed for our networks, we promote connections and collaborations that are advancing sustainable solutions to poverty.

Synergos was founded in 1986 by Peggy Dulany, who serves as our Chair. We operate with 56 staff and representatives in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America (<http://www.synergos.org>). Information about our activities in 2016 is provided below.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

ETHIOPIA: Agricultural transformation

Synergos has been working with Ethiopia's government since 2011 to improve the lives of 12 million smallholder farmer households. Agricultural growth is key to achieving the country's interconnected goals of food security, poverty reduction, and economic development. The Agricultural Commercialization Clusters initiative that Synergos has helped lead has been established nationally and in Ethiopia's four major agricultural regions. We have helped launch Value Chain Alliances that are creating new market linkages which are improving farmers' livelihoods and increasing their access to credit. This progress has been achieved by strengthening capacity, aligning stakeholders in government and along the value chain, building trusting relationships to problem-solve challenges that emerge, and making collaboration more effective and sustainable.

Based on the positive results of our work in Ethiopia, the government has invited Synergos to lead efforts to strengthen institutional capacity for improved implementation and delivery under its next five-year Growth and Transformation Plan. We have also started a major new initiative to help the Ministry of Health eradicate child undernutrition in Ethiopia by 2030.

NIGERIA: Agricultural transformation

While Nigeria has experienced impressive economic growth over the past decade, the resulting gains have been unevenly distributed – leaving nearly 100 million people in poverty, many of whom depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. In 2016 Synergos became the lead partner for the State Partnership for Agriculture (SPA), a partnership between Nigeria's federal and state authorities responsible for agriculture. The partnership aims to help Nigeria's agricultural leaders and institutions prioritize initiatives that take a whole systems approach to agriculture; align state, civic and market stakeholders around priorities; and build the capacity of key institutions to deliver effective agricultural interventions.

Synergos is strengthening key state actors and facilitating collaborations that will lead to a systemic shift of agriculture from subsistence farming to small, medium or large-scale businesses. This program builds on our success in applying systems thinking and strengthening collaboration for agriculture in Ethiopia.

SPA is initially focused on the states of Benue, Kogi, and Kaduna, and on rice and cassava, two major staple foods. The partnership has a particular focus on women

farmers and is piloting an innovation that will benefit women farmers by enabling them to use cassava peels as livestock feed.

NAMIBIA: Health and nutrition

Our current health systems-strengthening work in Namibia improves collaboration and mutual understanding across ministries for effective delivery of maternal health services. Our health infrastructure project made it possible to open 29 new clinics in Namibia, exceeding our target of 24, in 2016—and demonstrating the value of better collaboration between the Ministries for Works and Transport and for Health and Social Services. In addition, Synergos started a project to rapidly deploy container clinics as a quick interim response to a long-delayed construction of a clinic in Kunene region.

Through an initiative of the Harvard Ministerial Leadership Program, Synergos supported the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health and Social Services to better support each other to achieve maternal and child health and nutrition goals within available resources. The Harvard program is designed to stimulate transformative vision, enhance leadership effectiveness and political acumen, and develop planning and execution capacity among Ministers.

In 2016 we developed a country strategy focused on undernutrition for Namibia, where 24 percent of children are stunted. Synergos can make a uniquely valuable contribution to addressing undernutrition using our collaborative, systems-thinking approach. We have started a nutrition program to improve the health of infants and young children in Omaheke region, where undernutrition is a root cause of high neonatal mortality. Our nutrition strategy builds on our experience and social capital over the past decade in addressing maternal health in Namibia.

BRAZIL: Education

The Pact for Education in Pará was created in 2013 to improve the quality and outcomes of a public education system that serves two million students. Pará's low educational achievement and high drop-out rates prevent its youth from benefiting from the state's favorable economic outlook: large investments are vastly improving Pará's productive profile, creating demand for qualified labor. If met locally, this demand could trigger socio-economic progress for the local population.

The Pact is a multi-stakeholder partnership of governmental and international organizations, corporations, and civil society that has worked to improve Pará's national basic education index by 30% by 2017 so that students are better equipped for

employment opportunities. Synergos has a coordinating role in the work of the Pact. Its key strategies include improving management at all levels, from the Education Secretariat to regional offices, municipalities and schools; delivering programs to help students improve achievement and graduation rates; improving school infrastructure; building teacher capacity; involving parents and the community; and using information technologies to address logistical and communication challenges.

In 2016 results from the national IDEB (Brazil Education Quality Index) showed that Pará has made significant progress since 2012. Pará has improved in all levels and grades evaluated by IDEB, as the state showing the third-highest improvement in primary education as well as improvements at high school level. This progress was achieved despite frequent changes in political leadership and extended teacher strikes. The Pact ends in mid-2017. We are exploring opportunities to replicate the Pact's partnership model for the intersectoral Pará 2030 Vision.

MEXICO: Inclusive development

Synergos is supporting two areas of work in Mexico. One is an initiative to link next generation philanthropists and community foundation leaders throughout Mexico. The second involves exploration of a multi-stakeholder partnership in the Bajío region of Guanajuato, a state characterized by rapid economic growth fueled by the expanding automotive industry and a high rate of poverty and unemployment, particularly among youth. In 2016 Synergos completed a mapping of local stakeholders in the Bajío in order to build multi-stakeholder partnerships that would support inclusive economic growth and social cohesion by increasing the participation of marginalized groups. Partnerships will be piloted in the towns of Irapuato and Silao, where major industrial parks have attracted multinational corporations to the region.

SOUTH AFRICA: Children and youth

Synergos serves children and youth in South Africa in two ways. The first involves support to a fellowship of 100 hundred leaders of national and regional organizations that collectively serve 13.5 million children. The Leadership and Innovation Network for Collaboration in the Children's Sector (LINC) helps these leaders from civil society, government, business and the donor community work together to improve the quality of care for children and youth. Synergos has supported past convenings of LINC, which is exploring how to continue its work as a self-managed group.

We also work with the Samuel Family Foundation and local partners to support our Social Connectedness program. This program aims to increase recognition of social isolation as a psycho-social dimension of poverty and build the resilience of children

who experience it. Social isolation has been shown to impede children's learning, health, and capacity to function successfully as members of society. Our Social Connectedness program supports research and documentation of social isolation; identifies successful models and approaches to address isolation; conducts activities to build awareness and share knowledge about social connectedness through training, exchanges, and tools for leaders and practitioners who serve children and youth.

In 2016 Synergos reached some 3,200 child and youth care workers, researchers, academics and leaders through training workshops, seminars, conference presentations and distribution of knowledge briefs. The training helped child and youth care workers in South Africa incorporate social connectedness into their program services. In October 2016, Synergos was a convening partner of the second international symposium on Overcoming Isolation and Deepening Social Connectedness, organized by the Samuel Family Foundation in Montreal. We also supported research on a paper presented to Harvard University in November 2016 on social connectedness and poverty eradication.

INNER WORK FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Personal change for social transformation embodies Synergos' commitment to support social change leaders and philanthropists, helping them cultivate a shift in their approach to systems change and supporting their well-being. Along with collaboration, systems thinking, and bridging leadership, personal reflection is part of our approach to sustainable social change, and has been an important catalyst for us to achieve impacts on poverty. For example, personal reflection has long been part of our programming for our Senior Fellows and Global Philanthropist Circle members, who experience potentially transformative retreats modelled on our signature Montana retreat. Personal transformation work is also a part of workshops that we offer to our program participants and partners.

Inner Work is becoming a more visible part of our program thanks to initiatives by members of our Global Philanthropists Circle and like-minded donors. We are currently supporting several initiatives relating to Inner Work:

- **The Wellbeing Project:** The Wellbeing Project is a joint effort, co-created by Aaron Pereira, Ashoka, the Esalen Institute, the Fetzer Institute and Synergos, to support social entrepreneurs to shift the culture of social change to one more supportive of inner work, thereby enhancing the lives of those impacted by the work of these changemakers. Synergos is the convener of a community of global leaders, including the Skoll Foundation and the Ford Foundation, who will learn

together from the research on how well-being (inner work) relates to social change. Synergos organizes three virtual and one in-person meeting annually for the group, and the first face-to-face exchange was held in April 2016.

- **Spiritual Civilization:** For the past two years Synergos has supported a Spiritual Civilization affinity group within the Global Philanthropists Circle, comprised of 40 self-selected members who are working to advance core spiritual values around faith, love, compassion, purpose, altruism, ethics and creativity. The project aims ultimately to increase philanthropic funding to strengthen these values.
- **Spiritual Convening:** A main outcome of the work of the Spiritual Civilization Group is to conduct a spiritual convening in 2016 that would help make spirituality more visible to social change leaders and philanthropists.

Synergos has also expanded its retreat program to increase opportunities for personal reflection retreats in multiple locations.

LEADERSHIP NETWORKS

Synergos' regional and global networks amplify our impact by disseminating our approach to problem solving in our networks' sectors and issue areas.

Pioneers Program

The Middle East and North African region continues a historical transition that started with the Arab Spring in 2011. Governments are unable to provide adequate services or create sufficient jobs for a large youth population. The private sector and civil society face challenges to develop or support innovation to improve the lives of poor and marginalized communities. Synergos has expanded our program in social entrepreneurship as a way to promote innovation, deliver social impact and create opportunities for jobs or self-employment.

Our social entrepreneurship work is based on a proven model that we developed to support social entrepreneurs at several stages of their life cycle, from volunteer, to start-up entrepreneur, to 'Pioneer', or established, high-impact social entrepreneur. Our Pioneers Program model provides financial awards, training, technical assistance, networking and peer learning opportunities, as well as volunteer training and placement. We are currently operating a multi-year-project to implement the Pioneers program in Egypt and Palestine. In 2016 the program served 56 Pioneers and start-up social entrepreneurs.

Senior Fellows Program

The Senior Fellows are a global network of over 156 outstanding civil society leaders who are working to fight poverty and social injustice in 150 countries. Formed in 1999, the fellowship program engages the Fellows in a worldwide learning, service and action network designed to deepen their leadership skills and their impact through development of competencies in systems thinking, bridging leadership and collaboration, and opportunity for personal reflection. The program is delivered over three years through an annual convening of the Fellows that also offers opportunity for connection, peer learning and consulting.

In 2016 Synergos engaged in an organizational monitoring and evaluation of the Senior Fellows program. The findings recognized the program's positive impact on the Fellows' leadership within their organizations and with partners, the vital importance of personal reflection for maintaining life balance, and shifts to more collaborative ways of working including with government. The convening of the Fellows in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2016 was joined by diverse stakeholders, with the goal of re-imagining the program, recognizing its value, and looking at ways to strengthen programming to maximize outcomes in light of Synergos' overall organizational strategy. A strategy review was conducted alongside the annual meeting, and its recommendations are being considered.

Global Philanthropists Circle (GPC)

The Global Philanthropists Circle is a community of philanthropists making measurable change through individual and collective action that is significantly aided by their participation in the network. The Circle is comprised of 100 families representing 33 countries, including 9 families who joined in 2016. Our program for the Circle is designed to:

- Inspire the members to bring their whole selves to their philanthropy so they can engage their full resources including influence, connections, empathy, skills, access and finances;
- Enable the members to be strategic and effective; and
- Connect the members to ideas, resources, and each other.

We advance these goals through events we organize or facilitate for the Circle throughout the year. In 2016 we organized or facilitated 34 events and conversations around the world on topics such as family philanthropy and impact investing. Highlights are described below.

Annual GPC convening: With a focus on the future of philanthropy, Synergos welcomed members to the 15th anniversary of the founding of GPC with a discussion led by Synergos CEO Don Mohanlal on lessons we have learned over 15 years of convening the GPC network. GPC members heard from Pulitzer Prize Winner Sheryl WuDunn in a moderated conversation about the evolving spectrum of effective impact investing opportunities and philanthropy. Hamdi Ulukaya, philanthropist and Founder and CEO of Chobani, spoke about his journey from immigrant to Giving Pledge signatory, and how he is using business to transform community and respond to the Syrian refugee crisis. Fareed Zakaria, host of CNN's flagship international program and a top global thinker, shared his thoughts on global issues.

In 2016 the idea of a spiritual convening and the plight of Syrian refugees aroused keen interest among Circle members. An affinity group on Syrian refugees was formed, and Synergos hosted two meetings in Turkey and in New York on the Syrian refugee crisis, featuring a holistic response developed in Turkey to support and integrate these refugees.

UNIVERSITY FOR A NIGHT

On May 4, 2016 our signature event, "University for a Night," brought together in New York, 280 leaders from around the world to share ideas and inspiration about working together to create a more prosperous, just, and sustainable world. This annual gathering is an opportunity to bring together leaders from business, philanthropy, and civil society to share ideas and experience on how they can work together to overcome poverty. The David Rockefeller Bridging Leadership Award, which recognizes leadership that unites organizations and people who might not otherwise work together to improve their societies, countries, or the world, was presented to two sets of honorees: Othman Benjelloun and Dr. Leila Mezian Benjelloun of BMCE Bank Foundation in Morocco, which creates and supports schools and associated economic, health, and environmental programs to build more prosperous rural communities, including those of the Berber people. The other award recipients were Kennedy Odede and Jessica Posner Odede, co-founders of Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO), which has helped improve the lives of more than 76,000 people in Kenya's two largest slums in 2015 alone.

Over dinner, guests at each table, led by "Distinguished Faculty" with expertise or experience on a topic, discussed topics such as *Whose rights for what development? Governance, rights, community and inclusion; Impact investing: investing for social and financial returns; Collaboration for agriculture and nutrition; Promoting collaboration and excellence in the nonprofit sector; Responding to refugee crisis; Reflecting faith in*

your philanthropy; How business can create positive social and environmental impact; and The future of philanthropy.



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