



2017 Report of Activities



Contents

Overview.....	1
PARTNERSHIPS.....	3
<i>NIGERIA: Agriculture and nutrition</i>	3
<i>ETHIOPIA: Agriculture and nutrition</i>	4
<i>NAMIBIA: Health and nutrition.....</i>	5
<i>BRAZIL: Education.....</i>	6
<i>SOUTH AFRICA: Social connectedness for children and youth.....</i>	7
<i>Inner Work for Social Change.....</i>	8
NETWORKS	9
<i>Middle East and North Africa: Social entrepreneurship.....</i>	9
<i>Global Philanthropists Circle.....</i>	9
University For a Night.....	11
Emerging focus: Bridging Leadership.....	11

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

OVERVIEW

Our mission: The Synergos Institute is a global nonprofit organization that brings people together to solve complex problems of poverty and inequality. We work on issues such as health, nutrition, agriculture, and youth employment – creating opportunities for individuals and communities to thrive.

Systemic change requires collaboration. Solutions to poverty are often built in silos – and therefore fail. Synergos creates, promotes, and sustains collaborations among business, government, civil society, and marginalized communities. We foster successful collaborations by building trust, designing and implementing change processes, and enhancing the effectiveness of bridging leaders and institutions.

Synergos was founded in 1986 by our Chair Peggy Dulany, drawing on her experience working in Rio de Janeiro as a young woman. She found that people in poverty have the energy and motivation to address their poverty but lack connection to the resources, institutions, and potential partners that can drive meaningful and sustainable change. Synergos was designed to facilitate relationships among institutions and people who would not otherwise have access to each other, so they can develop long-term relationships and forge new paths to overcome poverty.

This is the heart of our approach to addressing poverty. In working with communities, leaders, and institutions we do not advocate a particular solution. Our role is to build trust, alignment, and collaboration among the stakeholders. For 30 years we have supported leaders, communities, institutions, and networks in over 30 countries and regions to help them generate, test, and implement innovations that lead to sustainable and systemic change. Through our partnership programs in countries like Ethiopia and Nigeria we collaborate with national and local governments, civil society, multinational corporations and local nonprofit organizations in agriculture and nutrition. We also serve networks such of social entrepreneurs and philanthropic families committed to increasing their impact through our approach to developing leaders and solving problems. We also seek to advance our mission through Synergos Consulting Services, a for-profit component of Synergos that offers strategic advice to companies, foundations, and philanthropists.

We deliver leadership and peer learning programs to a community of 100 philanthropic families and social investors, and the largest network of social innovators in the Arab world,

serving over 400 established and emerging social entrepreneurs and over 3,000 volunteers. In South Africa we are working to reduce the social isolation and improve the well-being of vulnerable children. In Ethiopia and Nigeria, we work with key stakeholders in agriculture to better the lives of smallholder farmers and improve nutrition. In Namibia we are helping to strengthen the public health systems in maternal and child health and nutrition. In Brazil we just concluded a large-scale partnership for educational reform that has helped improve educational outcomes for children. We are also working to formalize and expand our bridging leadership program and to improve our support to members of our Global Philanthropy Circle.

Synergos has now grown to a staff of over 60 based in New York, with field offices in South Africa, Ethiopia, Namibia, Nigeria, Egypt, and Brazil.

Our approach uses four elements that increase individual and collective effectiveness to address complex problems:

- **Personal reflection** - Increasing awareness of self, others, and the system, and aligning intentions and actions accordingly;
- **Systems thinking** - Looking at complex problems from diverse and often conflicting, perspectives to understand how elements influence one another within a whole;
- **Bridging Leadership** - Building trust and tapping the fullest contributions of diverse stakeholders;
- **Collaboration** - Working with others, including those most impacted by the system, to leverage collective knowledge, resources, and action.

This approach develops bridging leaders and helps create inclusive partnerships and institutions—contributing to changes in systems, better system outcomes, and improved lives. We model and disseminate systems thinking, collaboration, bridging leadership and personal reflection among our leaders and networks to enhance their impact. We also integrate these practices in our programs around the world.

PARTNERSHIPS

- **NIGERIA: Agricultural Transformation**

Synergos is capacitating the key state actors involved in transforming Nigeria's agricultural system, using a systems-change approach. By facilitating the State Partnership for Agriculture (SPA), Synergos aims to reduce poverty among smallholder farmers, who form the bedrock of Nigeria's agriculture.

Since 2016 Synergos has been helping the government shift its agricultural system from subsistence farming to small, medium, and large-scale businesses through the partnership, as states are responsible for implementation in Nigeria's federal system of government. This partnership between the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) and state governments was formed to help state agricultural leaders prioritize agricultural development; align state, civic and market stakeholders around priorities; and improve delivery of agricultural programs. Synergos is building the capacity of FMARD and state institutions to achieve these goals.

The partnership aims to improve farmer access to critical inputs, enhance farm-to-market linkages and food security, and increase private investment in agriculture. This strategy is being piloted in the states of Benue, Kogi and Kaduna through new state-level, cross-sectoral teams working to increase cultivation of priority crops—rice, cassava, and ginger, using gender- and nutrition-sensitive strategies.

Results: This project is increasing the productivity and income of smallholder farmers, including women. For example;

- Agricultural productivity has increased. Cassava production rose from 750 hectares in 2016 to 14,070 hectares benefiting 14,070 households in Kogi State in 2017, and from 2,000, to 3,2000 hectares benefiting 22,400 households in Benue State. This result has been achieved through new market linkages between farmers' groups and the private sector for priority crops.
- New income and employment opportunities for women smallholder farmers have been created as a result of increased production of priority crops and the creation of new market links. Women farmers and herders are also benefiting from a new, low-tech processing innovation that converts cassava peel, a waste by-product, into livestock feed. The success of this initiative has prompted a private sector partner to expand this model to other Nigerian states.

- The introduction of nutrition-sensitive agriculture has prompted 3,000 women to improve family nutrition by gardening at home.
- The livelihoods of smallholder farmers have improved as a result of their joining farmers' associations and receiving higher prices for crops such as cassava and rice.

These positive impacts are the result of two project outcomes:

(1) The agricultural leaders making informed policy choices, aligning around priorities, unblocking system constraints, and meeting the farmers' needs.

(2) Core delivery teams at state level have improved their capacity to implement state agricultural priorities.

These outcomes are the result of Synergos' efforts to embed transformational capacities and structures into governance for sustained impact and strengthen capacity for collaboration among the stakeholders. The stakeholders have developed their capacity to operate in a dynamic system, and survey and research reports conducted in 2017 are providing quality inputs for data-based decision making. The partnership and state-level actors are capacitated to support agricultural growth in the long term and in regions beyond the three pilot states.

These developments have resulted in greater ownership of agricultural policies and priorities at both the state and national level. For example, Benue state has developed a state agricultural policy for the first time, with input from all key stakeholders, leading the process of change. Kogi state has established agricultural policies that include a public-private partnership. Kaduna state is developing agricultural policies centered on food systems and integrating nutrition-sensitive strategies. The State Partnership has helped develop a nutrition policy that is changing family nutrition through women and is expected to reduce malnutrition.

For the next phase of work SPA is commissioning research to inform policy-making on controlled grazing, intermediate technology, and alignment of export policies and standards.

- **ETHIOPIA:** Agriculture & nutrition

Agriculture: Synergos is working with the Ethiopian government to improve the lives of its 12 million smallholder farmer households through agricultural growth. Since 2012 Synergos has been building the capacity of two ministries—the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MoANR) and the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MoLF), the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), and their partners to understand challenges with a systems perspective, align around goals, and build strong working relationships. We are now working

with the Ministry's Program Delivery Units to help them operate as collaborative teams that manage performance and apply a systems perspective for engaging on the topic and with stakeholders.

Synergos has been engaging with our agricultural partners in Ethiopia to promote shared vision and tackle agricultural bottlenecks. We continue to advance the work of agricultural transformation clusters as an innovative approach to coordinate stakeholders across specific value chains in order to create new market linkages that increase agricultural productivity, improve farmer livelihoods and facilitate farmers' access to credit. As this capacity-building initiative ended in December 2017, an evaluation of the program is under way to assess how Synergos' work has contributed to unified ATA and MoANR leadership teams with improved collaborative capacity; the progress of agricultural clusters in expanding production of key crops; and strengthened ATA organizational capacities that sustain its growth.

Nutrition: In 2017 Synergos launched a nutrition program to support the Seqota Declaration, in which the Ethiopian government commits to end childhood stunting in the nation by 2030. Synergos is helping the Ministry of Health implement actions that address undernutrition through Community Labs, a multi-stakeholder platform that brings diverse groups together to develop a common understanding of the challenge and work together to innovate solutions. Synergos is engaged in the first stage of implementation, which includes an evidence review of lessons from similar initiatives, support in engaging stakeholders, and preparation of an implementation guide. In addition, through a separately funded initiative, Synergos is conducting a landscape analysis of the nutrition-sensitive initiatives in agriculture currently being implemented in Ethiopia, as a basis for a broader nutrition program in Ethiopia.

Key update: Synergos delivered a training-of-trainers workshop for government staff at the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Livestock and Fishers, and the Federal Cooperative Agency; two stakeholder mappings and a networking workshop in two regions; and two Value Chain Alliance workshops in Amhara and Tigray regions. We have almost completed the Agricultural Cluster work and established the Program Delivery Unit in the two regions.

Synergos has delivered the evidence review and is working with the Ministry's Program Delivery Units to operate as collaborative teams with clarity on their performance managing role and a systems perspective for engaging on the topic and with stakeholders. We are also developing an implementation guide.

- **NAMIBIA: Health and Nutrition**

Our Namibia program is focused on health systems strengthening and nutrition. Our health systems strengthening work has improved collaboration and mutual understanding across Ministries, leading to more effective delivery of maternal health services. The health infrastructure effort ensured that over 26 health clinics were built and access to health services in Kunene region improved. We are exploring further support to strengthen Namibia's health systems, leveraging the strong reputation and cross-sectoral relationships we established in the country through our support to maternal and child health and nutrition.

Since 2016 we have also been working to address undernutrition in Namibia, where 24 percent of children are stunted. Nutrition is a complex challenge, and a root cause of poverty given its impact on human capital potential and economic development. Our nutrition strategy applies a collaborative, systems-thinking approach to improve the health of infants and young children in Omaheke region, where undernutrition is a root cause of high neonatal mortality. This intervention builds on our experience and social capital over the past decade in addressing maternal health in Namibia.

We have deployed a container clinic in Kunene region and built the capacity of the Regional Health Office and health extension workers, resulting in better service delivery for the surrounding rural community.

In Omaheke region we are supporting the efforts of the regional leadership to pilot nutrition interventions for infants and young children.

- **BRAZIL: Education**

Since 2013 Synergos has been a lead partner in the Pact for the Education of Pará, a multi-stakeholder partnership of communities, businesses, government officials, international organizations, the media and educators working to improve the quality and outcomes of public education in Brazil's largest state, where children ranked low in educational achievement. The Pact aimed for a 30% improvement on the national basic education index by 2017 so that students may be better prepared to improve their lives and workforce opportunities.

Results: Synergos' involvement in the Pact ended in 2017. While key indicators for the Pact will be released in 2018, early indications suggest that the Pact is contributing to improved educational outcomes in Pará, with improvements in student performance at the elementary and high school level.

We will be conducting an evaluation of the results of our initiative in order to systematize learnings into an implementation guide and create training materials for both a Family

Education program and a Young Change Agent program. Our approach of collaborative management for results as been incorporated in the design of a Social Agenda toward 2030 and in a new state initiative known as Par  Sustent vel, focused on improvement in education, the economy, and the environment. 44

- **SOUTH AFRICA: Children and Youth**

Synergos has been helping local institutions, leaders, and communities in South Africa and Mozambique to meet the needs of vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS, poverty, and social exclusion since 2006. In South Africa we co-founded the Leadership and Innovation Network for Collaboration in the Children’s Sector (LINC), a fellowship of 46 leaders from civil society, government, and donor agencies that serve 13.5 million children, to help them increase their impact on children. LINC Fellows are currently exploring mechanisms for funding and governance.

Social isolation is a dimension of poverty, along with meager income, poor nutrition, or limited education. Studies show that this sense of isolation and lack of meaningful social connections impedes children’s learning, health and capacity to function successfully as members of society. Our Social Connectedness program aims to increase resiliency among affected children and youth by working with organizations in South Africa and Swaziland that serve these children, to build understanding of the concept, increase knowledge of indigenous practices that reduce social isolation, and disseminate best practices. We have trained over 270 care workers and community caregivers and leaders serving 2,000 youth and 8,000 children to integrate social connectedness into their programs. Through our partnership with the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI), social connectedness has been implemented in 8 communities in Swaziland, working with 8 organizations and reaching 70 care workers and 1,500 isolated children. In 2017 we commissioned an assessment of the social connectedness program’s impact on the programs of City Year in South Africa and the approaches of service leaders.

Our goal is to grow the social connectedness work within South Africa and the region towards a global movement by building knowledge and learning, and contributing to key platforms for dialogue around the work, for example through approval of abstracts by the Harvard Comparative Research Programme on Poverty and the REPSSI African Psychosocial Support Forum. In addition, we are building links between our social connectedness work in Southern African and the work on social connectedness led by Synergos’ partner, Kim Samuel, at McGill University, by hosting McGill Social Connectedness students as interns in our office in Johannesburg and by writing scholarly papers and presenting lectures at McGill.

- **Inner Work for Social Change**

Personal change for social transformation embodies Synergos' commitment to supporting social leaders and philanthropists, helping them cultivate a shift in their approaches to systems change and supporting their wellbeing. Personal reflection is among the pillars of Synergos' approach, and has been an important catalyst for Synergos to achieve impacts on poverty. Inner work has been long present in Synergos' programs, embodied in activities across a spectrum from practices and knowledge that effect personal and system changes, to retreats that can be deeply transformative. We currently have two initiatives with an explicit focus on 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 help social entrepreneurs 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.

Spiritual Civilization: With support from the Fetzer Institute and the John Templeton Foundation Synergos has recently expanded programming to continue supporting the Spiritual Civilization Affinity Group of the Global Philanthropists Circle. The Group's purpose is to (1) nurture practices that increase their own spiritual consciousness and recognize the importance of the ideals of faith, love, compassion, altruism, purpose, ethics and creativity that personally guide and inspire them to help others; (2) more consciously link these values and practices to their philanthropic work; and (3) promote more philanthropic support for programs that promote the ideals and values of spiritual civilization within the broader society. The Spiritual Civilization Group held a retreat in Belgium in June and a convening in Switzerland in October.

Spiritual convening: The expanded programming for the Spiritual Civilization Group supported planning for a conference that could promote spirituality as an important pursuit for philanthropists, and make it more visible among change agents. In partnership with the Templeton Foundation, Fetzer Institute, and Planet Heritage Foundation, Synergos provided thought leadership and organizational support for the Gathering of Funders of Spirituality and Mindfulness held in Scotts Valley, California, in September 2017. Over 70 participants from a variety of networks attended.

Global movement for spirituality: Synergos, the Fetzer Institute, and the John Templeton Foundation have just signed an agreement to collaborate on an initiative with two objectives. The first is to expand opportunities to grow spiritual philanthropy and inspire a global movement for spiritual transformation. The second is to influence the way philanthropy is done so that more programs geared to social change incorporate mindfulness, spirituality and related approaches.

NETWORKS

- **Middle East and North Africa: Social entrepreneurship**

Since 2008 Synergos has built the Arab world’s largest network of social entrepreneurs – change agents who combine innovation and business skills to meet pressing needs in their communities and countries. This network includes 439 established and start-up social entrepreneurs in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco, and 2,316 youth volunteers in Egypt and Palestine.

Our program helps social innovators (“Pioneers”) who have found innovative solutions to social challenges in areas ranging from health and sanitation, education, youth employment, community development, energy, environment, transport, to arts and culture. For example, some Pioneers are supporting incarcerated mothers and their families or promoting the economic and social inclusion of people with disabilities. We deliver leadership building, financial support, training, and networking opportunities to Pioneers and offer them a unique space for peer learning, reflection, and building collaborations.

Synergos also serves start-up social entrepreneurs by helping them reach the launch stage. We promote youth employability through our volunteer program, which helps young people under thirty to access job skills training, volunteer experience and exposure to the social entrepreneurship movement

Results: Our recent report, entitled “Powering social entrepreneurship – Synergos in the Arab World: Ten-Year Impact Report” highlights the achievements of the Pioneers program: it has improved three million lives, created or enhanced 3,000 jobs, placed 1,300 youth in volunteer assignments, and helped 450 volunteers find jobs. Some of our social entrepreneurs’ programs have been replicated in over 30 countries.

- **Global Philanthropists Circle**

Synergos promotes systems thinking, collaboration, bridging leadership and personal reflection for social change through our networks such as the Global Philanthropists Circle

(GPC). The GPC is a community of 100 philanthropic families and 380 individuals representing over 30 countries and 45 interest areas, who are committed to using their time, influence and resources to fight poverty and social injustice.

Founded in 2001 by Peggy Dulany and her father, David Rockefeller, the GPC offers unique opportunities for peer learning and collaboration, helping members become more strategic and effective by connecting them to ideas, resources, and each other, and inspiring them to bring to their philanthropy not only their funds but also their influence, connections, empathy, skills, and access. To support these goals Synergos hosts or facilitates a series of events throughout the year, including an annual membership meeting, NextGen gatherings, special events, learning journeys, and retreats.

Synergos also supports affinity groups, in which GPC members share knowledge and collaborate on issues they select--such as climate change, the Syrian refugee crisis, and spiritual civilization. In 2017 two more affinity groups were formed around Impact Investing and Shifting the Food System.

In 2017 several Turkish GPC members formed a partnership to conduct philanthropic research in Turkey, supported by six of the country's leading foundations. The study was published by Alliance Magazine. Synergos also convened discussions on two new topics, around the role of art in creating social change, and on Philanthropy and Independent Journalism.

The annual membership meeting of the GPC was held in New York on May 11, 2017, around the theme of Value-Driven Philanthropy. Guest speakers included Hamdi Ulukaya, Founder and CEO of Chobani and Founder of Tent Foundation, and Sheryl WuDunn, author and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist.

With funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Synergos created a Bridging Leadership curriculum for NextGen philanthropists in Mexico and Brazil. Based on this successful pilot, we plan to extend the Bridging Leadership program to other geographies.

In 2017 Synergos continued to grow our philanthropic engagement in China through a Learning Journey to China and Hongkong from May 16 to 24, and the *Philanthropy Forum: Lessons from China*, hosted by Alliance Bernstein in New York in May. This year a consultant based in Hong Kong was contracted to grow our work in China. In addition, we are partnering with the Dubai Department of Economic Development to co-host a philanthropy event in the Middle East in 2018.

University for a Night

On May 10, 2017, Synergos convened our annual event, University for a Night (UFAN), bringing hundreds of people together to share ideas and inspiration about working together to create a more prosperous, just and sustainable world, around the theme of “Interconnected challenges, interconnected approaches.” Peggy Dulany, Founder and Chair of Synergos, presented the David Rockefeller Bridging Leadership Award to Mo Ibrahim, Founder and Chair of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation; Hadeel Ibrahim, founding Executive Director of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation; and Ma Jun, Founder and Director of the China-based Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs. The Award recognizes leadership that unites organizations and people who might not otherwise work together to improve their societies, countries, or the world.

A distinguishing feature of University for a Night is the discussion at each dinner table, led by “Distinguished Faculty” with expertise or experience on core themes and emerging priorities of Synergos and our networks. Examples of these topics at UFAN 2017 include food, agriculture and culture; using media to inspire action and inform social change; impact investing for social and financial returns; responding to refugee crises; promoting education, employment and entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa; and personal reflection to create trust and social transformation.

Looking to 2018: Peggy Dulany Center for Bridging Leadership

In 2017 Synergos staff started building the foundation for the *Peggy Dulany Center for Bridging Leadership*. The Center would bring together the various threads of our work on bridging leadership, inner work, and systems thinking, that are now managed by various parts of the organization – and integrating them into a larger and more holistic offering. The Center would support individuals, organizations, and partnerships to bring about systemic solutions to complex human challenges. Through the Center we hope to make accessible experiences that cultivate self-knowledge, empathy, presence, and love-centered leadership as well as training platforms that build skills for bridging difference and enabling collective action.

The Center is being designed around the following principles:

- To bring about systemic solutions to complex human challenges, unprecedented levels of collaboration across political, social, ethnic, economic and other divides are required.
- Practical skills for generating collective action and bridging divides are lacking but can be taught.
- The journey of collective action begins with the self, with the interior condition of the individual intervenor.

By nurturing and supporting the spiritual and emotional growth of individual leaders and enabling such leaders to be in right relationship with self, other, community and the environment, we create the pre-conditions required for bridging, collective action, and social change



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