



CATALYSING CHANGE

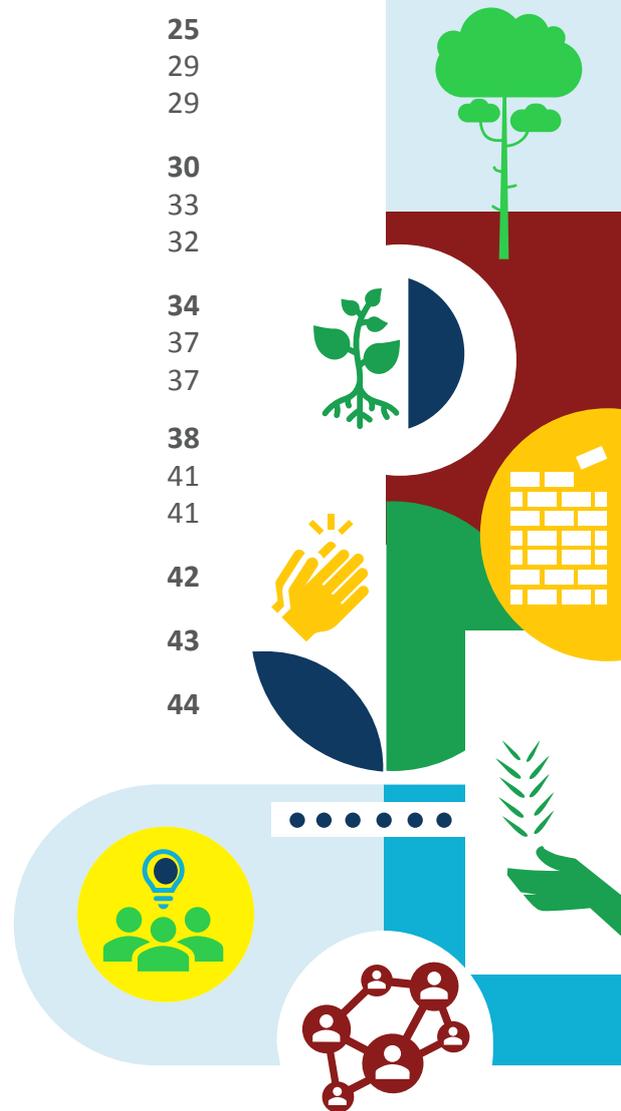
Catalytic networks and catalysing collaboration towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals



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Table of contents

Foreword	1
Acknowledgements	2
Many voices, one movement	3
Overview: Seven learnings for catalysing change	5
Catalyst 2030: A personal account	10
Unite with values	12
Figure 1: Values for collaboration	15
Sidebar 1: Stories of collaboration	15
Power the collective	16
Figure 2: An Unprecedented ‘coming together’	20
Sidebar 2: Stories of collaboration	19
Broker with honesty	21
Figure 3: Brokering with integrity	24
Sidebar 3: Stories of collaboration	24
Link many locals	25
Figure 4: Types of collaboration	29
Sidebar 4: Stories of collaboration	29
Lead from the first mile	30
Figure 5: Regions and chapters	33
Sidebar 5: Stories of collaboration	32
Resource change	34
Figure 6: Principles for funding	37
Sidebar 6: Stories of collaboration	37
Catalyse systems change	38
Figure 7: What is systems change?	41
Sidebar 7: Stories of collaboration	41
Our inclusive future	42
Appendix: Interview list	43
Appendix: References	44



Foreword

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up this report. Enclosed you will find an extraordinary story, but more importantly, you will find a set of lessons that we believe will help you become more effective at organising collectively for change.

Each of us has experience growing networks. Many of our organisations were founded on the belief that connecting people and organisations across boundaries contributes to stronger foundations for systemic change in communities, nations and regions globally.

However, we also know we have a long way to go. Our world has grown increasingly interconnected: the last two years accelerated this interconnectedness, but paradoxically, have also emphasised our divisions. We need ways of bringing people together to solve our biggest collective challenges that are both impactful and inclusive.

When members of our networks approached us about setting up an “umbrella network” to unite people and organisations in collaborative action for the SDGs, we immediately understood the value of such an effort. Networks are impactful when they highlight and connect people to achieve great solutions. They are catalytic when they inspire an entirely new way of organising to face big challenges.

Catalyst 2030 gives voice to more than 1600 individual members based in 100 countries and operating in 197 countries and territories. Bringing together this many voices outside a governmental body is a worthy endeavour. But that is only a fraction of our ambition.

When a crisis is reflected to us, it becomes an opportunity. The past two years have given us the unique perspective to collectively organise ourselves better due to the issues that the pandemic laid bare. **Catalyst 2030 aims to show that global and inclusive collaborative action is not only possible but deeply needed in our fractured and divided world.**

The Catalyst 2030 membership in partnership with:



Acknowledgements

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the dedicated members who have volunteered their time and expertise to the Governing Council (formerly the “Incubation Board”) of Catalyst 2030.

Ecosystem Partners

- Diana Wells, Ashoka
- Cheryl Dorsey, Echoing Green
- Francois Bonnici, Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship
- Don Gips, Skoll Foundation

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- Matthew Patten, Donor Relations Facilitator
- Debbi Brock, Systems Change Learning Facilitator
- Vanessa Goscinnny, Operations & Finance Facilitator

Many voices, One movement

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We are looking at funding from a different perspective and self-determining how we want the funding to come and what we think it should do. We are promoting that thinking so that it becomes a reality in whichever way we can, sitting where we are.

- Wamuyu Mahinda, Managing Director & Convener, Collaborative Value Partners - Africa

“

I came into our journey with an open-mindedness. I said, these are the kinds of problems I want to be involved in solving. I didn't come in here as a spectator. I came in here as a player.

- Anand Arkalgud, Founding Partner, Socion

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“

Catalyst members are successfully collaborating with their direct experience and commitment and spirit of generosity. You rarely get that feeling that people are looking to tick a box to get something from it.

- Valeria Dufлот, Co-Founder, Overtourism Solution

”

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Throughout civilization in history, when people galvanise themselves, it can go two ways. It can go with the strongest hand leading, or in the case of Catalyst, with the hand that gives growth and health and love.

- Jason Jacobs, Founder, Te Mana Consortium & Strategic Esports Entertainment

“

Social entrepreneurs have the solutions which will work in the mainstream economy. We need to give opportunity and airtime to these solutions so that they are more widely taken up to accelerate progress to achieve the SDGs.

- Sue Riddlestone, OBE; Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Bioregional Development Group

”

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Catalyst is so much more representative of the mosaic of humanity than other networks. The diversity just blows all the others away.

- Willy Foote, Founder & CEO, Root Capital

”



“As a social entrepreneur, you can be of service by creating capacity within existing infrastructure, instead of empire building and creating a secondary system. That’s what makes Catalyst special. I’m absolutely amazed at the incredible goodwill and commitment and energy that continues to be Catalyst.”
 - Karen Spencer, Founder & CEO, Whole Child International

“Catalyst is a revisioning of what a movement is in the 21st century on an international global scale. It’s brilliant, brave, and courageous.”
 - Janet Longmore, Founder & CEO, Digital Opportunity Trust

“Catalyst offers a Global platform to connect, co-create and collaborate with other social entrepreneurs with your same interests, even if they are on the other side of the globe. Join this amazing network if you feel that its core values are your own and you will soon say “I am Catalyst 2030.”
 - Jackie Kassouf Maalouf, Founder & President, DiaLeb

“Catalyst 2030 is a democratically-formed, associative structure which allows social entrepreneurs from all walks of life and all countries to come together and play a leadership role in executing on the SDGs in a successful and competent way.”
 - Chris Underhill, Principal, Mentor Services & Co-Founder, the Elders Council for Social Entrepreneurs World Cup

“It’s the breadth of voices, the things you wouldn’t get from a conference. You see the frailties and strengths of people and organisations around the table and that’s the basis for much better partnerships because, at the end of the day, partnerships are built on trust and understanding.”
 - Colin McElwee, Co-Founder, Worldreader



Overview: Seven learnings for catalysing change

About Catalyst 2030

This report describes the learnings we have gleaned from bringing together more than 1600 individuals and nearly 1300 organisations globally across sectors to catalyse collaboration towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos in February 2020, Catalyst 2030 has been in existence for a little over two years. In this time, we have seen a rising tide of individuals and organisations dedicated to coming together to achieve peace and prosperity for people and the planet.

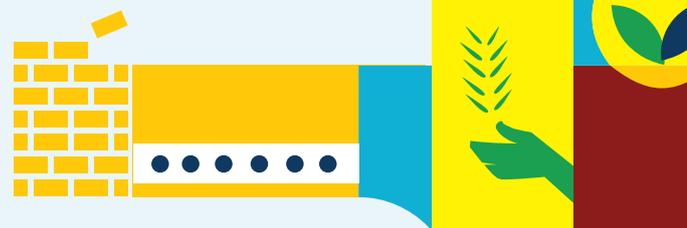
The movement is growing at pace, adding on average 40 members per month. It is also diverse, with headquarters in 100 countries and constituencies in 197 countries and territories. In total, Catalyst 2030 members touch the lives of two billion people.

Led by social entrepreneurs and innovators, the movement is allied with members from national and regional governments, businesses, multilateral agencies, philanthropic organisations, the media, and academia, creating a truly multistakeholder community of changemakers. Together, the group has built a structure of 8 working groups and 26 regional and country chapters, catalysing 72 formal collaborations that are accelerating progress toward the SDGs.

This report is not just about Catalyst 2030. It is about changing the conventional narrative that large-scale, global collaboration is inherently difficult, slow or inefficient. We believe that *catalytic networks* such as Catalyst 2030 offer an opportunity for significantly increased collaboration at greater scale and effectiveness than previously possible.

The experience of Catalyst 2030 shows that this style of organising is not only possible but highly desirable in working toward a just and inclusive world.

Networks that drive movements and collective action are not new. However, the sheer audacity of the global goals we seek to achieve requires a dramatic increase in our imagination of global collaboration. Catalyst 2030 has only just begun to explore what is possible, and we hope that creating and growing catalytic networks will become a key way of working in the future.



About this report

This report is co-created by the members of Catalyst 2030

This report is the fruit of more than two years of learning and growing the Catalyst 2030 network. It is coupled with decades of members' experiences growing networks around the world. It is written with a collective voice, with a multitude in the movement contributing to the lessons included.

We chose to write this report at a time when many social changemakers are thinking profoundly about what it means to organise and build power in an interconnected world. Many of the concepts that apply network and systems thinking to social change have been written about in the Global North. By contrast, the Catalyst 2030 movement adopts a truly global perspective, with an inclusive Southern view.

The concept of catalytic networks depicts a deeply “inclusivist” approach to network building. It inverts the traditional power dynamic promoting a style of organising that emerges from the streets, from the rural areas, and from communities, all within the “first mile”.¹

The movement is about hearing all voices, even when the process appears more complex and time-consuming. It is about sharing what we have, even when we have little. It is about helping each other along so that we get where we need to go – together.

Who should read this report

This report is written for those who are looking to organise collectively for change, in particular, those who are seeking to exchange a competitive mindset for a collaborative one. It is designed to support leaders from all sectors – NGOs, non-profit organisations, social enterprises, businesses, government agencies, media and civil society – to work together to accelerate progress on the SDGs. These lessons are shared in the spirit of generosity to give freely of time, knowledge and resources that Catalyst 2030 members hold with each other.

A single Catalyst 2030 is not enough. The movement will not be successful with just a handful of people and organisations. It is through the involvement of numerous catalytic networks that are global and “inclusivist” in nature that we will make real progress and meaningful change in the world. We believe that dense, overlapping networks with people and the planet at the heart of collaborative approaches will create the resilience and innovation necessary to address our most pressing challenges.

What is a catalytic network?

In this report, the term *catalytic network* refers to a global, distributed, cross-sector network of individuals and organisations who are united by their values and principles, and working together to achieve collaborative action. This concept has emerged from members' deep experience of how to build and grow networks, while drawing on network theories as well as practices of social movements and community organising.

The concentration of power in the hands of a few is a global reality. Cultivating a collective voice is especially challenging in a situation where the contributors have previously been seen as “not equal”, calling for a real mindset shift by all collaborators. Catalytic networks cultivate a sensitivity toward this imbalance, creating a place where power and legitimacy are derived not from resources and access to positional leadership, but from the breadth and diversity of the collective voice.

“Catalytic” refers to a transformation that is accelerated by the addition of something new. “Network” refers to an interconnected group of people or things. By combining these two words together, we are talking about an interconnected group of people that is accelerating transformation.

Catalytic networks are “networks of networks”, co-created and developed by members, existing to ensure new layers of engagement across geographic and sector boundaries. These networks are oriented toward action but with learning as an important function. They have strong management and operations to ensure structure and key activities are led and carried out by members.

Scholars, consultants and researchers use different terms to describe related concepts. Field catalysts², transformation catalysts³, systems orchestrators⁴ and impact networks⁵ are important terms currently in use. Although there are distinctions between the entities that these terms describe, they broadly exist to galvanise many people and organisations towards shared purpose and goals.

Catalytic networks are the generative and democratic space where these types of entities emerge, uniting people and organisations by shared values, emphasising inclusivity, and adding a layer of global connective tissue and a density of connections that did not exist before.

The evolution of a concept

The concept of “catalytic networks” has evolved from the experiences of the many diverse network builders across Catalyst 2030. In particular, the concept draws from the first-hand experiences of Jeroo Billimoria and her dedicated team members who have spent several decades growing catalytic networks. These networks include Meljol, Child Helpline International (CHI), Aflatoun, Child & Youth Finance International (CYFI) and presently, Catalyst 2030.

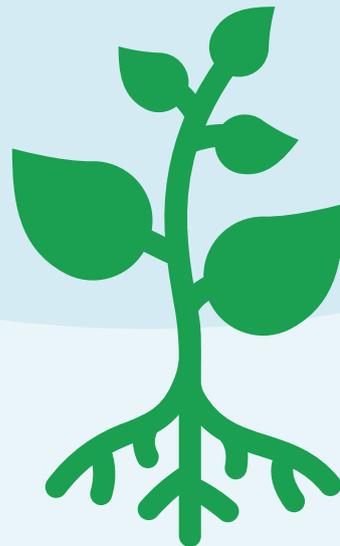
Meljol, CHI and Aflatoun were formed based on principles and practices of community organising, drawing from their Indian roots in Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of community-based

constructive action. CYFI built on these principles and practices, applying a social movement mindset to systems change on a global scale and developing a collective approach called “collaborative systems change”.

Through Catalyst 2030, these concepts are now being applied as an overarching organising construct, which we introduce here as “catalytic networks”. Catalytic networks are “networks of networks”, with members co-creating and adding connective tissue between existing efforts, all while assembling greater collective power across collaborations, issues, sectors, and regions.

Table 1: What is a catalytic network?

A catalytic network is...	A catalytic network is not...
United by values	United by ideologies, goals and objectives
Collaborative , encompassing many different networks and building on the spirit of generosity by members	Competitive , with the aim of creating “advantage” over existing organisations and networks
Resilient , creating additional layers and density within and across systems	Singular , replacing other organisations and networks
Both/And , adding layers of engagement and a plurality of solutions	Either/Or , forcing choice or binaries in engagement and approaches
Inclusive , starting with “first mile” leadership	Selective , with elite representation of specific populations
Humbly audacious , deriving legitimacy and power from the collective	Assertively paternalistic , deriving authority and setting goals from top-down leadership



The seven learnings

Based on two years of growing and learning, as well as many decades of cultivating networks, the following seven learnings have emerged from our work together.

- 1 Unite with values:** Catalytic networks start by uniting around a shared set of values that link existing networks of individuals and organisations together.
- 2 Power the collective:** Catalytic networks are powered by three key activities: assembling, convening (big and small) and facilitating emergence.
- 3 Broker with honesty:** Catalytic networks are supported by an honest broker, a team of facilitators who do not lead or manage activities but rather operationalise emergent activities led by members.
- 4 Link many locals:** Catalytic networks serve to link many locals together, mobilising a multitude of individuals and organisations to effect change with legitimacy and efficacy.
- 5 Lead from the first mile:** Catalytic networks cultivate “first mile” leadership. Local and regional chapters set distinct plans and influence the global network in service of these agendas.
- 6 Resource change:** Catalytic networks shift the funding paradigm by understanding the challenges that collaborators face accessing equitable capital flows, and moving the funding ecosystem toward new and transformative practices.
- 7 Catalyse systems change:** Catalytic networks ultimately seek to achieve systems change, when collaborative activities coalesce to address root causes and shift the conditions that hold a problem in place.

Catalyst 2030: A personal account by a founder member

Why it shouldn't have succeeded, but did

Catalyst 2030, the movement as we know it, should never have succeeded past its nascent few months. Catalyst 2030 is founded on values-based collaboration. To me, this seemed contrary to the way the sector operated.

A fellow social entrepreneur and I conducted a survey of social entrepreneurs in 2018. The findings of this survey indicated that social entrepreneurs don't often trust each other and revealed that half of the respondents felt donors had asked them to do something that conflicted with their values.

From my personal observation, social entrepreneurs are not collaborative by nature. They are competitive, especially with each other. This is largely as a result of current funding practices which foster silos and competition. My early opinion of why a movement like Catalyst 2030 would never work was informed by this understanding. Social entrepreneurs from my experience were more likely to undermine than support one another.

Then, in Q2 2019, a WhatsApp group called "the movement" was formed made up largely of social entrepreneurs from sector fellowship organisations. The group buzzed with ideas for collaboration and created a slide deck of concepts and analyses of how a massive social innovator collaboration could work. Zoom meetings were organised with interested individuals and more and more people joined them.

We soon embarked on a collaborative, co-creative process to agree a name and tagline for our new movement. Shortly thereafter, we settled on a logo, brand colours, fonts and other points of style. We officially had a brand and visual identity. It felt like we existed.

Then came the official launch. With the support of our Ecosystem Partners, we launched our movement at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos in January 2020. I remember feeling especially proud of what had been accomplished to date – all on a volunteer basis.

Out of the blue, one of our generous members invited more than 70 people to her home for a three-day workshop in February 2020. The workshop's agenda was based on a framework drawn up pro-bono by a well-known consultancy. We each invited colleagues, and everyone paid their own way to attend. We walked away with a plan, new connections, ideas for collaboration and an early mission and vision. A community was emerging. I think some came away feeling like they had made history, I know that I did.

Then within a few weeks, nearly every country in the world was in a hard lockdown. Suddenly, for several dozen people, Catalyst 2030 Zoom calls became an essential part of their daily lives and purpose. Isolated, but with like-minded people spending significant virtual time together, we brainstormed ideas, created supportive friendships and built trust. People understood they were a part of something bigger than themselves. In retrospect, lockdown greatly accelerated our progress. Members rallied around emergency measures to confront the pandemic and we all did what we could to help.

Catalyst 2030's General Assemblies - now with more than 150 people attending each month - and working group meetings also helped to foster our connections. Everything at this point was still voluntary, which was amazing. Operational costs were self-funded by the One Family Foundation, with a two-person staff now supporting a network of hundreds.

We were guided by the steady hand of Jeroo Bilimoria with her years of experience in building collaborations and her steadfast vision for Catalyst 2030, as well as her networks, the faith and belief people placed in her and her lack of ego, which made it harder for people to showcase theirs.

By April 2020, a task force came together to co-create a set of values which were put to the membership and rigorously debated. These values stand strong and firm today. A "feminine energy" pervaded from the get-go, both among the many strong, confident women involved, as well as the men. The key principles of inclusiveness, listening, power-sharing and consensus-building, were strongly evident from the start.

No one likes to admit they're wrong. However, in this instance I'm happy to. Catalyst 2030 remains a movement unique in the world. It's set apart by its people-centric founding and other forces that conspired to make it happen.



Unite with values

The Catalyst 2030 experience

Catalyst 2030 began in 2019 with a group of approximately 50 social entrepreneurs and innovators assembled on a WhatsApp group channel. Many of these individuals had been part of longstanding networks bringing together social innovators across the world: Ashoka, Echoing Green, the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and the Skoll Foundation.

Over WhatsApp chats and Zoom calls, this group agreed to work more collaboratively together. They believed their collective efforts would yield more together than alone. However, rather than quickly define what this “something” should be, the people spent the first six months getting to know each other better. The group was clear when working together, they wanted to focus on “bottoms-up”, servant-led collaborations that were powered from within, not from above.

These months were highly productive and laid the foundation for what was to come. The group received many pro-bono hours from a prominent consultancy to help create coherence among the diverse voices. This was an opportunity to explore a global movement for social entrepreneurs and innovators, who could come together to co-create solutions that would be owned by all members collectively. Importantly, a “movement identity” was thoughtfully established via a consultative process with early collaborators. After the name – Catalyst 2030 - and tagline were agreed, the brand began to take shape and form with a logo and colours. A starter website soon followed.

During this time, the formalisation of the values emerged from these conversations. The values took several months to evolve and was a highly collaborative and co-creative process with robust debate from the values task force. The values process was then followed by a “commitment” process whereby each member made a formal written commitment to treat one another with the values that had been agreed upon.



“What has been really beautiful is creating a space to reflect and brainstorm about collaborations. I think the field is mature. It’s ready. Social entrepreneurs are ready to co-create and find a way to work together.”

- Rodrigo Baggio, Founder & President, Center for Digital Inclusion (Recode)

Applying the learning

Catalytic networks start by uniting around a shared set of values that link existing networks of individuals and organisations together.

Clear objectives at the outset can be counter-productive

The conventional wisdom in the social change sector is that collaboration starts with clear objectives. According to this wisdom, collaboration is most successful when it is centrally coordinated, aligned toward a common agenda, and rigorously measured by a shared reporting framework. Yet, in our experience, we have found an important starting point which is often overlooked in the rush to get to action.

Although it might sound counter-intuitive, setting objectives too quickly can be undesirable in creating trusting, long-term relationships necessary to tackle global, intersectoral issues. The “grand challenges” of climate change, racial equity, and poverty are complex and adaptive problems. Our understanding of these problems grows as we engage with trying to solve them. At the same time, our interventions and programmes create consequences that shift how the desired outcome will be achieved.

Catalytic networks follow a process of evolution, just as natural systems do. It is through gradual trial and error and continuous improvement that adaptive problems can be addressed effectively. To collaborate in response to these challenges, we need to organise in ways that keep us together while learning. Yet, staying together is not as easy as it sounds.

Values are the “core operating system” of catalytic networks

Collaborations can get stuck in the initial design phase, struggling to define a shared purpose that everyone can agree upon. Collaborations can also break down in the implementation phase, when competitive dynamics and different interpretations of a complex issue emerge between participating individuals and organisations.

Problems can even (and often do) arise after initial successes, when collaborators experience the frequent disruptions that upend assumptions that underpin their objectives. Discomfort is part of the process, and is the only way through which we learn, grow and mature. Agility, acknowledging failure and knowing when to change course are key to ensuring dynamism and avoiding unintended consequences.

To avoid a full breakdown, collaborators need to start in a more fundamental place: defining the values that will drive their work together.

For catalytic networks, values are the “core operating system”. Values serve as the “Why” and the “How” that define members’ relationships with one another. Before a catalytic network begins doing, members need to spend time agreeing on *how they will do the doing*.

LEARNING 1
UNITE WITH
VALUES

Recommendations for uniting with values

- **Tie together existing networks:** It is important to start with what already exists in a system. Catalytic networks sit on top of other networks – this is how they grow quickly. Existing networks created by formal organisations with defined agendas often bring together like-minded individuals and organisations, which act as an ideal starting point.
- **Expand the conversation:** Create space for conversations that dig into the “why” and the “how.” Avoid conversations that try to define “what” at first. Invite members to share open-ended questions that are personally motivating to them, as well as what feels uncomfortable in the current system.
- **Formalise the values:** Identify the common themes that bind the group together. Distinguish the themes that are a “click above” the goals, objectives and purpose. Establish those themes that operate as human “universals”, transcending culture, geography and pre-defined identities.

“

“I think the big difference here is that you have to let go of control. The ways Catalyst 2030 developed were not pre-decided. They kept emerging. And they kept emerging through collective wisdom.”

- Neelam Chhiber, Co-Founder & Managing Trustee, Industree Foundation

LEARNING 1
UNITE WITH
VALUES

Figure 1: Values for collaboration

Catalyst 2030 members has developed the following values to guide their work together. Each member has made a commitment to collaborating guided by these values.



People and nature at the centre

In everything we do, we place people, nature and their ways of life at the heart of what we do. We stand accountable to them for our actions.



Co-creative mindset

The future of innovation is co-creation. We seek to acknowledge our own biases and silos and work to move beyond them. This includes sharing all relevant data when we collaborate and that whatever Catalyst 2030 produces is non-proprietary.



Collaborative leadership

We prioritise co-creating approaches that reflect shared ownership and credit collective impact. Shared norms are based on the needs and challenges we face.



Humble audacity

We have audacious goals and approach them with the humility that none of us alone know how they can be best accomplished.



Spirit of generosity

On any given day we are all donors, doers, visionaries or clients. We commit to sharing our knowledge, time and networks freely without expectation of receiving anything in return, other than the achievement of collective goals.

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Stories of collaboration

Co-Live: Covid Livelihood Coalition

Well-Being; SDG 4: Quality Education;
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Collaboration start: 2020

Collaborators: 67 local, first-mile organisations in India.

Collaboration reach: 9.1 million rural households in 13 states of India.

Systems approach: Short-term, emergency response but currently transitioning to an integrated effort that promotes preventive healthcare.

SDGs addressed: SDG 3: Good Health and

Collaboration description: Convened by Industree Foundation and initiated by several members of Catalyst 2030, the coalition comprises highly dedicated and dynamic frontline organisations in India. This multi-sectoral engagement of grassroots organisations has come together to activate a coordinated emergency response system that can transition to economic recovery. Co-Live addresses sustainable livelihood generation and it's members, along with other coalitions such as Covid Action Collab, RCRC, Catalyst 2030 NASE, together have reached approximately 20% of India's rural population.

Power the collective

The Catalyst 2030 experience

Through the second half of 2019, Catalyst 2030 grew organically, adding 200 individuals to the WhatsApp group through existing networks. During this time, a number of online meetings were conducted to create a detailed strategy for the movement (long before Zoom was the well-known platform of today). Members dedicated numerous voluntary hours, while staff and funds from the One Family Foundation sustained the movement throughout the first year.

In 2020, the “big four” existing networks of social entrepreneurs – Ashoka, Echoing Green, the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and the Skoll Foundation – deepened their involvement as Ecosystem Partners, expanding the reach of the movement even further. With the Schwab Foundation’s support, in January 2022, the movement was officially launched at the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting at Davos-Klosters.

Following the Davos launch, the members decided it was time to have their first in-person convening. Approximately 70 members covered their own travel costs to come together in Northamptonshire, England, where they were hosted by a Catalyst 2030 member at her home, Althorp House.

This first meeting proved to be a significant clarifying and bonding experience. The event was facilitated by a prominent consultancy and members took advantage of the time together to create a shortlist of working groups to grow the network further. Members were then encouraged to gravitate toward working groups that “gave them energy”, a process which still exists today. The group also decided that working group leads would form the initial “Incubation Board” and act as a steering committee to guide the development of the network through its first two years.



“Catalyst acts as connective tissue among many existing movements, with the common denominator of wanting to accelerate progress on the SDGs, coupled with a deep belief in the power of collaboration and systems change.”

- Tim Hanstad, CEO, Chandler Foundation

Applying the learning

Catalytic networks are powered by three key activities: assembling, convening (big and small), and facilitating emergence.

Assembling alongside values

Networks are often viewed as vehicles to achieve individual and organisational goals, even if coalesced into a shared purpose or mission statement. Members will join with a specific agenda in mind, such as raising funds for their own organisations or advancing policies and practices that will assist organisational activities. Yet, in our experience, this viewpoint can be limiting and doesn't capture the true potential of catalytic networks.

At their most powerful, catalytic networks are containers for collective action. The power of a collective ensures that the "we" is greater than the "I"s - essentially that the sum is greater than the parts. Like compound interest, the collective intelligence of a network expands as the number of members grows.

With values as a starting point, catalytic networks attract individuals and organisations aligned to the values. Once introduced to the network, members can find opportunities to convene in small and big groups and identify those with whom they can collaborate. These collaborations are the manifestation of new understandings that emerge when different perspectives are encountered and combined.

Convening (big and small)

Catalytic networks benefit from two types of groups: big and small. Big convenings often get the most hype and are good for creating momentum. Importantly, they are an opportunity to model network values and create "bridging capital"⁶ between individuals and organisations. Catalyst 2030 has several formats for big convenings: monthly General Assembly Zoom calls, the annual Catalysing Change Week and the annual Catalyst Awards.

However, since catalytic networks are designed to facilitate collective action, they also need a second type of convening: small groups. Small groups facilitate the creation of "bonding capital" and alignment for action. Small convenings are where objectives can be set, workplans developed and substantive action delivered. Catalyst 2030 encourages several types of small group convenings: semi-monthly or monthly working group meetings, regular Conversation Cafes and various governance meetings.

LEARNING 2
POWER THE
COLLECTIVE

Facilitating emergence

Harnessing collective power is different from directing formal organisations and teams. Top-down strategies can stifle a catalytic network, preventing individuals and organisations from moving ahead with emergent ideas. Since much of the energy is voluntary and self-directed, it cannot be managed. Instead, it must be nurtured and facilitated.

In catalytic networks, collaborative action happens in an organic rather than linear fashion. However, there are predictable patterns that can be harnessed. Collaboration as a concept is often inspired in “big group” settings but then emerges as action in “small group” settings. It’s important to continuously allow for “fractal organising” - the breaking away of small groups from big groups that grow too unwieldy for true action to happen.

Collaborative action can be likened to a regenerative forest. For example, individuals and organisations may meet each other while planning for a Catalysing Change Week session or through the nomination of a Catalyst Award. These brief encounters may spark interest in a shared project to be explored. Sometimes these shared projects blossom into full-blown collaborations; in other cases, they may go dormant, but provide the seed of a new perspective that will germinate later. Each interaction adds a new layer of organic matter to the forest floor, providing nutrients for future collaborations.



“Many social entrepreneurs are doing great work in pursuing their respective missions but tend to be siloed. In this context, Catalyst 2030 provides a platform for this segment of social entrepreneurs to overcome such silo mindset and practice towards becoming part of a broader movement for social entrepreneurship in the region.”
- Marie Lisa Dacanay, Founding President, Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia (ISEA)

Recommendations for powering the collective

- **Organise for diversity:** Collective approaches are driven by many experts, not single powerful leaders. Ideas will come from unexpected sources, often the result of lived experience of a specific issue or solution. Ensuring equal voice and representation is critical to maximising the potential of a catalytic network.
- **Establish “cadences” for convenings⁷:** Each group, big or small, will have different meeting schedules. Establishing a regular “cadence” that ensures momentum and reflection is key. For small groups, ideal cadences will likely be weekly or monthly. For bigger groups, cadences can be monthly, quarterly or even annually.
- **Create containers for continuous change:** Catalytic networks are containers for continuous change. Small groups will “shift shape”, changing membership, leadership and even closing when the group is no longer energetic or needed. A level of stability can be created by assigning two leaders for each group so that continuity is ensured if members need to move on to other priorities.

2

Stories of collaboration

From seed to mouth: Food security in Latin America

Collaboration start: In design phase

Collaborators: Bioconexion, Colombia Cuida Colombia, Fundación OpEPA, TAAP Foundation, Trabajo y persona

Systems approach: This project invites collaborators to embrace conscious food systems as a way of connecting seed recuperation with soil and ecosystem restoration, and community consolidation to increase resilience, food security, and sovereignty.

SDGs addressed:

SDG 1: No Poverty

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being

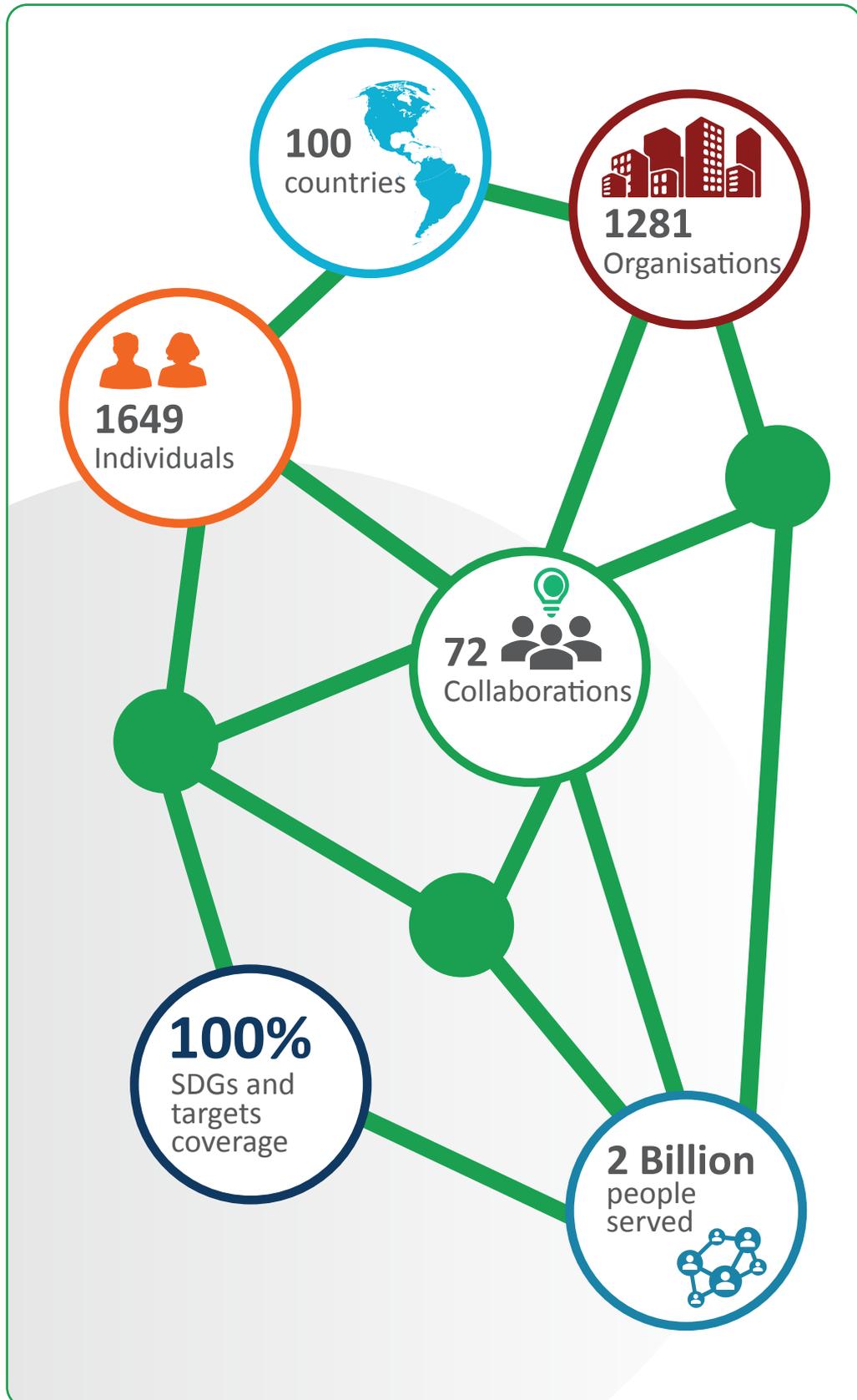
SDG 5: Gender Equality

SDG 15: Life on Land

Collaboration description: In various regions and territories, some seeds and foods have been displaced and have lost their ancient importance. One of the main aims of the project is to connect seed recuperation and soil restoration with agroecological transitions in production and transformation. This will be achieved through building capacity in communities and creating value chains that restore and reinforce resilience and local values and culture. To do so, a connection with local restaurants, entrepreneurs, chefs and producers is needed, as is a major cultural and educational process to shift perceptions about seeds, soil and land. We will simultaneously work to change narratives around food systems to inspire resilience and sustainability.

LEARNING 2
POWER THE
COLLECTIVE

Figure 2: An unprecedented “coming together”



Broker with honesty

The Catalyst 2030 experience

In the months prior to launch, Catalyst 2030 was supported by a small staff of two people employed within a family foundation. After the official launch in 2020, the Incubation Board realised that the activities coming out of the working groups required a greater amount of operational support. The network also needed fiduciary oversight as it drew in additional funding and support.

The board members were reluctant to create a formal organisation with a classic hierarchical structure. The members wanted to preserve the emergent and voluntary collaborations that powered the collective, building on the spirit of generosity that stemmed from the values of the network. To preserve this, funding was secured to recruit a staff of facilitators, coordinators and interns to implement the operational strategy and support the working groups where the bulk of network activities would continue to be generated.

Catalyst 2030 is currently supported by a Secretariat composed of 15 full-time staff and nine interns. The staff consists of a chief facilitator, six facilitators and eight coordinators. Each facilitator is responsible for a portfolio of groups while coordinators and interns are assigned to groups as operational support. Fiduciary oversight and back-office finance functions are outsourced to expert organisations, the One Family Foundation in the Netherlands and Panorama Global in the United States.



“Catalyst 2030 should be empowered towards the players. We all have our own local issues that we want to solve, but globally, a Catalyst 2030 member might be finding a solution for the world. Transfer of technology, transfer of knowledge, is critical.”
- Kuhan Pathy, Co-Founder, Pepper Labs

LESSON 3
BROKER WITH
HONESTY

Applying the learning

Catalytic networks are supported by an honest broker, a team of facilitators who do not lead or manage activities but rather operationalise emergent activities led by members.

The role of the honest broker

Unlike formal organisations, catalytic networks are powered by initiatives identified and led by members, not by a single coordinating body. Therefore, catalytic networks are best supported by an *honest broker*⁸. The term “honest” is used because the role should be played with significant integrity, ensuring that individual people and organisations are not privileged, but rather that all members have a substantive contribution. The term “broker” connotes the intermediary function of the role, linking and supporting members with one another to facilitate collaborative activities.

The honest broker is distinct from a “backbone organisation” or a “nerve centre”, terms used by other collective efforts aligned to a common set of goals and objectives. In the case of a catalytic network, the honest broker does not promote a single agenda, strategy or vision, but rather mediates between many emergent initiatives that are promoted and led by members. Importantly, the honest broker needs to listen carefully and analyse the needs of each member and explore the potential to unlock a powerful connection between two or more parties. The honest broker also helps to keep membership connected to the values that unify the network.



“Normally, global networks are created and controlled by funders or allies. This was the first time that we were chatting as social entrepreneurs to create something together. And that was amazing, the feeling that we all are peers. I wanted to bring that to my region, the opportunity for other social entrepreneurs to have the possibility to talk with someone in South Africa or Thailand or South Korea or Europe. In Catalyst 2030, you can find people working around the world. And when you speak with someone that is doing something similar to you in other parts of the world, your vision changes and your impact is immediately fostered by that experience.”

- Gaby Arenas, Founder,
TAAP Foundation

LESSON 3
BROKER WITH
HONESTY

Mediating and operationalising

The honest broker is composed of facilitators and support staff who provide connections and critical infrastructure to members and groups. In Catalyst 2030, the Secretariat serves as an honest broker to the movement, facilitating the work of the membership by overseeing the operational activities and tasks that drive the movement.

Brokering is primarily about listening carefully to members and then mediating so that members can find each other and build on each other's initiatives. Facilitators have a "birds-eye" view of what is happening across the network and can match-make members who have similar sensibilities and interests (a technique known in network circles as "weaving"⁹).

Honest broker team members also provide operational support such as scheduling meetings, recording minutes and archiving documents, ensuring that the cadence of convening is maintained and that decisions are recorded. This also includes the important role of fostering a brand identity and unifying terminology that is developed by members and promoted externally to key stakeholders.

Recommendations for brokering with honesty

- **Develop key skills for honest brokering:** Catalytic networks are aided by skilled facilitators who can see trends across the network while linking members together for emergence. They must also be able to humbly take on operational tasks that are essential for groups to flourish. Since almost all employees have been trained in hierarchical environments, these skills must often be developed by the network.
- **Invite contribution and engagement:** Collaborative activities are generated by member passion, shared interests and cross-fertilisation of ideas. Top-down leadership will likely stifle this emergence. Therefore, facilitators should orient members towards existing groups and collaborations that are likely to stimulate contributions and encourage engagement.
- **Ensure radical transparency:** Networks and catalytic networks in particular, thrive on transparency. Catalyst 2030 finance and operations meetings are open to all members while Secretariat salaries are equitable and disclosed. Additionally, financial and operational support to working groups is clearly communicated and discussed among members. This sort of transparency allows members to feel that every voice is given equal weight and that growth and development is a shared responsibility.

LESSON 3
BROKER WITH
HONESTY

Figure 3: Brokering with integrity

Catalyst 2030 members has developed the following principles to guide the work of honest brokering. These principles apply to the Secretariat as well as collaborations.



Convene as an honest broker: Create shared spaces for collaboration and co-creation that democratise the engagement of all stakeholders in society without discrimination.



Connect: Use collaborative systems change principles to connect social entrepreneurs, innovators and other stakeholders, across diverse communities, to generously share knowledge and resources to inspire the acceleration of progress towards attaining the SDGs.



Co-create: Community members, working in collaboration, co-create the overall strategy and direction, to provide all stakeholders with the opportunity to actively contribute to the future.



Celebrate: Consistent opportunities to celebrate the movement’s accomplishments, from awards ceremonies to events that keep members engaged, are important to keep participants focused.



Calibrate: The movement’s impact will be supported by research and measurement of outcomes as it expands. Necessary recalibration will take place to focus on “true North” to achieve the SDGs by 2030.



Cohere: Member organisations and activities must be developed coherently to form a shared identity of fellow travellers who are learning about and activating systems change. This is important to achieve the goal of growing the movement’s impact.



Change Consciousness: Shift norms away from a focus on individuality, to a belief that individual and community prosperity can be achieved with the same action.

3

Stories of collaboration

Conversation Café

Collaboration start: 2020

Collaborators: The Conversation Café concept was started as a member-led initiative in the Collaborations working group and then adopted by the Catalyst 2030 Secretariat in order to replicate both thematically and regionally.

Collaboration reach: 18 sessions held with 159 participants representing all global regions.

Systems approach: A form of “network weaving,” creating opportunities for members to engage in informal conversations that lead to collaborative action.

SDGs addressed: All SDGs are potentially

addressed through collaborative activities that are initiated by the conversations.

Collaboration description: The Conversation Café is a twice monthly, 40-minute virtual session that allows members to find new connections with fellow social change innovators, discover potential partners, and build new collaborations with alongside members of Catalyst 2030. Cafés are informal gatherings where groups of members gather to discuss a specific topic they are passionate about. It is a great opportunity to network with members from all over the world and build relations in a casual space with a coffee or tea at hand. The Café is offered at the local level in chapters and Catalyst groups to increase networking opportunities and collaborations between members and organisations.

Link many locals

The Catalyst 2030 experience

Throughout 2020, Catalyst 2030 grew at a rapid pace. The Covid-19 pandemic proved to be a galvanising force for the network as technologies for online convening advanced and obstacles to scheduling loosened due to remote working. By the end of the year, the network had grown to nearly 500 individuals and organisations with offices in 71 countries and reach in 180 countries.

Importantly, the breadth and depth of the network allowed members to have real-time visibility into the global nature of the pandemic as well as the thousands of local initiatives that were activated in response to the unfolding tragedy. Leaders of local and regional organisations - as well as funders of these organisations - were able to learn from each other's experiences and rapidly expand activities, such as equipment and supplies distribution, healthcare worker training and community education.

Key collaborations emerged during this period of global upheaval. The Covid Action Collab, the Co-Live Livelihood and Training initiatives and Creative Dignity were born out of the urgency of India's first and second waves of the pandemic. Education collaboratives linked out-of-school initiatives, such as Jordan-based reading programme We Love Reading with education efforts in the broader Middle East and Latin America. And importantly, around the world, members were able to create virtual spaces for learning, support and belonging during a tumultuous time for people and organisations dedicated to social change.

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“Today, people are connecting around identities that are increasingly niche, which is actually mitigating against collective action. We need to reimagine ‘global’ as a sum of lots of ‘locals’, building a modern Marshall Plan for people and planet that is data driven and locally led. It’s more about connecting the people of London with the people of Lagos and Des Moines with Dar es Salaam with the aim of delivering better at a local level everywhere.”

- Jamie Drummond, Co-Founder ONE.org & Founder Sharing Strategies

Applying the learning

Catalytic networks serve to link many locals together, mobilising a multitude of individuals and organisations to effect change with legitimacy and efficacy.

Types of collaboration

Catalytic networks stimulate many different types of collaboration at multiple scales. Some of these collaborations happen spontaneously and quickly, while others are built over years and even decades. Some members come into collaborations as representatives of their organisations, while others bring their whole selves into partnerships, transcending their institutional affiliations. This allows collaborators to find each other, coordinate relational processes and align self-driven motives with collective objectives.

One-on-one collaboration: Many collaborations will be one-on-one, involving the exchange of ideas or information. These collaborations might be one-off with a single conversation or recurring as relationships grow and develop. In Catalyst 2030's experience, one-on-one collaborations are sources of significant support, offering a sounding board during organisational transitions or a vital connection to funding or expertise at a critical juncture. They also enable faster peer-to-peer learnings, creating channels of information flow that would not exist otherwise.

Interorganisational collaboration: Collaborations also emerge based on relationships between organisations and individuals that have merging goals and objectives. These collaborations can be bilateral (with just two organisations) or multilateral (with many organisations). Collaborations of this nature often exist to pool resources or capitalise on organisational expertise.

Cross-sectoral collaboration: Collaborations develop cross-sectorally when people and organisations from different sectors come together to achieve shared goals and activities. These types of collaborations are facilitated by the shared values of the network which bridge the sometimes difficult divides that exist between sectors. Collaborations of this sort can be highly effective at resourcing and scaling existing solutions with government and private sector reach. They can also lead to entirely new solutions that transform a system's relationships and functioning by incorporating novel perspectives, technologies and practices.

LESSON 4
LINK MANY
LOCALS

Linking the global grassroots

One of the enduring features of global development has been the existence of intermediary organisations that win large contracts of funding and distribute it to local implementers, usually with significant strings attached. This strategy has been criticised for its inefficiency and ineffectiveness as well as its neo-colonial features. While there has been a significant push to change this feature, these calls have lacked implementation ostensibly due to perceived challenges of visibility of local alternatives and administration of funding.

Catalytic networks such as Catalyst 2030 offer a new alternative. By linking together people and organisations embedded deeply in their local contexts, collaborations harness grassroots expertise and knowledge. At the same time, collaborations benefit from building on ideas and practices from other geographies and adapting them to local contexts.

Rather than channelling funding through intermediaries, Catalyst 2030 can foresee local representatives of catalytic networks working closely with regional and global funding offices to source effective solutions.



“Collaborative impact is not optional. We shouldn’t see anybody as our competitor actually, everybody is our collaborator. We should use all our social capital, our leadership and our power to bring people and organisations together.”
- Shiv Kumar, Co-Founder, Catalyst Group

Recommendations for linking many locals

- **Create a culture of reciprocity and trust:** Collaboration does not happen automatically. It is fostered by the recognition of members' expertise, contributions and needs. Catalytic networks can establish a culture of reciprocity by encouraging members to share their needs and offerings on a regular basis. A culture of patience in appreciating diversity of views needs to be cultivated for a safe environment of constructive sharing.
- **Contain and build upon disagreement:** Catalytic networks are strengthened by disagreement and controversy, which allow generative discussion and solutions. However, conflict needs to be consciously fostered within a strong container that ensures disagreements do not fracture members but rather allow them to grow closer together, building upon disagreement and arriving at stronger conclusions.
- **Share power:** Catalytic networks can actively dismantle dominant power structures caused by colonisation and destructive cultural norms, such as racism and patriarchy. This is facilitated when those with historical privilege recognise their power and actively share and distribute that power with others in the network.
- **Work for transcendence:** Innovation and collaboration require deep listening and an ability to integrate important points of view and concerns in ways that are different from people's original way of thinking about an issue. This is generative conversation that creates transcendence.

Figure 4: Types of Collaboration



4

Stories of collaboration

Futures of Education: Catalyst 2030 education group – UNESCO collaboration

Collaboration start: 2020

Collaborators: Adhyayan, Breakthrough, ComMutiny – The Youth Collective, CRI Paris, Designathon Works, DID MY Academy Sdn Bhd, Dream a Dream, Edu-fy, Farm2Food Foundation, FreeTheMindCo, ICI Network, Katholischer Learning Planet, Kindergarten Sankt Marienstift, Mind Fit LTD, Next Stage Consulting, Quest Alliance, ReliablyME, Study Hall Educational Foundation (SHEF), We Love Reading, WeCanAccess, Worldreader, Your Passport2Grow, among others.

Systems approach: The aim of the collaboration is to accelerate existing education innovations through partnerships with mainstream institutions, policy think tanks and government systems.

SDGs addressed:
SDG 4: Quality Education
SDG 17: Partnerships to Achieve the Goals

Collaboration description: In 2021, UNESCO released a report called “Reimagining our futures

together: A social contract for education.” This report is the culmination of a two-year endeavour drawing on the input of over a million people, calling for changes to worldwide educational systems to support peaceful, just and sustainable futures. A number of Catalyst 2030 members engaged in education work around the globe participated in the report development, and independently recognised the need to illustrate how these systemic changes are already being implemented successfully in many regions. Through this collaboration, Catalyst 2030 members have sifted through numerous educational innovations in the network and selected 37 case studies that will illustrate a set of learning principles that emerged from the group. This report will be profiled at the UNESCO Transforming Education Summit in September 2022. The aim of this collaboration with UNESCO is to illustrate that education innovations supporting UNESCO’s “social contract” – such as social-emotional learning, diverse learning spaces and learner-centric methods – are already having impact around the globe and can be accelerated through partnerships with mainstream institutions, policy think tanks and government systems.

Lead from the first mile

The Catalyst 2030 experience

As Catalyst 2030 grew from 2020 to 2021, new clusters of activity emerged. Three large events, Catalysing Change Week, the Catalyst Awards and the People's Report, leveraged personal and professional networks to create exponential growth. Members were already seeing the value in connecting more formally to fellow members in their regions and countries. By linking to Catalyst 2030, this type of organising motivated members to form a new type of grouping: local and regional chapters.

Local and regional groups naturally formed based on shared language, culture, issues and priorities. These local groups valued the connections at the global level but were equally passionate to address local and regional concerns and pursue opportunities to shape the ecosystems in which they evolve. They also found that membership in Catalyst 2030 conferred the clout of a global entity, allowing collaborations to connect with influential people globally and locally, such as governments, funders and the media.

By the end of the year, the Incubation Board made the strategic decision to devote greater momentum and energy towards the development of country and regional chapters. Chapter members worked together to devise country and regional plans, focusing on local context and sector dynamics. By joining these plans together, Catalyst 2030's Board shifted perspective, seeing the role of Catalyst to be in service to local entities rather than the other way around.

“

“At a time of global crisis and urgency, one of the most interesting questions to ask is, ‘how can we shape the next phase of making meaningful and urgent change in the world?’ Part of what we need to figure out over the next ten years is how do we equip truly grassroots-based change-makers of different kinds with the tools to drive systemic change where they are. Because they’re the ones who know best how to do it and if they are successful, they are the ones who will have the legitimacy to build on that systemic change.”

- James Mwangi¹⁰ Executive Director, Dalberg Group

Applying the learning

Catalytic networks cultivate “first mile” leadership. Local and regional chapters set distinct plans and influence the global network in service of these agendas.

First mile leadership

Local leaders are often portrayed as the “end of the value chain” for social change. This is a dominant narrative that has negative consequences for the sector and has been slow to change. First mile organisations, which hold legitimacy and trust with communities, should instead be the primary drivers of social change. This is not just a matter of efficacy or efficiency. Hugo Slim of Oxford University writes, “Localisation is a matter of self-determination and political justice, not just effectiveness.”¹¹

In order to exercise influence and decision-making, leaders need channels and links to global networks, as well as lateral connections to each other to share resources, knowledge and expertise. Catalytic networks offer this opportunity by creating vertical links, between global and local networks as well as horizontal links, between local and regional entities.

Networks for power

Powerful people – heads of state, CEOs and wealthy elites – have long had access to networks allowing them to connect across geographical and sectoral boundaries. Global groupings (such as the G7 and G20), the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting at Davos and various sector networks, serve to connect powerful people and organisations in various configurations to solidify relationships and commitments.

Social entrepreneurs and innovators have global networks of their own but these have generally been convened through funders and Global North-led organisations. Entrepreneurs and innovators have previously had to wait for selection into these exclusive networks to gain access to a rich repository of global connections. These networks have been skewed towards entrepreneurs and innovators from the United States and Europe, although this is changing rapidly.

Catalytic networks remedy this geographical bias with selection mechanisms that are decentralised and democratic. Membership is conferred through self-nomination by prospective members, screening by the Secretariat and ultimate confirmation by regional chapters. Local leadership has the final say as to who is selected to join.

Recommendations for leading from the first mile

- **Link vertically and horizontally:** Catalytic networks increase local power by creating links vertically and horizontally. Members should be able to exercise influence locally, regionally and globally, devising plans that cater to their context, as well as merging shared interests into broader regional and global agendas.
- **Exercise deep inclusivity:** Membership in catalytic networks should advance deep inclusivity. Self-nomination processes that allow members to identify themselves as potential candidates are far more democratic than referral or closed-door selection processes. Facilitators can help with the operational burden of collating and screening applications but local chapters have the final decision-making power about who is accepted into the network based on context-specific criteria.
- **Global in service of local:** Catalytic networks have the unique ability to observe trends and needs across many local and regional chapters. The global network should use this vantage point to provide valuable services – such as operational support, linkages to resources and matchmaking to influential global leaders – to local entities.
- **Attend to possibilities of co-optation:** There are many ways that organisations and people in positions of power who benefit from current arrangements can undermine systems change efforts to maintain the status quo. Taking a firm stance on the stated values supporting leadership from the first mile is critical to avoid this.

5

Stories of collaboration

Catalyst Market

Collaboration start: 2021

Collaborators: GoodMarket; Industree Foundation; Nourishing Africa; Sahel Consulting; and World Fair Trade Organisation, with active involvement and facilitation from Catalyst 2030.

Collaboration reach: In 2021, Catalyst 2030 members launched a beta version with 62 Catalyst enterprises and more than 540 products from 24 countries. The collaboration has since grown to include 85 members.

Systems approach: The collaboration seeks to create systems change through a narrative shift away from profit maximisation toward prioritising people and planet; it also seeks

policy change toward sustainable sourcing practices and preferential services for fair trade, sustainably sourced, zero waste enterprises.

SDGs addressed:

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Collaboration description: Catalyst Market is a collaboration offering improved market access and visibility for social enterprises in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This group of enterprises is accelerating solutions for packaging, payments, fulfilment, shipping, and environmental impact. Working alongside specialised organisations and market experts this collaborative systems change initiative advances the SDGs by connecting marginalised producers and social enterprises.

Figure 5: Regions and chapters



Resource change

The Catalyst 2030 experience

By the end of 2021, Catalyst 2030 numbered 1575 individuals and 1144 organisations and represented 99 countries. A total of 36 formal cross-sector collaborations were underway, as well as the ongoing activities of 18 working groups and 26 local and regional chapters, plus a proliferation of one-on-one and interorganisational collaborations that were too numerous to catalogue and count. Most importantly, Catalyst 2030 was becoming successful at building trust among different stakeholders, most notably through the collaborative work between governments and social entrepreneurs.

In light of this activity, one of the persistent conversations among the membership has been the difficulty of resourcing these collaborative activities. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, recent estimates pinpoint a US\$10 trillion per annum shortfall in funding for the SDGs.¹² This is up from a US\$2.5 trillion per annum shortfall prior to 2020.¹³

Catalyst 2030 members are in a unique position to see and understand these funding challenges both locally and globally. Based on this first-hand experience, members are aware that funding needs a “paradigm shift” to reach the necessary scale and scope to effectively resource collaborative action to achieve the SDGs.

Catalyst 2030 has a unique opportunity to showcase new and emerging funding practices that are conducive to collaborative action toward the SDGs. The annual Catalyst 2030 Awards celebrates philanthropists, donor organisations, impact investors and corporate funders who are working in ways that advance the SDGs through collaborative action. These Awards also reverse the traditional funding power dynamic, allowing “do-ers” to highlight the “donors”.

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“One of the potential game-changers of Catalyst 2030 is being able to shine a light on some of the lesser known social entrepreneurs and systems change efforts, levelling the playing field and opening the door for organisations and individuals that aren’t yet visible to large scale funders.”

- Gary White, CEO & Co-Founder,
Water.org and WaterEquity

Applying the learning

Catalytic networks shift the funding paradigm by understanding the challenges that collaborators face accessing equitable capital flows and moving the funding ecosystem toward new and transformative practices.

Shifting the funding paradigm¹⁴

To more effectively achieve systems change there needs to be a powerful departure from traditional philanthropic and financing approaches. These approaches are currently failing to meet both funders and social entrepreneurs' needs. While funders struggle to identify worthy and sound investments, social entrepreneurs and their innovations are continually under-resourced and overlooked.

Specific issues identified by the Catalyst 2030 community include:

- The vast majority of funding goes towards alleviating symptoms of failing systems rather than needed systemic changes.
- Project-specific funding is doled out in short-term allotments accompanied by excessive paperwork and transactional power dynamics.
- Structures and criteria of application processes can lead to competition among organisations instead of the increases in levels of collaboration across organisations that are needed.
- Systems change requires aggregation and blending of different types of funding, not just philanthropic.
- System change requires aggregation of projects and initiatives which are often individually too small to have systems change impact.
- New relationship processes and relationships are required to institutionalise equity.
- Metrics must be designed to focus on beneficiary and systems impact.

Directing funding towards systems change approaches offers the greatest opportunity of addressing these challenges. This is because systems change efforts tackle the root cause of an issue, ensuring that the conditions creating inequality and injustice are overhauled. By fundamentally altering failed systems, these approaches give funders a greater return on their investments by establishing long-term, sustainable solutions, rather than focusing on the outcomes of these systems.

LESSON 6
RESOURCE CHANGE

Decentralisation of funding

Through the networked infrastructure, catalytic networks are ideally placed to facilitate resource mobilisation in a decentralised fashion. Catalytic networks could potentially play a facilitative role to ensure that one hundred percent of donor funds go directly to local causes.

Local stakeholders with proximate expertise and knowledge are best placed to identify organisations and collaborations which will impact the development of the local areas. The need for this type of commitment stems from the need to decolonise philanthropy and ensure that local stakeholders have decision-making power, not financial intermediaries based in the Global North.

Recommendations for resourcing change

- **Take a funding ecosystem approach:** There are many roles in systems change funding, including financiers/funders, financial aggregators, project aggregators, evaluators, policy makers and advocates. Focusing on one part of the system is insufficient. It is important to rather focus on a whole system perspective that encompasses the ecosystem for financing transformation.
- **Connect the dots between innovators and funders:** The interactions between funders and social entrepreneurs is a key area demanding attention. The greatest challenges facing many social impact organisations is access to the appropriate level of funding. On the other hand, funders struggle to identify, assess and measure high-impact initiatives and to fund and achieve systems-level change.
- **Encourage collaborative funding:** Catalytic networks can encourage funders to share knowledge, connections and expertise with other donors, enhance efficiencies through coordinated action, open doors for grantees and walk through them together as partners. This also means facilitating connections with funders which are investing in similar areas and holding one another accountable for thinking broadly about the funding ecosystem, while intentionally including leaders and organisations that have historically and systemically had a hard time accessing donor funds.
- **Speak with a united voice:** Catalytic networks are able to generate unprecedented numbers of active members united by similar resourcing challenges and opportunities. Using this collective power to move resourcing in the direction of equity and justice will benefit the entire sector and shift the landscape for future generations of social impact leaders.

Figure 6: An NGO Call-to-Action open letter



In March 2022, Catalyst 2030 members issued an open call-to-action letter to the NGO community to use their collective power to influence the practices of the funding community. An excerpt of the letter is included here:

The following principles outline what we, a large group of civil society organisations and systems change innovators, as well as many philanthropic thought leaders, believe to be the most critical and effective practices funders need to adopt as we tackle the complex problems facing our world today.

We invite funders to consider adopting the transformative grantmaking practices below. Given the powerful role of funders and donors in influencing the work and scope of organisations working on systemic issues, these shifts will better enable and empower the social sector and will foster multi-sectoral collaborations that work towards the types of systems changes that are urgently needed.

1. Give multi-year, unrestricted funding
2. Invest in capacity building
3. Fund networks
4. Create transformative rather than transactional relationships
5. Build and share power
6. Be transparent and responsive
7. Simplify and streamline paperwork
8. Offer support beyond the cheque
9. Collaborate with other funders
10. Embrace a systems mindset in your grant-making

Visit and sign the Call-to-Action
<https://shiftingfundingpractices.catalyst2030.net/>

6

Stories of collaboration

Catalyst Hub

Collaboration start: Currently in design phase

Collaborators: Co-created in partnership with leading systems change thinkers, funders, and specialists from Ashoka, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Chandler Foundation, Dalberg Group, Echoing Green, McKinsey & Company, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs, Skoll Foundation, Tendrel, and the World Economic Forum.

Systems approach: Catalyst Hub has the potential to kickstart and inspire a sector-wide mindset shift to a new and evolved way of philanthropic funding.

SDGs Addressed: All SDGs are potentially addressed through collaborative activities funded by the Hub.

Collaboration description: The Catalyst Hub will operate as a service to connect funders interested in supporting systems change initiatives. This will be facilitated by Catalyst 2030 who will identify and curate a transparent and accessible pipeline of trusted and high-impact initiatives. Drawing on this pipeline, committed funders will gain unique access to social innovations and be connected to investment-ready opportunities which also align with their mission and/or geographical scope. Funders will pre-commit an amount of their choice. This commitment will be set-aside internally by the funder, either as a grant or other social investment, and will be deployed towards a Catalyst 2030 curated opportunity of their choosing.

Through a multi-tiered offering, the Catalyst Hub will draw on the expertise of the Catalyst Hub co-creators to provide an entirely unique service. Leveraging the collective excellence of this group, grantees will gain access to tailored support, which extends beyond financial commitment to include strategy development mentoring, peer support networks, and many more opportunities.

Catalyse systems change

The Catalyst 2030 experience

As Catalyst 2030 journeys into 2022, the aspirations for the network have grown. The initial group of 50 experienced social entrepreneurs and innovators on a WhatsApp chat channel has exploded 30 times over in just two years. A large majority of these members are fully engaged in the effort, connecting changemakers who are touching lives in nearly every country on the planet.

When asked whether Catalyst 2030 will meet its overarching goal of achieving the SDGs, members are quick to say, “it’s too soon to tell.” Catalytic networks, with emergent activities and distributed leadership are notoriously difficult to measure and evaluate. Catalyst 2030 is seeking more meaningful ways to measure success, but for now, the network relies on statistics of reach and engagement – including number of members, SDG coverage and volunteer hours contributed – to calibrate progress. At best, these calculations are a rough estimate of the impact that Catalyst 2030 truly seeks.

For now, perhaps a simple way of determining the network’s impact is by asking what the social change sector would look like if Catalyst 2030 ceased to exist. In this regard, there is little doubt that the connections, chapters and collaborations initiated by the network have woven a web of relationships globally that did not exist before. This connective tissue and network density is stimulating more collaborative action between social entrepreneurs, innovators and their allies than previously thought possible.

While Catalyst 2030 has set its sights on the SDGs, the most enduring legacy may be achieving systems change in the way people and organisations organise themselves for social change.



“Catalyst 2030 creates a level playing field. We’re all equal and it’s truly global. When I belong to Catalyst 2030, I don’t belong to any particular ideology or agenda or anything. That’s very rare.”

- Rana Dajani, Founder & Director,
We Love Reading

Applying the learning

Catalytic networks ultimately seek to achieve systems change when collaborative activities coalesce to address root causes and shift the conditions that hold a problem in place.

Collaborative approaches to systems change

Systems change refers to a process that:

- Addresses root causes rather than symptoms
- Identifies and supports attainment of new goals
- Achieves these new goals by altering, shifting, and transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics and rules
- Brings about change through collaboration across a diverse set of people and organisations
- Intends to achieve lasting improvement of societal issues on a local, national, and global level¹⁵

People and organisations operating alone or in silos are unlikely to achieve these deep changes. A shift towards approaches that are focused on collaborative actions is needed.

Collaborative approaches to systems change counteract the dominant paradigm for development, which focuses on top-down solutions implemented through hierarchical institutions. There is no one big answer to complex problems. Instead, there is an abundance of smaller efforts working in harmony that culminate in widespread adoption of new ways of thinking and doing.

The role of catalytic networks

Collaborative systems change requires new webs of relationships that break down existing power structures and bring together unlikely partners and allies. Catalytic networks serve as a place for these types of relationships to develop, emphasising inclusivity rather than elitism, emergence over hierarchy, and a plurality of solutions rather than single approaches.



“Catalyst 2030 offers the meta-level work of movements, which is about coalition building. It’s networks on top of networks that bring together all of the actors to drive a shared agenda.”

- Cheryl Dorsey, President, Echoing Green

Recommendations for catalysing systems change

In Catalyst 2030's theory of change, we lay out five key shifts that will accelerate collaborative systems change, while changing the way we "do" change:

- **Support dominant culture shifts towards equity:** Collaborative systems change requires culture shifts that support collaborative action. These include peace and justice supported by law, listening as well as talking, power shifts in favour of the traditionally marginalised, moving from hero-oriented to collaborative action and making a spiritual awareness and inner well-being integral to action.
- **Strengthen political and community engagement:** Collaborative systems change also requires political and community engagement. This includes government at all levels supporting and incorporating first mile leaders in policy and decision-making processes.
- **Strengthen systems level funding:** Collaborative systems change requires shifts in the way funding is directed toward social change. Changes in funders' structures, processes and behaviours will support collaboration and systems change approaches.
- **Fuel collaboration:** Collaborative systems change requires a proliferation of collaborative action, networks, and coalitions amongst social entrepreneurs, innovators and their allies.
- **Develop and use systems change tools:** Finally, success in collaborative systems change will be enabled by continued development, training and use of systems change tools.

Figure 7: What is systems change?

Systems change captures the idea of addressing the causes, rather than the symptoms, of a societal issue by taking a holistic (or 'systemic') view. Systemic change is generally understood to require adjustments or transformations in the policies, practices, power dynamics, social norms or mindsets that underlie the societal issue at stake. It often involves the collaboration of a diverse set of players and can take place on a local, national or global level. The iceberg illustration below shows different levels at which systemic change can take place: 'deeper' changes tend to result in greater impact but less-dramatic shifts can pave the way towards these deeper changes.

- **Incremental change:** Training blind women to detect breast cancer more accurately than doctors (new healthcare practice).
- **Structural change:** Moving from a centralised energy system based on fossil fuels to a decentralised one based on renewable energy sources.
- **Transformational change:** Shifting mindsets to see women as full citizens with equal rights and material access to civil liberties.

Source: New allies: How governments can unlock the potential of social entrepreneurs for the common good, pg. 10

7

Stories of Collaboration

Healing Trees

Collaboration start: 2021

Collaborators: Multiple members of the Catalyst network, alongside individual members from 48 countries.

Collaboration reach: Currently, groups of people in all regions of the world have committed to planting 3.2 million trees by May 2022. The goal for the initiative is 5 million trees.

Systems approach: Community action and public mourning are both ways to cope with collective grief. This initiative combines the two – giving groups a way to acknowledge their losses. With a renewed energy and commitment to the vision of a healthy, equitable and sustainable world, we can strengthen communities and help them to thrive.

SDGs Addressed:
 SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

SDG 13: Climate Action
 SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals

Collaboration description: In this global campaign, young and old, urban and rural, physically plant a tree to honour someone who has been lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the grief that many share, we have found lessons for the future. To enable powerful responses to large scale problems, we need strong communities whose inequalities are addressed, and who act as part of an interconnected global community. The symbolic action of planting a tree highlights interdependencies and the health inequalities contributing to the toll of the pandemic and that urgently need addressing. It also practically benefits communities by providing bonding experiences and regenerating urban and rural green spaces. Such changes are essential to securing an equitable future where children and communities can thrive. Our campaign is rooted in a renewed commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Our Inclusive Future

In this report, we have told the story of Catalyst 2030 with the aim of sharing learnings for building and growing catalytic networks and ultimately catalysing collaboration toward solving our planet's most pressing challenges.

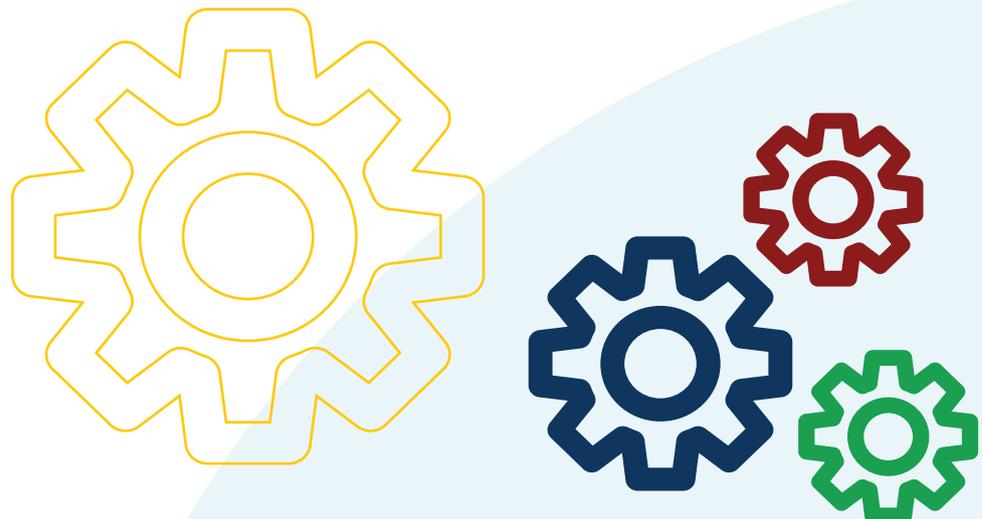
Earlier in this report, we defined catalytic networks as global, distributed, cross-sector networks of individuals and organisations who are united by their values and principles and working together to achieve collaborative action. We encouraged readers to think of these entities as “networks of networks”, co-created by members and existing to ensure new layers of engagement across geographic and sector boundaries.

We also emphasised that catalytic networks represent a truly global frame of mind, with inclusivity as the primary motivator and where power and legitimacy are derived not from resources and access to positional leadership but from the breadth and diversity of collective voice.

In the last two years, our global society has become increasingly interconnected. However, interconnectedness does not necessarily lead to equity or justice. In fact, globalisation has led to quite the opposite. Across the world, inequities in wages, access to healthcare, access to education, access to technology, among many others, are persistent. While the SDGs are our best global attempt to rectify these inequities, the COVID-19 pandemic has only recently exposed just how far we are from achieving them.

To accelerate our progress, we need to organise by the very values that the SDGs seek to embody. We need approaches to organising that maximise the benefits of our interconnectedness and which dismantle the inequities that divide us. Catalytic networks are an organising approach to achieve technical development goals, but most importantly, they reverse long-standing power dynamics and generate collaborative action that is inclusive and democratic.

We hope that these learnings can inspire the creation of more catalytic networks to draw us together, embodying the change we all wish to see in the world.



Appendix: Contributor List

Special interviews were conducted with the following Catalyst 2030 members:

Gaby Arenas, Anand Arkalgud, Rodrigo Baggio, Sohini Bhattacharya, Francois Bonnici, Debbi Brock, Luis Camargo, Neelam Chhiber, Marie Lisa Dacanay, Rana Dajani, Roberto Daniele, Carolien De Bruin, Cheryl Dorsey, Jamie Drummond, Valeria Duflot, Willy Foote, Fredrik Galtung, Shivani Garg Patel, Tim Hanstad, Jason Jacobs, John Kania, Jackie Kassouf Maalouf, Shiv Kumar, Janet Longmore, Wamuyu Mahinda, Colin McElwee, Kerry Medek, Deepa Mirchandani, Kuhan Pathy, Matthew Patten, Kristine Pearson, Dina Randrianasolo, Luvuyo Rani, Sue Riddlestone, Michael Sani, Gisela Solymos, Karen Spencer, Chris Underhill, Bram Van Eijk, Mabel Van Oranje, Koen Vermeltfoort, Dan Viederman, Steve Waddell, Vanessa Wai, Jeny Wegbreit, Diana Wells, Gary White, Mel Young



Appendix: References

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