

Catalysing change or reinforcing structures?

The document highlights certain 'pressure points' for strengthening people-driven change processes and critically reflects upon challenges and 'traps' in the prevalent project business. Breaking it down to simplified and provocative 'do's and don'ts', the following tables provide a short summary and invite the reader to re-think 'development practice' and co-create avenues for transformative joint action.

For communities

How to feed transformation	How to maintain a status quo
Trust in your own capacity and the potential of your family and community to initiate change.	Believe that you are poor and powerless.
Build on available resources.	Let your shortcomings stand in your way.
Be creative, master your craft and try out new things.	Don't move, don't learn, don't fail.
Look for committed allies and unite on pressing issues.	Do it all by yourself, or don't do anything at all.
Strategise collective action for change.	Wait for help.
Decide in democratic processes whether external resources are needed and adapt them to your local needs and plans.	Take whatever you get, demand more.
Choose your allies carefully and be firm and frank with your NGO partner and the change facilitators.	Participate in NGO's projects and carry out NGO's activities.
Develop your own narrative and re-imagine your future.	Be fatalistic – believe that change is not possible.
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For NGOs

How to feed transformation	How to reinforce the current NGO system
Support locally driven processes.	Have people participate in your predefined projects.
Listen and look for the unexpected with an open heart and open mind.	Follow your inner voice of judgment, as you know what has to be done.
Provide space for dialogue and facilitate people's own analysis, plans, and solutions using creative facilitation tools.	Come with ready-made plans and solutions.
Acknowledge your own role and responsibility and become a co-struggler, co-learner, co-creator of change.	Avoid new insights and abstain from transferring learning to self and work.
Be part of the change process.	Observe from a distance.
Listen, listen, listen – and facilitate reflection-action-reflection.	Talk, teach, train.
Challenge power structures based on systems, politics, wealth, gender, age etc.	Work with leaders and the better off only, as this provides faster results.
Help access funds and services for people's priorities as a result of local reflections and decision-making.	Provide subsidies and expert advice for ready-made solutions – and in so doing, 'buy' people's participation.
Believe in people, their potential and skills.	Assume that poor people need your help.
Challenge donor regulations.	Please donors to get funds and maintain your structure.
Support communities building up the best structures for defending their strategic interest.	Organise local groups around your project activities.
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For donors

How to feed transformation	How to maintain the current system
Nurture a relation of trust and patience with your partner organisations and try to understand their perspectives.	Follow your inner voice of judgment, as you know the many shortcomings and vested interests of your NGO partners.
Develop your listening skills and intercultural competence.	Communicate and criticise as you are accustomed to doing – the others will have to get along with it.
Be aware of the power of controlling the funds and make the best use of this power for empowerment, learning from and with your partners.	Control the projects and processes, insert your ideas, and decide on priorities and policies, as you control the money.
Provide space and time for dialogue processes for everyone: among partner communities and their partner organisations, and among partner organisations and your own agency.	Look for projects with fast results and avoid tedious dialogue with the partner organisations.
Screen projects with PLD lenses and make sure that your partners are committed to supporting people-driven change processes.	Don't invest too much time in the details of project proposals, as your time is really limited.
Provide space for exchange and learning processes among your partner organisations for more effective support of transformation processes.	Train your partners in how to respond best to your requirements in alignment with the demands of your back-donors.
Engage your partner organisations in the reflection on people-led transformation processes and motivate change through sharing of this document, deep dialogue and innovative project funding.	Write letters and send policy guidelines and expect that this will initiate the change you want to see.
Create opportunities for deep reflection in your own agency.	You are the donors, the others will have to change.
Prioritise and use every opportunity for passing time with local communities and your partner organisations to develop a better sense of local processes and relations – and a better relation to 'the people in the centre'.	Unfortunately, you do not have time for field visits – office visits or meetings at your hotel must do.
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