



The Leadership and Innovation Network for Collaboration in the Children's Sector

Case Study For Synergos

Vanessa Sayers, Reos Partners

MARCH 2013



Overview and introduction

The Leadership and Innovation Network for Children, LINC, was initiated in 2007 and today serves around 100 fellows in the South African children's sector. Its story to date is told on the following pages: how it came to be, what it ended up 'looking like', its main activities, challenges, successes and learning.

The story began with an idea about addressing the potential crisis relating to children in South Africa in the mid-2000s from a social entrepreneur (Ann Lamont), who worked in partnership with a process specialist (Mille Bojer of Reos) and an institutional representative with the mandate to support innovative work in the social sector (Barry Smith of Synergos). From that base the initiative reached into the key major stakeholders in the sector and gathered momentum and resources to be able to create a small core team and a set of facilitated spaces and services to support the leadership in the children's sector in ways that were appropriate to its needs.

As such the purpose of LINC only emerged over time, but for the sake of offering a foundational core around which the process can be explained, the purpose of LINC as it was eventually articulated is: to enhance the leadership capacity of leaders in the children's sector to be more resilient, think systemically and proactively collaborate; shift the nature of institutional arrangements in the sector to enhance cohesion, collaboration and coordination; and create opportunities for leaders and their organisations to innovate and provide solutions around key challenges in the sector. This case aims to show how that happened and what impacts it had.

Case Study Series

This research case study is one of five cases commissioned by Synergos for the purposes of learning and sharing, about programmes in which it has played a key role, in its 25th anniversary year. Synergos has been a consistent presence in LINC since its very beginnings, although that role has changed over time: Synergos is currently the organisational home for LINC in South Africa and it has been the lead organisation providing core support since early 2011.

Methodology

As a partner and then associate of Reos Partners, I was involved in LINC in a variety of roles including process design, facilitation and learning history writing from late 2007 until 2010, as a result much

of my knowledge of the story of LINC is embedded in this case. To acknowledge that I therefore hold a particular perspective is an important 'interest' to declare up front in a study such as this. In order to do what is possible to bring balance to this perspective and increase the ground from which the case draws, this experiential knowledge has been significantly augmented by a study of written materials created throughout the LINC process (including monitoring and evaluation reports, event reports and reviews) and a series of interviews with ten key role players from the core team and fellows. A list of documents referenced and interviewees can be found at the end of the study.

This study does not claim to be 'the' story of LINC, because there are as many stories of LINC as there are fellows and participants, however it provides a picture built from the views of people who were very central in creating LINC and from a small number of fellows from the the 3 cohorts whom it was designed to support and benefit. The intention is that in drawing on these voices, a 'central (core?)' story is told here.

The case is structured into the following chapters:

1. Fertile Ground and Sowers of Seed
Socio-political background,
Key initial role players
2. Creation and Growth
Creation
Growth
3. Fruition
Impacts: formal measurement and fellow/
team perspectives
Challenges and responses
4. Looking back and forward
Lessons learned
Way forward
Conclusion

Glossary

Appendices

1. LINC Timeline
2. Stakeholder Group detailed descriptions
3. Sources
4. List of Interviews

Section I: The ground and the sowers

The seeds for LINC – the Leadership and Innovation Network for Children (which was initially known as Leadership and Innovation for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)) were planted during 2006 in Gauteng, South Africa. To understand how and why LINC emerged in the form it did, the story needs to begin with an understanding of what ground those seeds were planted in, who made the choice to plant them and why they chose to plant that particular kind of seed.

1.1 The ground: historical, political, social and economic contexts for this initiative.

In 2006 South Africa was in the midst of an economic upswing along with the rest of the global economy, the mineral resources which form the basis for it being the largest economy on the African continent, were in high demand. This was leading to the growth of a new wealthy black elite and the small middle class was becoming increasingly racially diverse.

However, pre-1994 apartheid policies had created inequality and massively underfunded education, health, and social services for the majority of the population. There had been and still were deep economic divisions between geographic areas where black communities had been relocated, without running water, electricity or housing and the areas previously kept for white communities being well served suburbs. South Africa remains one of the most unequal countries in the world, vying with Brazil over the years, for having the world's worst Gini co-efficient (a measure showing the gap between the richest and the poorest in society).

In an effort to address these massive inequalities, the ANC government was, by 2006, nearly a decade into a range of major programmes to bring vital social and basic economic services to millions of people. Progress was positive but slower than many wanted. Meanwhile, the country was plunged into a major health and social crisis of a nature and proportion without precedent. The HIV epidemic was embedded within a racially and economically unequal reality, demanding that urgent action be taken at large scale, which needed to be delivered through systems which were still being or yet to be transformed and built.

Furthermore, HIV/AIDS was a highly political

and politicised topic. President Mbeki, his executive team and with them, the Department of Health, were not following global trends or mainstream scientific advice to implement a programme to bring Anti-Retroviral (ARV) drugs to the most effected populations.

Estimates for mid year 2007 from Actuarial Society of 2003 model

HIV prevalence total population	11.40%
Total numbers of new infections	5.5m
New Infection in 2007	512000
Life expectancy at birth	50.5
UN General Assembly Special Indicators of level of response	
% of those who needs ARVs receiving it	33%
% of those who need PMTCT receiving it	30%

Table 1 gives model and census based statistics as they were in 2007, provided by the Human Sciences Research Council, for the first major meeting of the LINC initiative.

A battle was being waged between some of the key policy makers and implementers in government and many Civil Society organisations around the level of response. This battle was both very public and very intense with players like the Treatment Action Campaign leading legal battles and media campaigns in particular around Anti-retroviral drugs roll out and the reduction of prices of patented drugs or the right to produce of generic drugs locally.

Only on World AIDS Day 2009, did the South African Presidency announce a significant change in government policy relating to the use and distribution of Anti-retroviral drugs. This followed on a Constitutional Court challenge by AIDS NGOs that ended up forcing government to provide ARVs to pregnant women and their children. The polic shift and increase in political will has subsequently

led to a significant improvement in the incidence mpact of the virus, but that is another story.

1.2 The sowers

The people who were originally involved in sowing the seeds of LINC into this ground were:

Ann Lamont: a social entrepreneur, an ex Monitor Consultant, who had at the start of LINC, just stepped back from running a South African education NGO called Mindset. She was a fellow in the Synergos Senior Fellows programme and a fellow of the African Leadership Initiative. These connections and networks would prove vital in the setting up of LINC.

Mille Bojer: at that time a new associate with Generon Consulting a specialised process consultancy based in the US, which was working with Synergos in India on the Bhaivishya Programme to address child malnutrition. Mille had previously run a social innovation NGO called Pioneers of Change and was looking for an issue and potential partnerships to bring the U process and Change Lab methodologies to bear in the South African context.

Barry Smith: then the Regional Director for Synergos in Southern Africa. He was working on a series of programmes related to child health in the region. In 2005 Synergos brought Otto Scharmer out to South Africa to co-facilitate its Senior Fellows meeting in the region.

2. The Creation Process

The process of developing the LINC idea into a programme happened over a year, and involved a series of intersecting activities. These included the core players identifying the theme (1), drawing on knowledge and experience of social innovation approaches (2), establishing that the theme and the processes could work effectively together (3), sourcing core funding (4), identifying and drawing in key stakeholders (5), learning about the stakeholders and their interactions (6) and understanding the issues in the children's sector (7). This section describes what happened in this process.

2.1 Creation process (1): Sowers seek and find fertile ground

Mille Bojer as a new Generon Associate in South Africa, learning about Change Labs was, in her own words "a hammer looking for a nail, very carefully seeking out a nail that could fit my hammer precisely".

Here is Mille's telling of the initial meetings: "I met Ann Lamont through Synergos and she had already met Otto, .. she was familiar with the U and a little with Generon. Shehad this knowledge of the issue of OVC and networks around that. And so we started looking at that issue, it was an AIDS related issue and it fit our 3 types of complexity and the need for a change lab perfectly as far as we could tell."

Early on in her search, she had considered tackling the overall AIDS issue but this had been ruled out by her and Ann: "(we) chose not to get involved in that (HIV/AIDS) theme in conversation with other people is because it was so saturated, it was hugely politicised and very saturated. There were already so many conferences and forums and workshops about it already, and it was too stuck for me at that point."

So, why sow in this particular place: children? As Mille put it, she remained "passionate about AIDS and the impacts", and coupled with the personal interest and commitment to children on Ann's part and Synergos' focus on social justice, the area at the intersection of children and AIDS seemed to suit the capacities and interests of the 'sowers' and was ripe for an intervention.

Ann talks about embedding the programme in an area that she and those around her in fellowships cared about: "In making those decisions, there has to be personal interest, there has to be energy in that area and I was connected at a personal level

through ALI with others who had energy for that area, with access to government and funding. OVC was a particular focus for (another ALI fellow) Adie Eindhoven's (social investment company) and we'd spoken about it; then Bongzi Kunene was with the Deputy Presidency and her focus was OVC and then Motomang Dialo, another ALI fellow had very good access to the Department of Social Development." Mille, again, talks about Ann's capacity to bridge sectors and draw on diverse resources: "She was this networked networker, she knew one of the directors at Nelson Mandela Foundation, leaders at the Hollard Foundation: she was incredibly well connected." And it was the combination of a topic to focus on and people who had energy and resources to pursue that galvanised Ann and Mille to move forward. Meanwhile, Barry Smith of Synergos, was able to offer Synergos' and his own support because there "was an overlap of the drive and passion of Ann and her ALI colleagues had for moving on this issue, and an interest from Synergos in applying this approach in the South African context'.

Thus it was onto this ground, the seed of the LINC idea was sown.

Creation Process (2): adopting an approach

The design, intentions and philosophy of the programme, which one could think of as it's 'DNA', come from action research into social change in complex systems which had happened in the 1990s and early 2000s (with its roots even further back). Today, this body of research and practice is expressed in the model and practices of "Theory U"; and thinking around complexity and soft systems. These ideas were all brought together in a process used by Generon and later, Reos, called the "Change Lab".

The core team had between them some exposure to these methods, and in Mille's case, experience in facilitating and working with similar processes to bring about social change. They saw the 'OVC' issue as an opportunity to respond using creative and systemic techniques to address some of the major challenges in the sector relating to overstretched resources in organisations and individuals, who were battling an overwhelming tide of need in a context of rocky bureaucratic systems, lack of money and insufficient human capital.

At this point, it is useful to provide a brief introduction to these creative and socially innovative ideas

to provide a context for why LINC was focused and designed as it was and perhaps more importantly why three individuals believed that they could take action that could impact an issue as deep and wide as that of South African children affected by HIV and AIDS

Complexity and complex problems

A key insight into many of the major issues facing societies globally, is that the problems we now need to address are complex. Adam Kahane, uses the following distinctions to explain the different ways in which this complexity shows up and how they need to be addressed:

- Generative complexity, where the problem is unfolding in unpredictable ways and it is not straightforward to solve with existing practices this requires working out solutions as the situation unfolds.
- Social complexity where solutions depend on the involvement of diverse stakeholders with diverse and potentially conflicting views, so no one party can solve the problem, and responses must be participatory (so that the diverse voices and actors are drawn in and become part of the solution).
- Dynamic complexity where cause and effect are indirect and far apart in time and space, so a systemic view must be applied, “taking account of the interrelationships among the pieces and the functioning of the system as a whole”.

Thus approaches to engaging with complex issues need to be iterative, participative and systemic. The methodologies of Theory U and the Change Lab aim to meet just these criteria:

Theory U

Theory U originally developed out of about 100 interviews with creative people over a few years.¹ It offers an explicit methodology for a ‘group (*working with a complex problem*) to access its collective intelligence or wisdom’.² One of the key interviewees who contributed to the discovery of the U as an approach, was W. Brian Arthur. He explains the need for it as follows:

Operating in the new environment requires knowledge that does not stem from an abstract framework that we apply to or impose on a situation, but from a knowing that emerges from the quietness of deep observation and reflection. To access this deeper source of knowing—the source of all true creativ-

1 See C. Otto Scharmer’s book, *Theory U*, for a detailed exposition of the process undertaken by Jaworski and Scharmer in 1999–2000.

2 Hassan, Zaid. 2004. *The U: A Language of Regeneration*.

ity and innovation—and to use it as the basis for action, one follows three steps: (1) total immersion: observe, observe, observe; (2) retreat and reflect: allow the inner knowing to emerge; (3) act in an instant: bring forth the new as it desires.

The U-Process therefore comprises three phases: sensing – uncovering the current reality by expanding and deepening awareness; presencing – retreating and reflecting to enable individual ‘inner knowing’ as a foundation for collective commitment; and realising – generating a new reality through rapid-cycle prototyping, piloting and the implementation of breakthrough ideas. The U takes a group on a detour, in order to develop new solutions to problems of an apparently intractable nature. If a problem has a more obvious solution, then this detour is not needed: ‘If you already know what to do, then do it.’ (Arthur) The diagram below shows how these three processes are organised in time, and demonstrates why the approach is called the ‘U’:

The U-Process

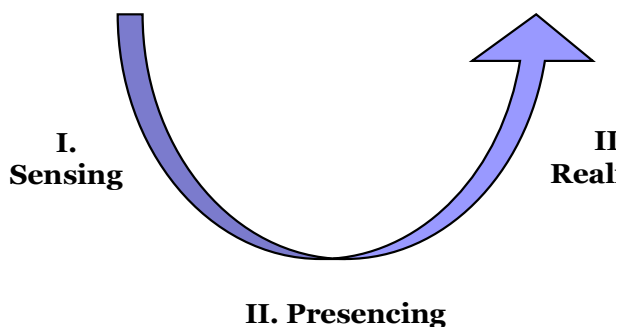


Figure 8: The U-Process

The Change Lab

A Change Lab is a space carved out in physical space and time for social innovation to take place. It usually brings the basic architecture of the U together with key convening, relationship building and workshop based activities and structures to draw on and in a relatively small number (usually 20 – 80) of stakeholders from different parts of the system concerned and begin to access some of their key personal capacities to support complex problem solving. This process can be ‘held’ by a very small group of people who are responsible for designing the space and the or elements of the process.

Creation Process (3) Finding a good fit

The assumption of the people who sowed the seeds of LINC, was that an approach grounded in an understanding of complex systems and based on U theory and other social innovation technologies suited the problems of the Children's sector because they were complex in the three ways:

Generative complexity

In the initial interviews undertaken for the process, one of the NGO leaders described the challenge in the following way:

"The great plague wiped out a third of Europe but it was so highly infectious that a whole village would disappear. If you look at war, obviously millions have been killed in some of the significant wars of our past, but it was the men who died so you always had the mother and child left behind. If you look at famine, in some of them, particularly in Africa, it's the weakest and the most vulnerable who get taken out, so the children go first in a famine because the adults will be stronger and survive for longer. But with HIV/AIDS it's the first time ever on a scale of those pandemics that the people left behind are the children." Anthony Farr, Starfish Foundation

The unprecedented nature of the challenge was reflected in questions about delivery systems. Existing systems would not meet the foreseen needs: the traditional extended family system for integrating orphans and deserted children had shown a remarkable absorption capacity beyond expectations, but would not be sufficient to tackle the numbers. Many grandparents are weak or too old to cope and children left behind by AIDS are often stigmatised by family members. The other "old" solution, the orphanage, was also unrealistic: the sheer numbers made it impossible to build enough institutions, and extensive research has shown that they are not a healthy place for a child to grow up, and was in conflict with African cultural values. While they may be needed in limited circumstances, they were not a viable scale option.

Social Complexity

Differences of opinion showed up among stakeholders about:

- definitions for OVC and whether a definition is desirable.
- advocating large-scale, systemic solutions focused on quantity and serving basic needs ('the Checkers solution'³) versus those serving a small

3 Checkers is a South African supermarket chain, offering 'cheap goods with a reputation for lower quality.

number of children with integrated, holistic, and long-term care, one-by-one ("the Woolworths solution"⁴)

- competition for funding and territory in the NGO sector and within and between government departments.
- Models of psychosocial support: some believing in therapy and going into the trauma versus others preferring to leave the trauma behind and support children in being 'normal'.

And there were complicating factors relating to AIDS denialism and stigma and "compassion fatigue": it was emotionally exhausting for people to engage around children. There were many perspectives on many parts of the problem.

Dynamic complexity

The problem's source and impacts were spread out in space and time in a number of ways and these were articulated in the following ways:

- Orphanhood is intricately related to the issue of AIDS prevention: transmission of the virus now can lead to orphanhood in a decade's time.
- If children are not receiving the emotional and material support they need today, what kind of citizens will they be in 10 years time?
- Many government grants were not reaching the groups they are intended for eg. child support and foster care grants as well as school fee exemption schemes.
- It is very difficult to single out orphans or children made vulnerable to HIV/AIDS where many children may be vulnerable due to poverty. Providing special care for the former can lead to them being stigmatised or rejected or a child who is orphaned but taken care of by an extended family may be better off than, for example, a child with an abusive parent.
- Many interventions tend to be reactive and focused on the short-term as opposed to being holistic, systemic and sustainable in the long-term. This results in inefficient utilization of resources, resources not being filtered down to areas of need, and a failure to take successful projects to scale.

Thus the core group decided to move forward in engaging with the Children's sector using the basic steps of the U process/Change Lab, which began with a set of deep 'dialogue' interviews intended to better understand the sector, the stakeholders, their views, and the potential for change.

4 Woolworths is a South African retailer offering more expensive goods with a reputation for higher quality.

LINC and the Bridging Leadership model

LINC only engaged with the Bridging Leadership framework relatively late in its development: in 2010 Synergos brought the Bridging Leadership (BL) framework to South Africa through a short training workshop, thus exposing the core team to the approach and it was not until late in 2011 that the BL framework was drawn into the design of events. However, it was used in a very structured, integrated way. Ann tells the story:

“Once Bridging Leadership came into the fold, we designed in quite a structured way, I used a design template: we used the Bridging Leadership framework and Theory U framework mapped onto each other. I took the elements of BL the first element is personal development, under that we would do sensing, presencing, prototyping, at a personal level; so the first day of workshop became that, used part 1 of BL and did Theory U, then 2nd part of BL is the shift from self to working in a bridging way within your organisation or between two organisations so we would then do theory U once again, who are you collaborating with at a very micro level not within the bigger system, with the next level of the BL framework. In first day we’d use some personal tools: peeling the onion etc., then on day 2, stakeholder mapping which were all in the tool box, and the 3rd day.....when you get to the systemic stuff, (similarly to theory U), the tools becomenobody’s cracked that stuff yet. But we used it very clearly in those 2 phases. In the design templates – and I still use those a lot....”

Creation Process (4) Sourcing Initial Funding Support

Returning to the early process, the team now needed to raise funds to begin their work

“Ann started talking to some of the people in her network about doing a Change Lab on OVC. She managed to get through her networks about R500k to do the dialogue interviewing phase.....with that we did 40 dialogue interviews at national level and 40 at regional level.” (Mille Bojer)(NB. *The regional interviews were conducted and used as part of the local initiative, Kago Ya Bana, mentioned below.*)

Funding largely came from Adie Eindhoven, part of the family that owns Hollard, a major insurance company in South Africa, as well as the Spier Estate, a wine estate and hotel near Stellenbosch, Western Cape. Adie was influential in committing funds to the project through the Hollard Foundation in the early stages of the project and continued to support LINC through his investment fund, Capricorn: core

funding still comes from Capricorn’s successor until now. Hollard later went on to fund a community level project, named Kago Ya Bana (help for the children), which addressed similar issues to LINC, in one municipality near Johannesburg.

Creation Process (5) Identifying and Drawing in the Key Stakeholders

Ann and Mille spent the next 18 months working to bring together the main stakeholders in the sector. The work involved contacting 80 people in the sector, 40 at national level and 40 in the Provinces and engaging them through dialogue interviews. These were in depth, up to 3 hour, conversations where the interviewers listened deeply to the stakeholders: asking them about their lives, their reasons for being in the sector, their hopes and fears, and how they saw the current state of the sector and why they thought it was the way it was. Alongside this, they undertook advocacy sessions, where they spoke to key stakeholders about their intentions and sought support for the process and they ran focus groups with children to hear their perspectives on the issues.

They developed the following listing of the key stakeholder groups in the sector, detailed descriptions of each stakeholder group can be found in appendix 2:

- Community-based Organisations (CBOs)
- Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- Faith-based organisations (FBOs)
- Government
- Business
- International donors
- Universities and Research Institutions
- Media

Creation Process (6) Sensing the System: Learning about the key stakeholders from the Dialogue Interviews

The dialogue interviews were a powerful way to create deep relationships with key players, learn about what really mattered to them, and begin to create a picture of the key challenges facing them.

Mille: We were able to do “real dialogue interviews ...that take 3 hours. We would have one interview of 90 minutes then come back to continue and we ended up with hundreds of pages of interview notes at the end. The relationship building of dialogue interviews, was very convincing – really listening to people was how we got into the system...”

A key question in the dialogue interviews was to ask participants ‘who else should we talk to?’ The overlap of answers to this question enabled the team to identify who were the vital stakeholders, who sat at the centre of the sector, and at the centre of its challenges and therefore who would have to participate in the process if it were to have the impact they hoped for. The five key players identified through this process were: the co-ordinator in the Department of Social Development of the National Action Committee for Children Affected by HIV and AIDS (NACCA); the co-ordinator of the National NGO co-ordinating body South African National Aids Council (SANAC); the Director for Children in the Department of Social Development; the Director for HIV in the Department of Social Development and the head of the Office of the Rights of the Child.

Ensuring that these five people attended the initial workshop became a key target for the team. Persistence was key in this process: “we knew we had to speak to one person in government... she cancelled the meeting on us 8 times and Ann did just not give up. And finally we had a meeting with her and a Dialogue Interview and she came to the meeting and she turned around. Ann had the capacity to map out who are the key players in the system that we can’t do without and how do we get them...” (MB)

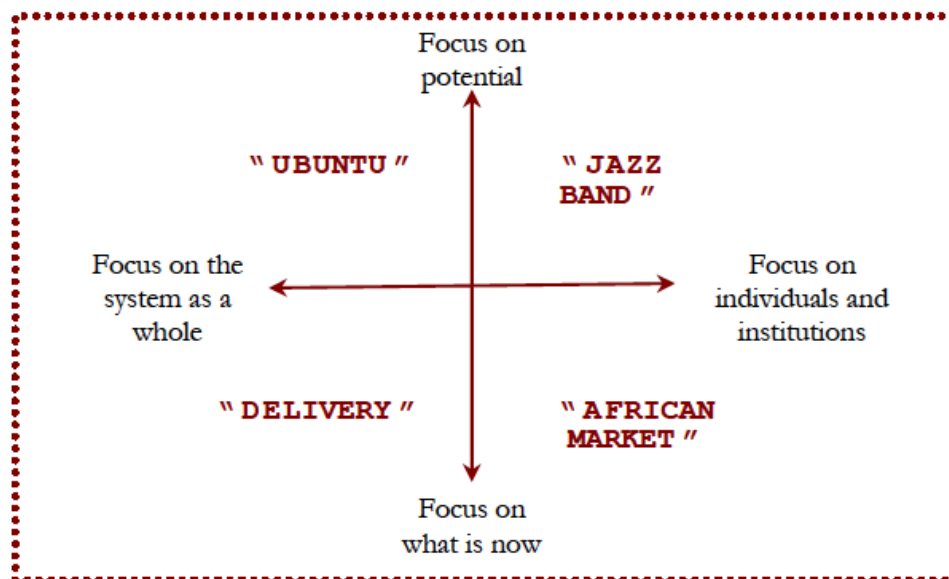
Alongside the people who were core nodes in the system, other key stakeholders who wielded significant influence in the system and who emerged during and immediately after the first workshop came from: UNICEF, the National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW), the Children’s Institute, and the Child Welfare Association as well as private sector donors and foundations with a strong emphasis on children, such as the DG Murray Trust.

Participants were recruited from among the people who participated in the dialogue interview process. As the initiative gained momentum, some, who had been missed in the initial stages got to hear about it and were drawn in. Sometimes this was a relatively simple process of inviting them to the next available event. At other times, the fact that they may have been significant role players and not ‘seen’ by the

core team in the early stages, led to some resistance to participation. The core team then needed to engage in deep listening and responding to bring them around to being willing to participate. Later cohorts of participants were identified based on recommendations from the first set of fellows. People who worked together drew each other in.

Creation Process (7) Sensing the System: Key issues in the system

Once the interview process was complete, a report synthesising its findings was written. Mille Bojer: “I created a synthesis that structured all the themes that were coming out but it was a little boring and Ann then insisted on us doing causal loop diagrams. We had a stakeholder meeting and it fell flat. For all the people who had been interviewed, a presentation of the synthesis, and putting all the causal loop diagrams on the wall was not the right way to do this: we were analysing the system. Then we had a break” and the team went back to the drawing board and ultimately used a framework that looked not at how the system of children could be viewed, but at how the stakeholders within it viewed it and themselves. So, this can be thought of as a map of their perceptions, rather than of aspect(s) of the system they were trying to influence:



This view, which emphasised the role and perspectives of the stakeholders much more strongly, resonated well with the group who saw it first at the initial retreat which took place at the Spier Wine Estate in November 2007. “They could see the mindsets and what conflicts they were getting into with each other”.

The report also focused in on key issues that were

identified from the interviews, which would form the core driving purposes of the LINC programme: collaboration, systems thinking, leadership and innovation.

Mille again, on why these topics: “We asked people to tell their lifestories in the beginning and where their future lies at the end and we realised that there was a lot of moving between sectors, a lot of people would leave their jobs but they were 100% committed to working with children, they might leave Childline/Mindset and go to DSD or the Nelson Mandela Foundation but they were all moving between the same institutions. And they were all burnt out and stressed. So we decided to basically focus on this issue of collaborative leadership in the sector and their need to work together. What we heard was: we are all working in silos, we need to see the big picture; we need a more systemic way of thinking.”

2.2 Growing LINC

LINC's Purpose

From this understanding, the core team designed a programme and process, which was frequently iterated, which initially followed the form of the U and also responded to the four key issues of collaboration, leadership, innovation and systems thinking, which had been identified in the ‘sensing’ phase: the dialogue interviews. The exact framing of these issues went through slight changes over time, but by 2011 these core purposes remained, articulated in the following way:

- Enhancing the leadership capacity of leaders in the sector to be more resilient, think systemically and proactively collaborate;
- Shifting the nature of institutional arrangements in the sector to enhance cohesion, collaboration and coordination; and
- Creating opportunities for leaders and their organisations to innovate and provide solutions around key challenges in the sector.

Core Capacity

The basic operational structure started out being Ann as Programme Director and one or two support staff. In 2008 Ann established an NGO called “Convene” while starting LINC and another similar project funded by Hollard Foundation. Initially she and Mille had worked under the banner of the African Leadership Initiative but now Convene became the organisation responsible for running LINC. Reos and Synergos were part of a core team

that worked together on the overall design of the process (which activities and events should happen when, for example) as well as the design of specific events within that. The core team also participated in ongoing advocacy work. Reos came in with extensive experience in multi-stakeholder process work, and Barry Smith from Synergos brought with him long term and extensive networks and expertise in engaging with South African civil society and government which he used on an ongoing basis to support the reputation building and acceptance of LINC.

Why a Fellowship?

From the start, with the identification of the fact that many of the key stakeholders were committed to the children’s sector for the long term, despite moving organisational affiliation, the team made a decision to form a fellowship, where those stakeholders could stay involved over time. The initial cohort was drawn from the people invited to the first workshop at Spier. When asked at the end of this process if, despite their demanding workloads, they would be willing to participate in a year long process which would require attendance at 3 workshops and participation with a smaller team of people working around a specific issue in between times, all but 2 of the people agreed. Thus the first cohort of 36 fellows was formed and began working together at an event in May 2008. Two further cohorts followed, identified by existing fellows ie. word of mouth and through the team’s increasing knowledge of the sector. The second cohort joined in May 2009 and the third in December 2010.

Role of the core

This core structure was set up to offer the following support to the fellows:

Holding to the key **methodological approach** of seeing different perspectives, deep reflective learning, collective action and finding ways to institutionalise.

Supporting **learning and reflection** by documenting and reflection how stakeholders work together and refine solutions, and to support scaling up

Fundraising: facilitating access to fundraising opportunities and assisting with fundraising proposals

Facilitation and Design: through process designs for events and the overall programme

Integration through sharing information, supporting stakeholder relationships and helping partnerships to formalise and supporting leveraging and scaling up where possible.

Project Management: support for implementation of ideas

Initially the three core organisations shared these roles, with Reos leading on facilitation and design and Convene on project management, fundraising and integration with support from Synergos on fundraising. Learning and reflection was undertaken by all the partners in different ways: Reos facilitated learning sessions, wrote Learning Histories, Convene drove conceptualising an evaluation framework. When Reos stepped back from holding facilitation and design, Convene worked with a small team of fellows and independent facilitators to take on this role.

While there was a structure in place which should have drawn in the key stakeholders into a Steering Committee, ongoing and committed participation in this body in the early stages proved difficult. The key decision making defaulted to Ann in particular and the core team in general. A combined group of Convene staff, Synergos (in the form of Barry Smith and occasionally Adele Wildschut) and Reos as the facilitators and process designers made the decisions about how each year of the first 3 years of the programme would progress.

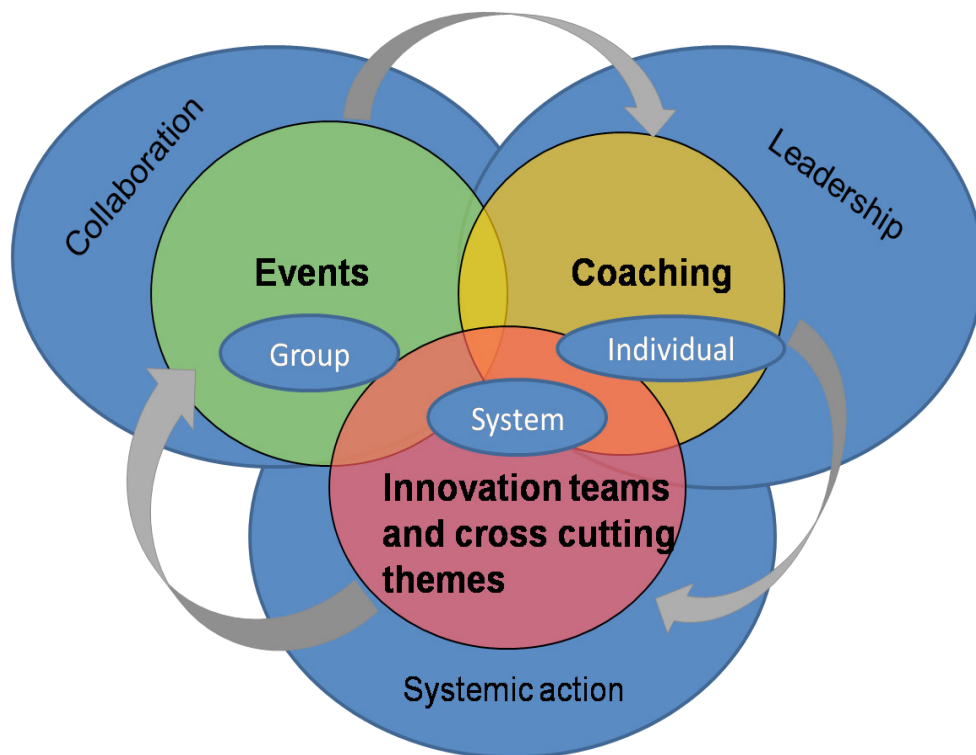
Programme Design

LINC's design comprised three levels of activity focused on the three levels that fellows were operating at: the individual, the group and the system. The process included

- Regular group wide events which offered opportunities for seeing the system as a whole, developing relationships across sectors and organisations, and networking to initiate action.
- Coaching for individuals and at a group level aimed at supporting the development of their leadership and in particular their capacity to collaborate across organizational boundaries.
- Innovation and cross cutting theme meetings and work groups which were focused on particular aspects of the system that fellows and the team

identified as being points of particular leverage for the system.

The figure below shows how these were intended to relate to each other to create impact across the system.



A timeline of LINC's activities since 2006 can be found in Appendix 1.

Innovations and Cross Cutting themes

Another underlying principle in the design of LINC, was the idea that tackling complex challenges in soft systems is more effectively done by allowing the stakeholders participating in the process to try out many different options. In getting these different options to work, other stakeholders, not involved, but with an interest in the issue would be approached to offer feedback and provide resources, where this happened, initiatives could thrive, where not, the lack of engagement is taken as a signal that this is not what is needed/wanted now. And this would mean that some initiatives would thrive and continue and others might not last. The survival or not, of different initiatives, would be part of a healthy process of system adaptation, so there would not be an expectation of 100% success of all initiatives.

The creation of a diversity of innovations was structured into the process in the early stages through workshop design which aimed to get people to

cluster around issues that were key to them, using open space technology for issue identification and a process of voting on topics by the participants, for which issues they felt were most important and most likely to have an impact.

The themes chosen at the first innovation workshop in May 2008 were:

Building Community Capacity – this included largely civil society players. It centred around a question about how to get foster care grants to work more effectively especially for child headed households, and in creating a cadre of child and youth care workers, and crucially brought together two major civil society players, who had previously not been collaborating. This initiative is still 'live' in the sense that the research, conversation and action to create a grant for households headed by 16-18 year olds is ongoing and the Isibindi child and youth care workers programme is rolling out. (see section on impacts for more)

Building Local Government capacity – fellows and LINC core team members undertook research around the challenges related to the capacity of local government to drive outcomes relating to services for children. This work aligned very closely with work that Save the Children UK were initiating to bring children's issues into the local planning through Integrated Development Planning processes and provincial activity around this innovation is continuing. The group ran a workshop which brought together representatives from municipalities with the national co-ordinating structures relating to children and HIV to share experience about successful structures for incorporating children's issues into planning and implementation at the local level.

Database on Children – this topic was strongly contested, and the team gathered around it were operating at very different levels of influence in the system. The challenges this team faced were related to the ownership of data and political difficulties with sharing information. After having explored the issue thoroughly through an externally written review, the fellows concerned decided to disband the innovation.

Co-ordinating the Children's Sector – this topic became a cross-cutting theme and held one workshop early in the LINC process which brought government and civil society together to help clarify how government budget processes worked and how NGOs could engage more effectively in the process. Through this work, and activities initiated by the donor network team, the Isibindi initiative gained exposure in government and LINC likely played a role in government taking the programme on na-

tionally and rolling it out; Treasury also adapted its budget planning process to incorporate civil society voices representing children more effectively, while a LINC fellow was working there.

Donor network – this team undertook research through the Children's Institute to map donor funding and allocations and engaged together with some team participants in supporting others to raise the profile of funding for children amongst donors across the board (this involves for example re-categorising reporting matrices and mapping projects), as well as improving the statistics on children. This team held a workshop between donors, which major international funders such as USAID and GTZ attended, with Treasury, to look at funding coordination. Donors identified specific areas they wanted to take forward, there were four of these initially identified in the meeting, the LINC core team followed up to support them to act on it, but after some time decided to not drive it beyond what the donors themselves were willing to pick up.

Education – This initiative only began in 2009. It explored various options in the education system and was particularly interested in improving parental involvement in their children's education. The group stuck with this theme and decided to direct their energy towards Early Childhood Development since it was becoming part of the formal schooling system soon. The team partnered with the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership in 2011 and raised the necessary funds from the Jim Joel Trust to conduct research on how parental involvement could be increased and tracked over time.

Media – the topic of engaging with the media arose during the initial stakeholder interviews but was not chosen by the fellows in the voting process. However, the topic was reintroduced in late 2008 and an event was held in early 2009 to raise awareness of how to cover children's issues. A team was initiated in mid-2009, which undertook research into what needed to happen to raise the profile of children's issues in the media. This team initiated contact with specialists in the media sector, at least one of whom subsequently became a fellow. Many small activities to raise journalists capacity to cover children's issues, provide accurate data and raise the profile of children beyond the children's sector have occurred as a result of this work.

Overall, the identified innovations met with varying degrees of success and there is considerable discussion and diversity of opinion about whether in fact they should be/have been the focus of assessments of the 'success' of LINC. For some, the innovations drew attention away from the task of improving leadership capabilities, for others, collective action is the main benefit they get from LINC (although

they don't necessarily see these designed innovations as being the source of this collaboration), and some talk about the fact that without a 'practice ground' for working together, the requisite learning about how to collaborate could not have taken place: outcomes were less important than the process they have gone through.

From the core team perspective, after the innovation review, they considered *"what we thought we could change and do differently: there was a shift from teams and their existence, and rather a focus on the initiative itself. We allowed people to come in and out as and when they felt it was relevant to them, rather than have a group that felt the need to get together without being sure if they were adding value. So we kept the initiatives, and had a lead organisation whose objectives aligned with that. We thought this had a better chance of success."*
Dineo Malembe, Convene core team member.

Coaching

A coaching programme was developed which included individual coaching for all the second cohort of fellows as well as group coaching organised on a provincial basis to draw fellows working in similar geographies together (this was largely driven by the practical need for people to be able to reach coaching session easily.)

With the coaching programme, as well the BL framework was designed in:

"we took the BL framework and we tried to define competencies out of it and we matched the competencies with the coaching framework, so we integrated it much more strongly, so what we did at a personal level in those workshops was aligned with what we were doing with the coaching process and we also did pre and post coaching testing on personal leadership. So ...it was quite a sophisticated, integrated leadership process using the BL framework and those tools had not been developed, we developed those tools, so I think we upped synergos' competency around that significantly with that development. The feedback we got was positive at that personal level. " (Ann Lamont)

Section 3: Fruition

Impact: formal measurement

LINC has undertaken two formal processes of assessing its impact since inception and one review of innovations to better understand challenges. The first of these resulted in a 50 page evaluation report in June 2009, relatively early in the process. This evaluation laid out a clear set of criteria for measurement and used existing written feedback and additional specially designed questionnaires to gather data. This evaluation considered LINC's impact at the individual, organisational and systemic level.

The second process took place in mid to late 2011 to assess the impact, which the individual and group coaching process had had. This laid out a set of Bridging Leadership competencies that the coaching was hoping to develop and expand and measured fellows own perceptions (and 360??) on how far this had shifted as a result of the process. This, by definition, focused in much more closely on the impact on the fellows themselves and their ability to be Bridging Leaders.

In September 2010, Reos was asked to engage in a review of two innovation teams who were struggling to make progress, to better understand what the issues were and what lessons there might be for the system as a whole from their processes. This

was not an evaluation per se, but some of the views and thinking from that review have been included throughout this case study.

No further assessment of impact has taken place since 2011; at provincial fellowship gatherings in early March 2012 there was a strong request to return to the initial evaluation and update it for the purposes of understanding what LINC was contributing and how, and for use in possible further fundraising. However this has yet to happen.

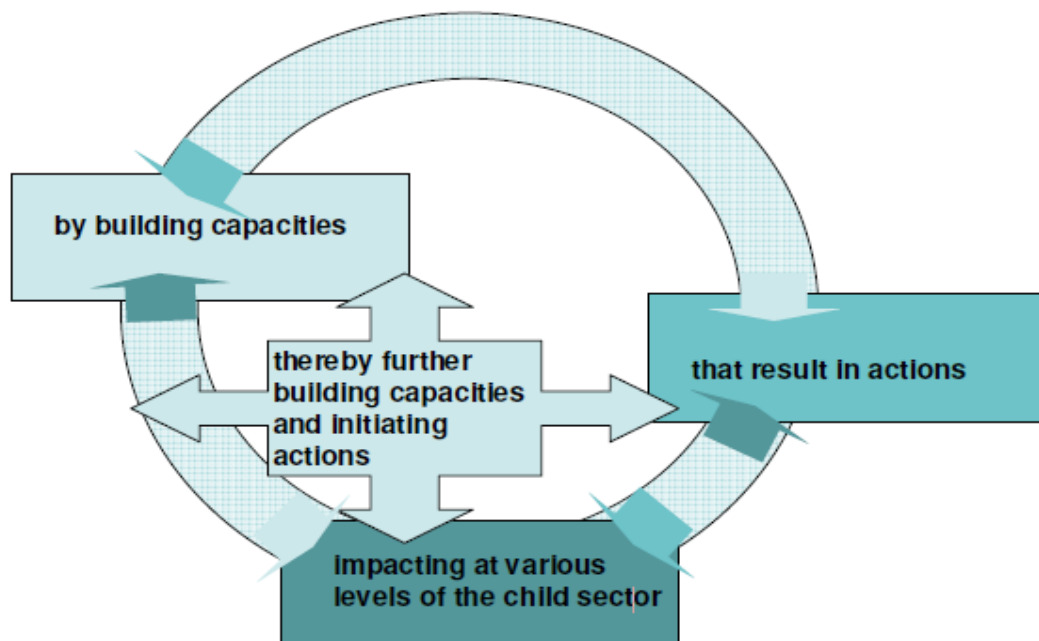
A small number of new interviews were undertaken for this case study to explore particular elements of the process, and some anecdotal evidence from these, in particular relating to one or two very large projects that LINC played a role in, is also considered in this section.

LINC evaluation June 2009

Given the nature of the LINC programme, the evaluation framework required to measure impact needed to be carefully designed. The consultants used to do this work were specialists in monitoring and evaluation. They co-created a framework based on the following conceptual understanding of the process of LINC having impact

figure 2: Diagrammatic representation of envisaged LINC fellowship programme process

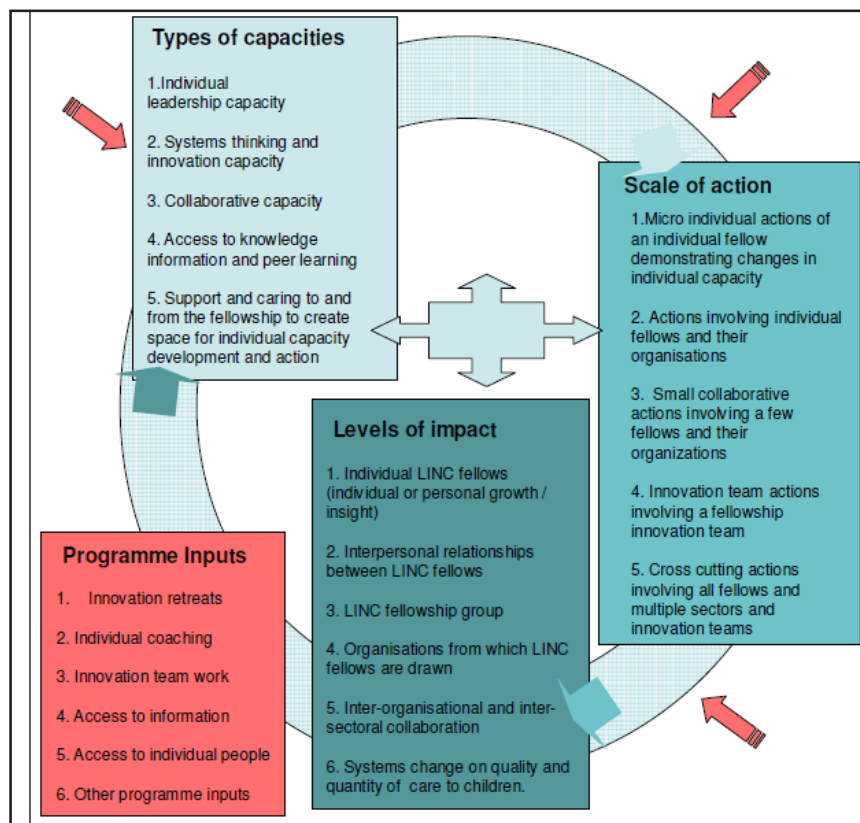
The LINC fellowship increases the quality and quantity of care to children



In

And identified impacts relating to this process as follows:

Diagrammatic representation of types of impact for each category



keeping with this framework, the report, which ran to over 50 pages, clustered its findings around the following categories of impact:

Change in organisations

Change in inter-personal relationships between fellows

Shared values/principals and commonly agreed language/framework in group

Inter-organisational and inter-sectoral collaboration

Links to national structures

Systemic change

Individual capacities:

Leadership as an individual

Systems thinking and innovation

Ability to collaborate

Tangible actions:

Micro individual actions

Actions within fellow's organisation

Small collaborative actions involving a few fellows and organisations

Actions relating to innovation projects

Cross-cutting actions and action relating to shifts in the whole system

Overall strengths and weaknesses of the fellowship.

The overall findings included detailed feedback showing percentages of fellows agreeing or disagreeing with different statements about LINC, as well as sharing specific examples of actions and also stories of the 'most significant change' they were aware of (this is a specific monitoring and evaluation methodology which was used).

In summary, the conclusions were that LINC had impacted on individual fellows by giving them access to key people in the childrens sector (and from across sectors), access to information, increased understanding or exposure to different ways of thinking, opportunities to see the big picture and work across the sector barriers, especially with government, while creating time and space for reflection and offering coaching support. This was reflected in more confidence and ability to engage with a broad range of stakeholders and as one NGO respondent put it, the insight that 'it starts with me'.

LINC had created space to foster interpersonal relationships between fellows through breaking down barriers and creating new ways of working and in particular most fellows felt that the difficulties in relationships between government and other stakeholders had diminished.

LINC had created a coherent fellowship with a shared culture; people felt better able to work together, and better able to build networks. They felt that trust building had been undertaken in a deliberate and careful way and the environment that ensued from that made moving forward with consciousness and purpose possible. A particularly important achievement was that LINC had made it possible to have difficult discussions about language (the 'OVC' issue) and race, which might previously have divided people.

LINC had made an impact on inter-organisational and inter-sectoral collaboration through more and better cross sectoral communication, listening and dialogue, and the vast majority of fellows felt they were ready and able to see, hear and feel the perspectives and voices of other stakeholders. This meant they had, all but one, identified new opportunities to work with other organisations in a mutually beneficial manner and could do so from a position of thinking about possibilities rather than problems, which in turn had helped stretch the available resources for the care of children.

Finally in terms of clear achievements, LINC had the potential to effect systemic change through facilitating co-ordination, addressing duplication and filling gaps. Since the evaluation report covering the period from October 2008 to March 2009 it made getting concrete examples of these kinds of activities elusive but interviews undertaken for this case study, which are referenced later in this section provide some examples of this type of impact which have occurred since 2009.

The report noted that LINC had not by that time, had as much impact inside organisations (only a small majority of 60% said their organisations were working in new ways) although these included two significant examples – one of a donor shifting from a reactive (responding to proposals) to a proactive (seeking proposals in key areas and initiating programmes) approach to funding, and a second from an academic institution shifting towards seeing its research as 'socially responsive' and changing strategy to reflect this.

As far as capacities were concerned, fellows commented most strongly on their greater ability to collaborate, both in terms of developing the skills and knowledge needed to operate in a more collaborative manner, and in the provision of opportunities to test this collaborative capacity in practice. Interviewees generally expressed the view that they had significantly benefited from the capacity building focus of the fellowship including several comments about learning the value of trust and honesty as well as communication, listening and sharing information.

Individual leadership capacity

Fellows made specific mention of their ability to listen, interact/engage with people and to consider alternative views of other sectors (especially government). Some fellows mentioned their heightened self reflection and self awareness.

Systems Thinking and Innovation Capacity

The majority felt they were more able to access creativity and imaginative thinking by working with their head, heart, and hands, more equipped to develop, iterate and refine solutions to complex challenges in the environment and with the people for whom the solutions need to work. With 80% of them feeling that they were much more capable to lead in complex systems and that they understand and navigate the bigger picture. Almost all interviewees felt much more comfortable about their own ability to work within the systems approach.

Collaborative Capacity

Most fellows highlighted this as the single greatest benefit of their participation noting that LINC has been able to attract and retain a wide range of people in leadership positions and that it has given them information about how the various role players within the sector work. LINC had also been instrumental in developing an understanding as to how government works – about the energy and passion that goes into the children's sector. To quote one: "(LINC) has created a core of people who are passionate about this particular area, and you can't get anything more powerful." At the same time, there was a note of caution: "partnerships are easy on paper but hard in practice. It takes an enormous amount of championing, vision sharing, adaptability and flexibility to make it work".

Micro individual actions of an individual fellow demonstrating changes in individual capacity

The actual process of participating in the fellowship was noted by a number of interviewees as being conducive to increasing activity levels or energising individual action. This is reinforced by the networking element, where the "opening of doors" to senior people was definitely seen to be making individual's work easier and more effective. As a direct example of an individual action, one respondent has taken the LINC approach into a regional network addressing issues faced by orphans and vulnerable children.

Actions of individual fellows in their organizations

48% of fellows gave short descriptions of changes at their work. These included reflections on the general planning and principals that were being used as a result of LINC, as well as specific actions that enhanced or supported existing initiatives.

Small collaborative actions involving a few fellows and their organizations

Most actual activity appears to have taken place at this level, largely due to the nature of the network: "Just having access to new people has meant that [my Department] has been able to identify and support new projects."

Fellows were explicitly asked to "describe any new relationships or partnerships that have resulted from their involvement in the LINC fellowship" and responses revealed business fellows reporting building and strengthening relationships with government departments and national structures, and with the donor sector. Civil society fellows spoke about working with government departments and particular individuals within them, as well as national structures. Some government fellows mentioned contacts and relationships with the donor sector. There was finally specific mention of training collaboration and referral of projects to organizations represented in LINC.

Actions relating to the innovation projects

A substantial 68% of fellows felt that most of the innovation projects would require ongoing funding and support from the LINC fellowship, after they had been prototyped. This indicated an area of concern about the ongoing and longer-term sustainability of the LINC innovation projects. There was also some concern that innovation team activities had been rather slow to get off the ground.

Cross cutting actions and actions relating to shifts in the whole system

The evaluation report identified the collaborative work on the Children's Act involving Child Welfare SA, Childline and SANAC, mentioned several fellows as having the potential for system wide impact. One of the interviewees wrote about it, thus:

"the ultimate effect of the group working together may have a greater impact than a product We may feel that we are not succeeding because the 'product' is lagging (the innovation was moving slowly at the time), but the rela-

tionships and networks that have been built are possibly even more valuable...the fellowship offers a way of working together and engaging which fundamentally affects the quality of the product."

Coaching Assessment

A systemic coaching intervention was implemented in LINC which included individual and group coaching. During this period, the Bridging Leadership framework had been brought into LINC and integrated into the programme and event design. Thus the measures used for the coaching were directly drawn from the capacities required to be a successful 'Bridging Leader':

Bridging Leadership Competencies:

• Ownership – Personal Mastery

–Bridging Leader owns the issue

–Understands systemic analysis and recognises multi-stakeholder interests.

–Makes a personal response to the issue

• Co-Ownership – Organisational Mastery

– Convene stakeholders on the issue

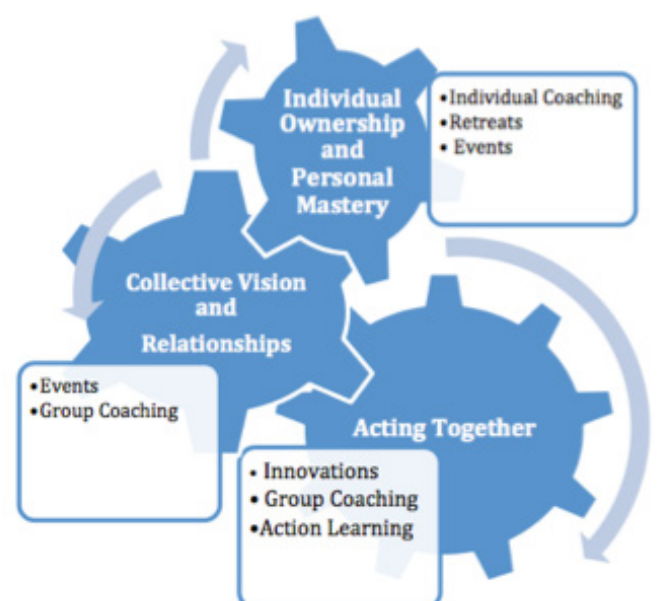
– Through dialogue & engagement, create opportunities for stakeholders to find common ground and reach a shared vision and response

– In collaboration with other stakeholders foster wider societal vision that commands wide support

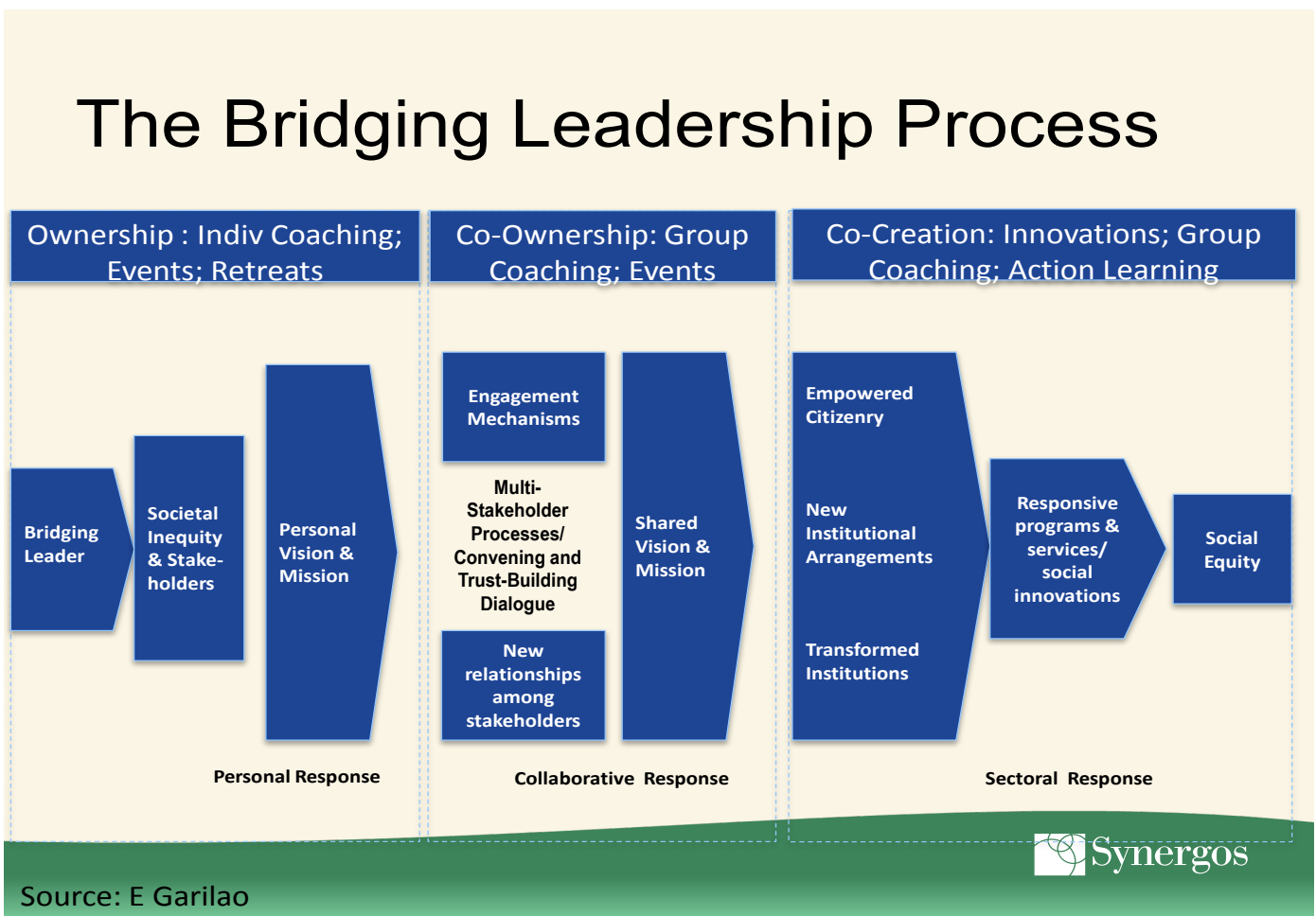
• Co-creation – Sectoral Mastery

– Works with stakeholders to create new institutional arrangements – new rules and ways of doing things

– Collaborates with others over time to institutionalise new arrangements (inclusive, accountable & transparent) and take it to scale



The way these were designed to work together in LINC is shown in the following illustration and graphic:



– With others, builds a community of values and practice committed to an empowered citizenry, more responsive institutions, and equitable access to basic rights and services

The main conclusions of the coaching impact report were that the importance and value of LINC for each of the leaders working in the Children’s sector was unquestioned, that in terms of Bridging Leadership competencies, by October 2011 fellows had moved from personal into organisational mastery and to lesser extent to sectoral mastery (an area which still requires focus), that multi-stakeholder collaboration/partnerships are complex and need time to develop and that coaching does add value to the leadership development agenda and can be more powerful when linked to a programme like it was in the LINC example.

One important insight that emerged at this point in the process was that the investment in a dedicated portal for LINC for social networking had not supported the programme in ways envisaged. There has not been an investigation of what drove this outcome, to understand why fellows did not find the platform useful enough to engage with it regularly.

Impact: Fellow and Core Team perspectives

For the purposes of this case study a series of 9 interviews were undertaken with 5 fellows and 4 core team members to draw on their perspectives and understanding of what had happened in LINC and what impacts it had had. By necessity, this data is anecdotal. However, without the benefit of an updated in depth evaluation report, it offers a partial snapshot of a series of specific impacts which have affected the system as a whole, parts of it, and particular organisations, as well as interviewees’ commentary on other impacts related to improved leadership, understanding, and collaboration capacity in the sector.

The Isibindi Community Care model Roll out

The National Association of Child Care Workers has been a strong civil society participant in LINC since the initial Spier workshop. They had a model of community based child care using trained child

care workers, called Isibindi which Zeni Thumbadoo their Deputy Director brought to LINC and began promoting it. Zeni wanted to scale up the model across the country and was keen to take it into government, and had begun that process.

When Brenton van Vrede, working in the Treasury Department joined LINC, Zeni was: *“able to talk to him about how our bid to Treasury should be fashioned for replication. It was helpful having a relationship with someone already inside government who understood what needed to be done. Thereafter, LINC also facilitated a meeting with Treasury and the Children’s Institute with key relevant people..and when the bid took place it helped having someone in Treasury who understood the model.”* Brenton commented: *“I don’t suppose I would have known about Zeni if it weren’t for LINC”* and expanded on broader changes which took place around budgeting process which emerged from the relationships developed in LINC: *“one of the changes we made in one year for the budget process was to bring a whole bunch of civil society stakeholders into the budget process, to come and give input into the budget process ...and that’s when Isibindi got quite a bit of traction.”*

Obviously the whole thing was initiated through the Minister that the whole budget process changed but LINC played a strong role....(there were) a whole range of engagements to get government and civil society together ... I don’t think change was on the cards until then. You could make the case that it was LINC, the influence that LINC had that lead to the whole change in budgeting for the social sector while I was in LINC and in Treasury. The budget has moved back again now: no one in Treasury had the links I had so it’s not happening.”

Assigning prime cause to LINC in this case is not straightforward, but as Ann Lamont put it: *“at the broader systemic project level, we have played some role in the Isibindi roll out which is a significant impact. I think that may have happened without LINC and it may not have happened without LINC.”*

Foster Care Grants for Child Headed Households

Two fellows (from UNICEF and NACCW) tell the story of how this innovation, headed by NACCW and Child Welfare is bearing fruit:

“I think that there are pockets of change and some of those were around relationships that were formed, and some of the innovations did work, the foster care initiative that NACCW and Child Welfare worked on did work. There were those 2 organisations in competition, and through LINC they could work together, and find ways to bring services together and complement each other and improve

services for children as a result.” (Heidi Loening-Voysey, UNICEF)

“We were trying to do a project with Child Welfare that was supposed to result in child headed households accessing foster care grants. In the process of discussing it with legal people that we had met at LINC, (Megan from CW was talking to National Government departments about it, to everyone, including the Children’s Institute about how it could work) the Department of Social Development realised that child headed households needed grants, but didn’t like the foster care grant. So now there’s been a whole research by the Children’s Institute looking at it. There will be a different approach (ie not foster grants) but it will happen. You might think of this as an unintended consequence, we wanted to pilot using foster grants, but what happened along the line was that there were legal loopholes and government wanted to close them in a tactical and thoughtful way so that ... they will get a bigger grant, that child. It hasn’t come to fruition yet but it will and it will become a special grant”. Zeni Thumbadoo, LINC fellow

Civil Society collaborations

Ann commented that there are many examples of collaboration which have emerged from the networking possibilities provided by LINC, which have not been captured: “I think there are a lot of collaboration and impact and projects that happened because of LINC..of people who worked together because of LINC, involving 3 or 4 organisations, not the whole sector”.

Examples of collaborative projects between NGOs were cited by the handful of fellows interviewed for this case study. These included a private sector donor creating a formal partnership with a bursary provider to get rural children into higher education (so far 50 children) and a partnership between an NGO and major foundation in the sector began with looking at the foster grant issue in one community has developed and drawn in another LINC affiliate so that children from the one programme are included in all the events and initiatives of the other. As well as a small group of LINC fellows coming together to give written policy focused input to the national budget process and another donor and NGO co-designing a youth empowerment programme for income generation, technology provision, volunteers to support education, getting past exam papers to help children with study etc.

And between Civil Society and government, examples were cited of developing policy proposals and drawing children into the planning process for Comprehensive Rural Development strategies involving an international NGO, private sector donor and provincial government; LINC fellows from government connecting donors through provincial

children's forums as well as one particular initiative in Mpumalanga funded by multiple private sector donors in collaboration with Provincial government to develop Early Childhood Development in an Agri village programme as a pilot across 60 communities.

There were also examples of donors and NGOs trying new approaches together in a more informal way, for example to link mobile clinics which are already reaching communities and to expand on them by putting a trailer behind a clinic with a toy library and an open seat and an ECD family facilitator to train/work with mums and children. The local government haven't bitten yet, but we're working on it.

As Corne Peters from Mondi said: "if you really start to track programmes and projects that we're doing through those connections, the exposure gives you new ideas, and how to bring children in to projects. (Even from events two years ago....)there is still contact and input, and the effect of decisions is ongoing now."

Intangible impacts

"We definitely created some structured spaces for critical conversations to happen, those had never happened before I think that certainly we shifted some deep rifts in the sector, we certainly shifted a lot of personal relationships and we did shift some levels of collaborative relationship amongst the broader stakeholder groups, so I think in terms of did we contribute to greater collaboration and cohesion in the sector, yes we did. Is it nearly enough? No. But I think that we did do that. I think we did create some safe space for people who were close to burnout and help them in recharging batteries and I think we did develop individual leaders and give them more coping mechanisms and help them to cope in the sector". Ann Lamont

Critical conversations

"The activities forced you to talk to each other about issues, and there were opportunities to personalise, what are your personal memories of growing up – someone from the department sharing something personal, there was a clever design of activities and opportunities using plasticine, designing something together, the way groups were put together, different people together and even the broader discussions that allowed for some tricky issues to be raised as well." Zeni Thumbadoo

Healing rifts

At the start of the LINC process there was a major rift between one of the main government organi-

sations operating in the children's sector and one of the largest national co-ordinating networks. Civil society organisations allied themselves on one side or the other of this rift, with the main government department in the sector sitting somewhere in the middle. At the first LINC leadership retreat, the processes, space and facilitation enabled the key protagonists in this conflict to reconcile. As one of them said to Ann subsequently about the benefits of this: *"you will never know what you have done for the children's sector"* (Ann Lamont)

Collaborative relations across stakeholder groups

"There had been different forums where we gathered, we might have met funders and the department separately or NGOs plus the department but here it let the 3 categories come together. To bring the funders in as well as government, created an opportunity to talk to each other. It levelled the playing field, the facilitators created a non power environment to talk together on same level: that's unusual - from the start. The activities and the facilitation was excellent in doing that". Zeni Thumbadoo

"There's a proper network of people so you get people to see from different perspectives, it's the only forum of its kind that I've been in, where all the parties talked openly and honestly about their challenges, for the first time you get a sense there are people in government who do give a shit, what are their annoyances with NGOs, that they feel they're on their own delivering services". William Bird

Safe space and recharging for those close to burnout

"I remember sitting at a table, of women all about my age and in a similar situation, that basically it was a sense of loss we had and how that had called us to do this kind of work. I had a really deep connection with the other women who were part of that. I found that very enriching – to hear my own call again. ... Definitely, it inspired me helped me to feel congruent with what I was doing and more connected to others in the field." Heidi Loening-Voysey

Finally, a further change at the level of the system might be that LINC has engendered is a shift in the culture of many in the sector towards understanding and being able to collaborate. One fellow interviewed for this case study noted that a similar process is needed in the gender relations sector where there is currently no such collaboration and it is sorely needed.

Challenges and Responses

The LINC team has faced a series of challenges over the life of the programme. Often these have shown up as dilemmas – ie. problems which don't have a 'solution' but which instead draw one between two polarities which require balancing. Managing this balance is a dynamic process, which by nature changes over time as the environment and the players themselves change.

Wide or narrow? Scope and focus

One of the key challenges LINC faced was embedded in the initiative at the start, and was identified by the interviewees in the synthesis report. This was the question of how narrowly or broadly to focus. Ann and Mille had developed the issue beginning from a desire to tackle one aspect of the huge challenge presented by the impact of HIV/AIDS and had then chosen to engage with the issue of children. However, during the dialogue process and in the first event at Spier, strong voices from academia and the NGO sector argued that separating children affected by HIV/AIDS from others who were suffering to a similar level but for different reasons would be to reinforce patterns of stigmatisation already happening in society. The words 'orphans and vulnerable children' were also dropped because of similar concerns about the term 'vulnerable' and problems with the definition of 'orphans'. Thus the initiative became about the whole children's sector, with an awareness that much of what was happening was driven by the impact of HIV/AIDS.

This decision was driven by fellows, and as such, being willing to respond to their interests and concerns was demonstration of the core team following a key principle used in social innovation methods, such as Open Space Technology, to respond to where the energy is among the stakeholders, rather than stick-

ing to an 'external' agenda held by the facilitators/organisers. At the same time it created a significant challenge for LINC as a programme, in terms of how to then define boundaries of its scope and impact, and more specifically how to measure those.

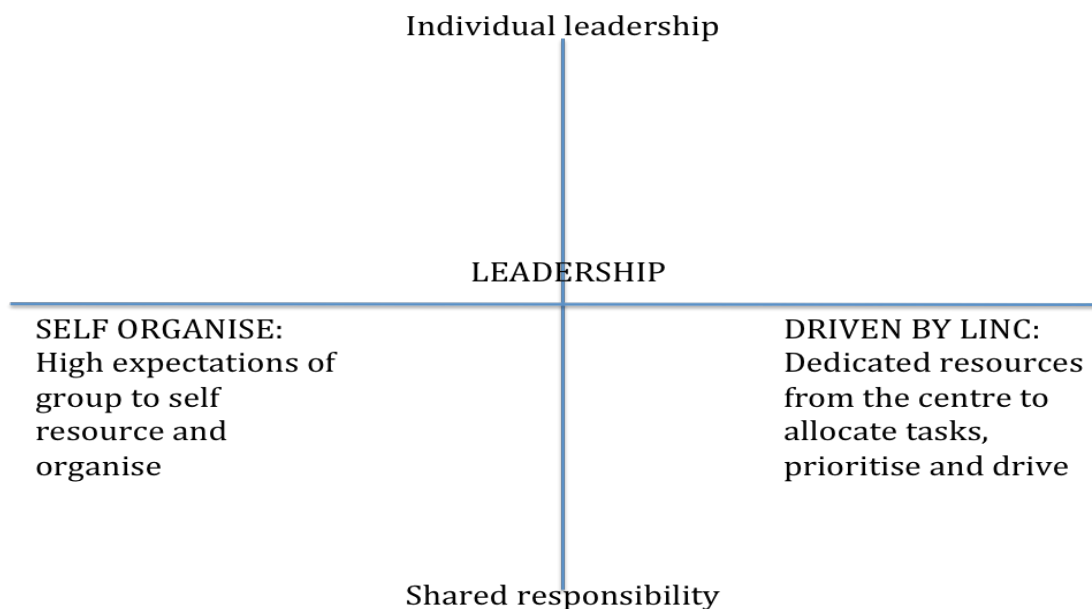
This issue cut across another important distinction, which was apparent to the designers of the programme but not to fellows or external observers, particularly over time. It was evident from the initial interview process that the voices in the sector wanted LINC to focus not on direct impacts on the children themselves but on building the capacity of the leadership in the sector. As Mille put it: "LINC was not about children but about the stakeholders". This would mean that measuring its impact on children on the ground would be difficult – and could possibly be considered an unfair measure of success.

Drive the process or be responsive?

Fellows' views revealed a tension around a preference for LINC to drive outcomes through the core capacity versus a desire at the centre to respond to what was emerging among the participants, and for fellows and their organisations to drive outcomes. This was revealed in interviews undertaken for an innovation review in 2010, which focused on two innovations which were struggling to make headway, as the two contrasting quotes below demonstrate:

"I think the task teams need to have a dedicated LINC employee who steers, helps sort out the nitty gritty...the loss of our LINC co-ordinator was a big loss". Quote from innovation team review 2010 (fellow – all quotes in review were unattributed)

"All of us need to take responsibility, we are adults who can communicate. ...our co-ordinator didn't have to do that, it spoiled us, now with her not being around all of a sudden the common push is gone...we could have appointed someone among ourselves to do that."



This perspective had as underlying assumption that LINC would take on a significant role in driving the direction (at least) of innovation, through content knowledge. And thus a related issue for those who wanted the LINC core to take a stronger driving role was the need for more content knowledge in the supporting structures:

“Over time LINC was missing a depth and detailed content knowledge of the sector which would have made specific initiatives more appropriately designed.” (Ann Lamont)

“It changed focus when it started talking about innovations. That was where my big frustration came in. LINC was trying to facilitate innovations in a vacuum, didn’t have project knowledge to expertly facilitate. What they had knowledge of was how to bring us together and deal with dynamics of working as a team.” (Heidi Loening-Voysey)

Changing thinking or driving action?

Different philosophical views were revealed as well, through perceptions of what success would have looked like. On the one hand was the perspective that, in hindsight, thought the focus should have remained on changing ‘big picture’ mindsets and high-level systems change through better relationships among the ‘big shots’: *“Maybe there wasn’t a need for a new project or initiative, rather we should have asked the question: what can be achieved in terms of a systemic shift?”* Mille Bojer

“LINC had the opportunity to facilitate better understanding of the frustrations, challenges, workloads, and of what was working, that the system required strong cooperative relationships because services aren’t provided by government like they are education and health. They need civil society for delivery..... But as soon as we tried to get into innovations ...I think that’s where the wheels came off for me. It just didn’t work.” Heidi Loening Voysey

On the other hand, voices spoke of the significant impact of bringing people together in terms of the number and quality of projects that happened. Although these perspectives were not being given in opposition to the ‘big system’ view, they point to the fact that at least some of the sought for collaboration was actually happening through people networking at LINC events.

System impact vs Organisational Mandate

One of the key learnings for some of the core team from the process, was that there wasn’t enough alignment between what people needed to do to meet their own objectives inside their organisa-

tions and the role they played there, with what they committed themselves to doing in their innovation team in terms of scope and their place in the system. Where this alignment was close (in the community capacity team, for example) results were better, than where the alignment was weak. On the other hand, one fellow who took on tasks far outside his organisation mandate, spoke about the impact of this alignment being more a function of the organisation’s ability to tolerate movement away from ‘line function’ for the purposes of wider systemic impact:

“In my old line department – which wasn’t close to LINC’s mandate, being part of LINC wasn’t a problem: they saw it was useful for me to engage. In my new department, it’s a bit more that there are always questions about “why do you want to go to that?” They don’t see the importance. I’m not sure what happened to the relationship, (since the new department was one of the key ones for LINC to relate to), but now it’s hard for me to prioritise.....”

As Ann retells, late in the LINC process, the insight about letting people act in their organisation became more clearly designed in:

“On the organisational level what we wanted to do, ...was to work with a couple of organisations because really where we got to was that if you can’t collaborate and work effectively within your organisation, there’s no way you can take it (beyond). So what we started to design was to take BL into some of those big organisations like NACCW, Child Welfare, a couple of the big ones, just choose 5 and work with them and one was meant to be DSD. So we had quite a bit of development work done in developing that. What you can do in a workshop is obviously limited: what we did achieve in the workshop was raising the issues and making people think about the issues and shifting some individual partnerships.”

“With regard to the systemic stuff – and this is not BL framework or theory U – the way we shifted much more towards the end was that there are themes and what can your organisation, even not working collectively, what is your organisation doing to contribute to this theme and how can you do more of it? And how can you share your learnings? We shifted the way we look at collective action, but that wasn’t out of the BL framework, it was out of our own learning and experience.”

The ‘revolving door’ for fellows: do we go deep or wide?

This issue was exacerbated by the challenges of working with a ‘revolving door’ approach of bring-

ing in a second and third cohort of fellows over time: 'old' fellows found sessions repetitive as new fellows needed to go through the process of trust building and engaging.

Newer fellows did not have the benefit of the initial experience, which engaged deeply and directly with power issues and therefore many were more interested in networking and didn't necessarily see the need to engage with issues about purpose/focus of LINC nor did they (in the eyes of early fellows) go to the deeper levels engendered in the early sessions.

This left some of the 'older' fellows frustrated by the apparent repetition of the process in later sessions, expressing a desire to be able to build on the depth and rigour of the early work. One said: "I can really see (the potential) if we had stuck to the original group and deepened our understanding and challenged what was blocking us".

Consistency of participation: pushing against the bureaucratic culture

The challenges of holding a purposely multi-stakeholder space were manifold, as the diversity of voices within sectors, let alone across them, was significant. One challenge in particular repeated throughout the process: this was often articulated as 'diary management'. As one fellow put it:

"(LINC) was wonderful gift; there should have been a quid pro quo that we made a commitment on (our) own goals and reported back on them.... We needed a tighter accountability, for any programme that runs over 5 years, for the process, to prioritise it."

The challenge of working with the culture in the South African bureaucracy emerged clearly. This is seen to undermine the ability of individuals working within it to commit to and plan for engagements. Barry Smith explains the impacts of this:

"People (In government) don't know what they'll do each morning when they arrive, as their agenda may be changed by what the Minister needs them to do... since politics are in tumult there is never any time when things aren't political, so a natural response is to keep your head down.... (as a result) its been hard to build political will. LINC had interest and sympathy from officials but that's hard to translate into a concrete commitment, particularly when you ultimately need ministerial engagement to move these things forward. This is a story that repeats itself across government and is a challenge for any attempt at systemic change that engages government outside itself. " w

How were challenges and opportunities handled, and with what results?

Scope and focus

The question of focusing narrowly on children affected by HIV/AIDS or not was addressed and answered by fellows during the first retreat, where the voices arguing against the narrower agenda carried the day. Thus LINC's mandate was a broad one. Given that this choice point was decisively navigated at an early stage of the process, there is no way of knowing whether outcomes and impacts would have been significantly different with a narrower focus. As Ann commented:

"I think that what we were trying to do was very complex, so the only thing from a systemic point of view that I could've thought of that maybe we should have done was to define the topic more tightly, but we would have still had the complex issues among the stakeholders, but I think that defining the issue more tightly might have helped. And in a way the issue got broadened by the sector itself and I don't think we kept a tight enough rein on it. Maybe the need in the sector was to have the whole thing, even though it was more difficult to achieve outcomes. I don't know, we definitely got pushed beyond OVC and HIV/AIDS."

Expectations

Related to the issue of scope, with hindsight, two core voices felt that the expectations from LINC in the early days from themselves and the fellows had been unrealistically high:

"LINC's intrinsic issue and limitation consisted in being a national network in a large country with a lot of regional variation and a very complex system bringing people with a range of urgent issues together. It was always going to be difficult to find common ground on a few concerns. It wasn't a text book application of U and change lab, it proved some limitations of that thinking on a national level: it's extra difficult for one to bring a wide ranging group together, and distil their concerns to a couple of focus issues. It didn't have the driving and active participation of governmentit led to a lot of angst about what (the fellows) were really there for - what was the concrete outcome? how could they justify this input? how could you commit to a joint innovation when you were only there every 6 months, and then back into overstretched burn out work? What had to shift in LINC was people coming to terms with what was achievable, in what time frame, getting sensible about moderating systems change in a short period which is the Achilles heel

of the U process/Generon approach...its always in tension with the reality that people wanted to please donors in a very conventional way." Barry Smith

"I don't know if we created this or the sense of desperation created it – but the expectations were too high, from us and the sector. You know that's something I've thought about – I've really come to terms with, I think what we did, yes there are things we could have done better and achieved, but I think what we did was possibly as much as could be done." Ann Lamont

After the first Spier retreat, LINC ended up ambitiously aiming to tackle challenges of an astonishing level of complexity and breadth. It is no surprise, therefore, that this made it harder to progress concrete initiatives on the ground and moreover, to do so in multi-stakeholder teams was perhaps too much to ask for.

Drive the process or be responsive?

There were examples where the core team drove action strongly, in reintroducing topics that the fellows had not prioritised in the early workshops, in doing legwork for initiatives between meetings, in driving a particular set of activities at workshops through design and strategy and, given the fact that the Steering Group, which had representation throughout the sector, struggled to find the time to meet, the core was left to take more leadership than had been envisaged at the start.

Coaching was intended to support people to develop Bridging Leadership skills and to support better diary management and reduce other barriers to effective collaboration among those in government and with the most senior roles. The longer term intention being that leaders in the sector would over time need less of the type of support that LINC provided.

However, it is clear from perspectives shared by current fellows, that external support is still necessary and wanted to enable the capacities and relationships that LINC has built to sustain and spread further in the sector:

"If you look at ICT sector which is incredibly successful; business pays millions of rands, dollars, to get the best thinkers together, they have countless opportunities to come together and think about where things are going in their industry, be that around leadership or whatever. People see the value of it, there's no need for tangible output, in fact, people pay for it! The real value is that they can get together and share opportunities. (Children) are far more important and (without LINC) it isn't going to happen because you can't make money from it,

but the value of it is as great as in any of those sectors...."

LINC staff took on a strong role in driving innovation teams until late 2011 and at times the core stepped in (such as in reintroducing the media issue as an innovation), so there were clearly examples where the core 'drove' the process. On the other hand, the willingness to respond to concerns about language and terminology which lead to the wider mandate, the willingness to let some of the innovation teams disband and later, to shift their structure so that one organisation held a theme and other stakeholders came and went, is evidence that at times the core responded to the fellows.

What does emerge here, from the writer's perspective is a question about how this process of balancing this dilemma might have benefited from seeing it as such and managing it proactively, with the knowledge that the need for "intervention" or "space" differs over time and circumstances. From within the core team it sometimes seemed that the 'push/pull' between these two poles became a tension that sat between individuals or organisations espousing either one, instead of the group holding that tension collectively.

Changing thinking or driving action?

From a facilitation point of view, there were moments of missed opportunity during the early meetings, where deeper understanding of patterns in the system might have been revealed and worked with. Mille, for example, noted the fact that a shift from seeing children as victims to seeing them as potential protagonists, was sitting in the group at Spier in 2007 among some people and had shown up as a possible 'new lens' in the dialogue interview process, but it did not emerge through the collective engagement and didn't become a driving insight in LINC going forward.

However, LINC did change thinking in the sector in other significant ways – in particular, fellows pointed to major shifts in how the sectors perceived each other and in how much people identified their counterparts in other sectors as being just their roles, began to be able to experience and interact with them as human beings who cared about children, releasing all of them in the process to imagine different future possibilities together.

"One of the really good things just being able to see the people behind the roles. Actually just seeing people and their humanity...there were some very transformative moments."

The tension between changing thinking (which is

hard to pin down, track and measure) and driving action (which is more easily observable) is at the core of this type of work. As Donella Meadows states in her paper on “leverage points” for systems change⁵ the most powerful shifts happen in systems at the level of paradigms or mindsets: that which is hardest to see has more impact than any measurable concrete action. However it is elusive and frustrating to seek: perhaps we only know it with hindsight.

At this point in LINC’s story, the fellows who were interviewed have spoken most passionately about the changes in their own mindsets – all of the evaluation reports and reviews evidenced this. But this only attests that change is happening at the level of the individual and as the example of the Treasury budgeting process demonstrates, this does not necessarily lead to change in the organisation let alone the system. The question then is not – does this work, but how do we support change at the individual level to create change beyond the individual? Is it a matter of time alone as some have argued (William Bird’s comment that this will need at least 10 years, the coaching report’s assertion that 2 – 5 years is a normal time period for personal change even)? Is it ‘more of the same’? Or are there other ways to expand and deepen the ‘changing thinking’ impact across a system.

If it is ‘driving action’ that needs to take prominence, then Ann Lamont seems to have already learnt from her experience in LINC and to be implementing a new approach. Here she talks about how she is working on a new initiative in the Education sector, called Bridge:

“Bridge, which is deeply collaborative in a different way, is drawing on everything that I learnt from LINC. The core of Bridge is how do you spread successful practice, if there are so many pockets of excellence which there are..how do you spread that? And that’s not about everybody doing one project, it can be about everybody doing bits and pieces that if you put it together in a certain way will have a much greater impact...I think it’s a better model of scale because the myth that we have about “you prototype then you go to scale”, even without prototyping there are very successful projects that just don’t go to scale: we can’t keep on pretending that that is going to happen. So the Bridge thinking is if lots of people are doing successful work in a particular area how do you create scale out of that, or systemic change out of that”.

5 Leverage Points, Places to Intervene in a System. **Donella Meadows**, The Sustainability Institute, Paper, 1999 (accessed online)

System impact vs Organisational Mandate

The strategy of continuing to work through designed and facilitated innovation teams with multi-stakeholder participation, was a key cornerstone of the LINC approach in the early years. However, interviews with a handful of fellows point to an interesting ‘system driven’ response to the limitations of this approach: the opportunities provided by team interactions, informal interactions during ‘time off’ at the retreats, and by group activities, led to many connections which were not designed.

The initiatives and activities that came out of these connections, such as working together on existing projects, scaling up, and learning from each other for programme design and implementation were all, by definition initiated by fellows and were aligned with their existing organisational mandates. Although formally, there may have been challenges relating to the need to better align with job descriptions, fellows took the spaces which LINC provided to do what they needed and wanted to do together anyway.

“ (after that) it was just about building links with different people so that we could work more closely together on things we were running, there wasn’t ‘an innovation’ as such.” William Bird

The ‘revolving door’ for fellows: do we go deep or wide?

The initial strategy to create an ongoing fellowship was pursued, thus bringing in two additional cohorts after the first. The idea about the lack of depth of the second two cohorts was reflected only by those from the first cohort; fellows from cohorts two and three valued LINC for its networking opportunities and did not feel they had ‘less of an experience’. By the end of 2011, there were almost 100 fellows from 60 organisations, so the fellowship was a ‘wide’ one. From the perspective of a core team member, bringing in new participants has, each time, “brought fresh ideas, perspectives, and crucially, energy into the Fellowship”. (Renald Morris, Synergos, LINC co-ordinator)

The question about what might have happened if a smaller group had gone ‘deep’ will remain unanswered. But for one (initial) fellow, the question remains: “I think that as LINC grew bigger with new people coming in, who might have not been grounded in the same way, there were times when we didn’t sing together as well. The only way you can keep bringing in new people is if they were properly oriented and grounded....I thought it didn’t happen.”

Consistency of participation: pushing against the bureaucratic culture

Despite knowing that this issue was not specific to LINC, it remained an area of concern and ongoing questioning: Ann talks about what LINC might have done differently to draw more government commitment, but also of how those strategies have been tried, without success:

"I've thought about it a lot. I'm not sure I have the answers from a systemic perspective. I just see it again and again and again in development. It's the games we play. Government sits with the power, people won't attend if government doesn't attend, this one feels left out and that one feels left out Maybe it would have helped if we had more relationships with the Minister, but I've done that too and then when you get passed down it becomes an issue at that level. The DG was going to come to the first meeting and maybe it would have helped if he'd been there, but I've done that before as well and they get too busy and even if you have that support it somehow disappears along the way."

As one fellow commented:

"People realised that we had different workloads, but I don't know that we shifted out of the frustration with each other. I don't know how they could have done it. There might have been a handful of people who came away with an aha about pace/slow, but I'm not convinced in the last 2 or 3 meetings, there was still quite a divide, over the way we function. My frustration with some of the stuckness with government didn't shift."

Although she finished on a more positive note with a suggestion:

"I think there are one or two people in government who really benefited from the larger fellowship at national level who I work with a lot and have really benefited from a process similar to mine – affirmation of their judgment and their wisdom through relationship and the process. What would have been wonderful would have been to take that a step further, help them to be able to function in a more authoritative manner that would have needed close coaching designed for government officials." (*The coaching programme was offered to government officials, some of whom took it up, but others did not because of time and diary commitments.*)

This challenge is not, as Ann comments, only related to LINC, but is rather a challenge which any

multi-stakeholder initiative in South Africa must engage with and address as best it can.

Self-assessment

Overall, how the 'sowers' feel now about what they began:

Ann: *"On balance if I look back it definitely did not achieve what I would have liked it to achieve but it definitely achieved and I think it was brave to try. I've come to feel comfortable with that. And I learnt a lot."*

Barry: *"I see the explicit value of this approach as a leadership development initiative and approach. If one looks at it as a collaborative leadership initiative, it's been quite successful."*

Mille (who left LINC in 2008): *"It was a bit painful, (Reos stepping out of a partering role in LINC) but for me it doesn't change the fact that the convening process created an initiative that started in 2007 and still continues in 2013."*

Bridging Leadership among the 'sowers'

Mille and Ann both spoke about the fact that they were able to handle differences productively and that they possessed complementary skills which made LINC more powerful in the early stages:

Mille Bojer on her and Ann's relationship: *"We had a shared purpose and the sense that we needed each other to do something that was going to be really great. I think there was a certain self awareness that the other person had something that we didn't have so maybe we both had some of that. And we had a pretty transparent relationship, take the conflicts directly, go for coffee, what's going on, give each other feedback."*

Workshop Design and Processes

Each of the retreats was designed with the purpose of creating the space and possibility for new relationships to be developed, existing relationships to be improved and for the possibility of conflict being resolved where it had been a barrier. Some of the most successful exercises and their impacts are described here:

The Power Game

This was the first exercise at the first retreat. It involved giving people each a playing card on their head – effectively labelling them as a 'bottom', 'middle' or 'top'. Moving around having to guess from how other people treat you, which of these you are, and then finding each other to form your group. Participants (including senior government officials) who were labelled 'bottoms' in this exer-

4. Lessons Learned

cise ended up 'toi-toi-ing' (a form of South African protest dance) at the end of this exercise. The process opened up the issue of power and rank in the group and was a contributory factor in participants feeling able to engage with each other 'as human beings' rather than in their roles in the LINC space.

Fellows mentioned this in interviews and in the Singizi evaluation report as having had a significant impact on the levels of trust and openness in the group from the start.

Prouds and Sorries

A second significant process designed into the first retreat was to gather the major 'sectors' together – however diverse they may have been internally – government, business, NGOs, academia. Each sector was asked to develop a list of what they were proud of – what they felt was their positive contribution to the child care system – as well as what they were sorry for – what they believed they were doing to create the less than ideal outcomes that the group had come together to address.

Overall the effect was, in the case of government in particular, to demonstrate that they were well aware of how challenging they were to work with and that difficult issues, such as siloed behaviour was brought into the process by the protagonists, instead of being a source of criticism and conflict from the other sectors, fearing to raise it. Another major insight was around the fact that NGOs found it difficult to take responsibility for anything negative that was happening in the sector and stayed in a 'finger pointing' position.

This opened up the possibility to discuss these topics more openly, and also increased the atmosphere of trust in the group as a whole.

Being outside the sector

The core were sometimes very aware of not being "from the sector" in terms of taking on a Convening role and in the early stages this led to a sense of them being, as one person said to Mille: "white and pushy". On the other hand, being 'outsiders' offered the strength of being perceived as relatively neutral in some of the major conflicts that were going on.

Way Forward

LINC, through Synergos, is currently looking ahead to its next phase of development. A recent concept

note states that the approach in the coming years will be to: retain and build on what has proven effective; support promising innovations identified by the Fellows; identify priority/strategic areas in the 2030 National Development Plan where LINC can influence and identify strategic blockages in the children's sector that would benefit from the 'brains trust' generated by the collective knowledge of the fellows.

Key elements of this approach will involve consideration of recruiting a new cohort of fellows with a coaching interventions for them; peer learning and consulting sessions at regional level and two national meetings a year. There is the possibility of collaborating based on the strong knowledge and existing co-operation of LINC fellows, with several development agencies and LINC will also play a more central role in the Synergos Social Connectedness Programme.

Case Writer's Conclusion

In 2013, an increasing number of events and processes are based on the ideas of dialogue, collaboration and innovation, as people begin to experience what it's like to operate when they are given the space to do what really matters to them, and to do it with others who share their passion. In 2007, LINC broke new ground in this field. Its initiators stepped into uncharted territory working in this way and managed to bring with them an exceptionally powerful group who could engage from all parts of the Children's Sector. As each of them acknowledged, they can be proud of the work they did in bringing the idea to fruition.

This case study has also highlighted where there were paths not taken that might have led to different, perhaps even better, outcomes: what might have happened if the initial group had focused on mindset change rather than practical innovation, as Mille commented? What could a smaller group who stayed together longer have created, as one of the fellows imagined? What if there had been less need for cross-sectoral work and newness and more on replicating what already works, as Ann has gone on to do? What if the focus had stayed narrower somehow? These are all valid questions to ask, and paths for other initiatives that follow this pattern, to pursue.

LINC has instead followed a path of addressing the leadership in the children's sector as a whole, paying attention and taking seriously for the first

time, the incredible stress and demands on leaders of their work with the traumas of so many young lives.

LINC has succeeded in offering these leaders concrete practical support to become more effective in their work, a place to share and be heard by others in the same situation, a place to discover and try new things, and to make connections that can increase the impact of whatever resources they have. In some cases this has led to significant shifts: Isibindi being one, healing a personal and political rift that ran through the centre of the sector, being another. Like other initiatives of its type, LINC faces the difficulty that measuring the 'impact' of changes like these is elusive.

And as Meadows, quoted earlier, states, it is shifting mindsets which has the biggest impact. I would like to suggest that shifting the mindsets of at least some leaders in the Children's Sector to appreciate that they need and can get support of whatever kind from each other and from LINC, is one such change, which has contributed to building the resilience of an entire sector. In 2007, a major underlying tone of the Synthesis report was one of panic and burn out. But newer fellows don't emphasise this, they prefer to talk about networking and opportunities, one even likened them to business people in the IT sector who want to make new connections and have bigger impact. Certainly, some of the changes in government policy around health system responses to HIV have led to less of a 'crisis' situation, but LINC has also played a role.

Finally, it struck me and gave me great hope that every person interviewed for this report talked about the benefits they'd gained from LINC, the gratitude they had for its work and their desire that the best of it continue.

ALI	African Leadership Initiative
ANC	African National Congress
ARV	Anti-retroviral drugs
BL	Bridging Leadership
CBO	Community Based Organisation
DSD	Department of Social Development
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus infection / acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NACCA	National Action Committee for Children affected by HIV and AIDS
NACCW	National Association of Child Care Workers
OVC	Orphans and vulnerable children
PTMTC	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (of HIV)
SANAC	South African National AIDS Council
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Appendix I

2006	Initiative conceived	
2006	Dialogue interviews	
feb-07	Synthesis report v1	
Nov-07	First Retreat and Synthesis report v2 presented	
May-08	Farm Inn 'Innovation Lab'	Cohort 1
jul-08	GIBS Innovation Lab	
sep-08	Collaboration Lab Zebra Lodge	
Nov-08	Leadership Retreat Spier	
Jan-09	Media Event	
Feb-09	Local Government Workshop	
Mar-09		Evaluation Report
Apr-09	Co-Planning event	
May-09	Induction event	Cohort 2
Jun-09	Leadership Retreat Kaya Ibubhesi	
Aug-09	Donor Funding Directory	
Nov-09	Leadership Retreat Spier	Group coaching introduction
Jan-10	Strategy Consultation at Provinces	
Mar-10		Group Coaching
May-10	New Strategy workshop Gauteng	
Jun-10		Group Coaching
Jun-out-10	Recruit and baseline assess	Cohort 3
aug-10	Children Act Workshop	
Aug-10	Action Learning Dialogue	
Nov-10	New Fellows Provincial orientation	
Dec-10	Induction and retreat new fellows (only?)	
Dec-10		Group coaching
Jan-11	Bringing Leadership competency findings	
Jan-11	Handover to Synergos	
Feb-11		Group coaching
May-11		Group coaching
Sep-11	Coaching Assessment and close out	
Nov-11	Leadership retreat Spier	
Mar-12	Provincial Consultations on future	
Mar-12	Social connectedness knowledge exchange I	
Jun-12	End of 5 year plan	
Jul-12	Social connectedness knowledge exchange II	

Appendix 2: Stakeholder groups

- **Community-based Organisations (CBOs):** Thousands of community-based organisations are responding to the crisis. They are often started by a local woman or group of women, who begin to take care of the children. Their key role is in providing home-based care, strengthening family and community coping systems, identifying children in need of care, providing psychosocial support, spiritual guidance and material assistance. They are generally under-resourced, run by volunteers, and in need of small amounts of steady funding, as well as organisational capacity-building. They are also welfare-driven, and tend to be more short-term in their outlook as they aim to meet immediate needs.
 - **Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs):** A number of larger, professional, national and international organisations work strategically for OVC in South Africa. They mobilise and disburse resources, advocate, develop and implement models for care, and facilitate coordination of service delivery. Some are focused on home-based care, while others run community centers, community childcare forums and/or even children's homes. They often liaise with CBOs and community structures helping to channel resources and build capacity. Key organisations active in South Africa include NOAH, Heartbeat, Starfish Foundation, SOS Children's Villages, Hope Worldwide, World Vision, Save the Children, CARE, and others.
 - **Faith-based organisations (FBOs):** Every community has a church or a mosque, and the faith-based communities can play a vital role in communicating important messages to communities as well as providing material and spiritual support to people in need.
 - **Government:** Current policy and programming interventions directed at supporting children affected by HIV and AIDS are guided by the principles set out in the "2004 Framework for the Protection, Care and Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World With HIV and AIDS". The National Action Committee for Children Affected by HIV and AIDS (NACCA) has been mandated to coordinate the implementation of the framework. NACCA is a permanent co-ordinating structure of government departments, civil society, business and development agencies, led by the Department of Social Development. But while the policy frameworks in South Africa are highly progressive, government faces significant challenges in implementation, integration, and leadership.
- Government departments involved include: the Presidency, within which the Office of the Rights of the Child is focused on mainstreaming child rights and a child-centred approach, the Department of Social Development, which facilitates service delivery for the fulfilment of rights of children; the Department of Education, which develops mechanisms for a schoolbased support system, and provides fee exemption; the Department of Justice, which needs to ensure that the rights of children are protected; the Department of Health, which is to provide treatment, care, and support for management of HIV/AIDS; the Department of Home Affairs, which provides birth certificates and identity documents which are crucial to affected children receiving government grants and services; other departments such as Housing, Agriculture, Transport, Correctional Services, the Police, the House of Traditional Leaders etc.
- **Business:** Businesses are active through their foundations, Corporate Social Investment programmes, and employee giving and volunteering schemes. They help to provide key resources, as well as providing support structures for their own employees and families, and getting involved in the communities surrounding their business. Sometimes, however business can be more driven by legal compliance and PR opportunities than by a motivation to see impact on the ground. While some businesses are driven by a long-term perspective, others fail to see the link between the OVC issue and their world. There is also little communication happening across businesses to align approaches.
 - **International donors:** A number of bilateral and multilateral donors are active in South Africa. A positive trend is that the resources devoted to this issue are increasing. A key challenge is how to trickle funding down to local level, as the grant amounts offered are usually large, there are time lags between proposal submission and disbursement of funds, and application procedures and reporting requirements are too heavy for small organisations to meet.
 - **Universities and Research Institutions:** The academic community researches and publicises issues related to OVC, and does advocacy work.
 - **Media:** Mainstream media who can raise awareness around the issue.

Appendix 3

Sources

Orphans and Vulnerable Children in South Africa: Problem, Perceptions, Players... and Possibilities for Change. Interview Synthesis Report

African Leadership Initiative

April 2007

1st LINC Fellowship Meeting Report: Enhancing Collaborative Leadership to Improve Care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children

Reos Partners

November 2007

Orphans and Vulnerable Children Leadership and Innovation Network: Briefing Document

Ann Lamont, Mille Bojer

April 2008

2nd LINC Fellowship Meeting Report

Reos Partners

May 2008

Increasing Awareness and Action on Children's Issues Media Event Report

Reos Partners

January 2009

Exploring Good Practice Examples at Local Municipal Level Aimed at Improving Services to Children, LINC Meeting Report

Reos Partners

February 2009

Joint Planning for Children Meeting

Vanessa Sayers, Reos Partners

April 2009

LINC First Round Evaluation Report (Oct 2008 – Mar 2009)

Carmel Marock, Nicky Roberts, Singizi and Kelello Consulting

May 2009

4th LINC Fellows Meeting Zebra Lodge

Reos Partners

September 2009

LINC Innovation Team Review

Vanessa Sayers, Reos Partners

October 2010

Results from LINC Coaching process

Jopie van Rooyen Associates, Nicola Taylor

September 2011

The Bridging Leadership Development Programme:

Coaching Return on Investment Report for LINC 2010/2011

Resolve Encounter Coaching

September 2011

LINC Presentation on Leadership Development to Synergos Senior Fellows

Ann Lamont, Renald Morris Synergos

October 2011

Spier Meeting Report

LINC

December 2011

Consolidated Report on LINC Sustainability Provincial Consultation Meetings

Synergos

March 2012

Appendix 4

List of interviews in alphabetical order

Name	Organisation
Bird, William	Media Monitoring Project (LINC Fellow)
Bojer, Mille	Reos Partners
Lamont, Ann	Convvene Venture Philanthropy (now LINC Fellow)
Loening-Voysey, Heidi	UNICEF (LINC Fellow)
Magner, Colleen	Reos Partners
Morris, Renald	Synergos
Peters, Corne	Mondi (SA corporate) (LINC Fellow)
Smith, Barry	Former Synergos
Thumbadoo, Zeni	National Association of Child Care Workers (LINC Fellow)
Van Vrede, Brenton	Treasury, Social Development (LINC Fellow)