YOUTH VOICES
IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE

CONTENT OVERVIEW

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

by Vanessa Terschluse, editor-in-chief at The 50 Percent & Sandrine Dixson-Declève, Club of Rome Co-President

Resilience is defined as 'the capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties'. In the last couple of years, resilience has become the buzzword in the climate movement.

Rightly so, considering that our future as a species depends on two things: how quickly and effectively we act to address climate change, and how resilient we are to its now unavoidable shocks.

Regardless of how successful we are at limiting the causes and impacts of a changing planet, we will undeniably face significant impacts – from more frequent severe weather, ocean warming and acidification to longer-lasting droughts and extreme temperatures. The scientific community has been warning us for decades that the impacts of extreme weather and exacerbating 'natural' disasters can significantly contribute to societal collapse, making it clear that resilience is an essential component of any climate adaptation programme.
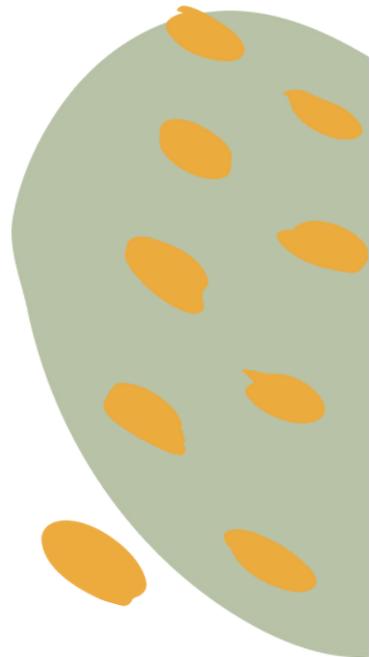
At The 50 Percent and at The Club of Rome, we believe that all work to make our societies resilient to the environmental and social shocks of climate change is in vain if we do not fix the root causes of our vulnerability – our current economic and financial systems. Our current systems value short term profits and shareholder value rather than the planet and people's livelihoods. They exacerbate inequality and have led to growing political instability for the financial benefit of the few. To build truly resilient communities, we must therefore abandon or revolutionize the systems that are wreaking havoc on the environment and weakening social structures, replacing them with systems that nurture human well-being and safeguard our natural world.

Young people all over the world are already leading the work to uproot outdated systems, creating a movement that calls for innovative, new ways of existing on this planet. As time runs out to act on climate, it is time that forums such as the UNFCCC COP rise to the challenge and start to truly enable the multi-level systems change that we need.

The urgency and complexity of addressing climate change demands a transformative approach in our global efforts. The current COP process, while essential, has since the Paris COP increasingly fallen short of the action and speed needed to deliver on the Paris Agreement and guarantee a planet for future generations.

t's imperative that we <u>reimagine the role of the COP's</u>, transforming these into dynamic negotiations with a focus on smaller delivery based meetings between the parties anchored in current science and climate impacts. Sadly, the COP's have increasingly become trade shows with growing numbers of attendees.

This month's COP will welcome 75,000 attendees most of whom are not negotiators, some of which, are advocating for a continuation of an extractive fossil energy based economy.

It's crucial to move away from a sporadic series of events at one annual COP gathering to smaller, more frequent engagement that ensures a continuous flow of ideas, insights and feedback loops with the sole purpose of ensuring climate action and building greater resilience to future shocks and stresses.

After all, systems-change work is rooted in hope and the pursuit of a future that is more just, equitable, and ultimately, joyous. While there certainly are moments of grief, loss and defeat, the pursuit for a better world can and should also be an inspiring experience. Building community, re-connecting to ancient knowledge systems, reframing our relationship to the natural world and revolutionizing how our cities look, are all incredibly crucial to building a more resilient world – and to happier, fairer societies.

SABAI SABAI: THE UNSINKABLE SPIRIT OF BANGKOK by Tanvi Mishra, YFCA

"When people ask me what I miss most about my hometown, I fail to put it into words. Thailand's capital Bangkok is often conflated as nothing more than either a hedonist or a backpacker's dream, in a superficial glance of a city that boasts so much more."

Known to locals as Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, or simply Krung Thep, the city lies between the paddy fields and peaceful towns of Northern Thailand and the beaches and bonfire festivities in the south, which is home to the many beautiful islands that the nation prides itself on. Bangkok itself is a mature cosmopolitan city that never sleeps, with glittering lights and temples, and the beautiful Chao Phraya river cutting through it.

I've realised lately that the thing I miss most about home is the spirit of Thai people— a spirit that could be summed up in a commonly heard phrase in Thai, "sabai sabai."

Ask a man on the streets, "Sabai mai?" (Are you doing well?) And you'll hear back, "Sabai khap!" (Doing great!)

Syntactically it's similar to the French "Ça va?" "Ça va!", (which means the same as the given interaction) but sabai is a bit different in that it is also a philosophy.

Sabai means relaxation, contentment, and an easy-going attitude towards life. To face life with serenity, positivity, and peace. This is quite possibly why we're called the Land of Smiles — it's simply sabai at work.

In my line of work, climate change takes centre stage in our thoughts, threatening to disrupt the range of variables we've survived in; pleasant temperatures, a predictable water cycle, healthy crops, few natural disasters, and a sense of comfort, I suppose. All of these are at risk— and with a recent surge of climate denialism (spurred by the goaded lobbying of fossil fuel companies), I've seen concerns over climate change manifest as deep-seated worry in young people, as well as anxiety, fear, and anger. All of these are visible in the spirit embodied by young people as they often find themselves doing the work of raising awareness on climate change on the global stage and their local communities — in negotiating rooms, protests, dinner tables with their families, their classrooms, and so many more spaces where young people are pushing the climate agenda forward.

But despite Bangkok regularly featuring on the top ten cities most vulnerable to global warming through rising sea levels, the same manifestation of "eco-anxiety" is not quite reflected here. This does not mean that climate change is ignored or belittled, (admittedly a hard task when you experience major flooding nearly every year.) Global warming and pollution is definitely a hotly discussed topic, and the Thai government is an active party to the UN Climate Change Conferences (COP).

Thailand ratified the Paris Agreement in 2015 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2002; and climate change is a phenomena that is acutely real in the Thai vision and accepted by the civil society and the government here.

The Thai Nationally-Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement lay out goals to become carbon neutral by 2050, laying out the fragility of the country and the steps needed to develop in a sustainable manner.

In fact, the late king HM Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX's theory of the "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy," a formal conceptualisation of sustainability and effective resource usage juxtaposed with the Thai sabai philosophy, is also highlighted as a strategy in Thailand's submission to the UNFCCC. The "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy" encapsulates moderation, prudence, resilience, and the middle path in life, following on from Buddhist teachings.

The government itself has a lot of work to do to ensure effective climate action, from retrofitting an ageing national grid with poor connection in certain regions (we are still a developing country!), to phasing out coal and gas in favour of renewables without tampering the balance between growth and climate

commitments. Still, the nation accounts for less than 1% of global emissions but will be one of the first to feel its brunt.

There have been a spur of innovative ideas in Bangkok to combat its impending fate, like the brilliant "Porous City" project, by my favourite architect, Kotchakorn Voraakhom, that includes a park in Bangkok that absorbs excess runoff water. Her TED talk on the matter is a masterpiece — she conveys a problem, and offers a solution with a smile. This to me exemplifies sabai; grace and resilience in the face of challenges.

Ahead of COP28 countries race to evaluate the Global Stocktake, whis is, in simple terms, a measure of progress in climate action for the whole planet, rather than a country-to-country basis. As countries convene and negotiate over goals, there will also be an exchange of ideas and attitudes. The sabai attitude and a moderate way of thinking has been enshrined in the Thai NDCs, and one can hope that a similar idea of restraint, moderation, and sufficiency can inspire other countries to consider sustainability as being more than a political tool. It's a philosophy and a way of living; just like sabai.

There's no way to predict when Bangkok may face its watery fate. Perhaps the city will gracefully return to its roots, navigating its waterways like the boats that gave birth to the famous kuay tiew ruea (Thai boat noodles). What remains certain is the unwavering resilience of our people— the Thai spirit of sabai sabai. **We will find a way to manage the inevitable flooding of Bangkok, always with a smile and an innate adaptability. It's in this spirit of resilience, amidst the uncertainties of climate change, that we find hope.**

In the words of an ancient Thai proverb, "กุศลมีลูก" (Guson mee look), or "goodness has children"– a reminder that our good deeds ripple forward.

ON RESILIENCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH VANESSA TERSCHLUSE

What does resilience mean to you?

I come from a long line of resilient women. As I grew-up, I watched them, or was told stories of, how they adapted to various circumstances and hardships. All of them had a stubborn mind and a fierce heart, and an unshakable belief that more was possible. It is their collective resilience that allows me to thrive. I do not take this for granted. I see it as my responsibility to carry on their dream of a better world. For me, that means using my voice to advocate for a more resilient, just and equitable world. In today's context, resilience for me means doing all we can to mitigate and adapt to climate change, while simultaneously working to eradicate the systems of oppression that created it, so that we don't continue reinforcing the cycles of environmental disaster, poverty and oppression.

What does it mean to be an active citizen?

For me, being an active citizen means actively taking responsibility and initiative towards the world around you. It means using your skills, your voice, your voting power and any other ways in which you can safely and peacefully express yourself politically as a tool to better your community.

While of course, some people have privilege that gives them access to certain rooms, or that allows their voices to be heard more loudly, I still truly believe that everyone can be an active citizen. Start in your community, think about what skills you have and what you can safely do to help others around you, or change perspectives, and do that. Small steps lead to big things.

How does the work that you do with the Storytelling Fellowship and the 50 Percent zines contribute to resilience?

At the 50 Percent, we strongly believe that storytelling is a powerful tool to teach systems thinking. When we tell stories, we have to ask fundamental questions – where is the character from, how were they raised, what kind of impact does their environment have on them, did they have access to education, if not, how did that change their life, and so forth.

As Kristen who runs our Storytelling Fellowship also always says – we only see the world from where we are standing. Storytelling helps us to amplify our worlds. In our fellowship, we focus on developing active listening skills – a key pillar of resilience. Because when we listen to each other, we develop a sense of shared understanding. Shared understanding allows us to build relationships and create communities, and once communities act on a common principle, value or vision, they start to move mountains.

NURTURING RESILIENCE: HARNESSING THE POWER OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN SHAPING THE RESILIENCE EVIDENCE LANDSCAPE

by June Kimaiyo, Global Resilience Partnership

Young individuals hold a critical role in driving resilience efforts and fostering intergenerational dialogues that are essential for overcoming challenges and creating innovative solutions. Within the resilience community, there's a noticeable scarcity of opportunities for collaboration, emphasising the need for amplifying youth voices and fostering transformative learning especially from failure. This gap emphasises the necessity for collaborative processes that facilitate learning, reflection, and the translation of knowledge into actionable results.

What is Resilience Evidence :
It is the available bodies of knowledge that establish which interventions work and which don't, and how we tell the difference between the two. Resilience evidence is framed as broader than measurement as it seeks to mediate between the needs and priorities of evidence producers and its users, and support evidence-informed action (including and not limited to the domains of policy and decision making, practice, and investment).

Young Professionals' Role in Redefining the Conversation

Acknowledging the influential role of the youth demographic in shaping the future is vital. GRP recognizes the importance of a more grounded and nuanced discussion on youth involvement in adaptation and resilience. To address this, GRP actively engages with young professionals through capacity building, peer-to-peer learning, and policy involvement. This inclusive approach brings fresh perspectives, innovative solutions, and increased inclusivity to the resilience field, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability.

GRP engages young people through the Resilience Evidence Coalition through grantmaking, fostering leadership and by amplifying young voices in the community of practice around resilience, evidence and measurement. These grants support innovative evidence-building approaches, such as arts, citizen science, games, and storytelling. GRP's initiatives include the Resilience Perspectives competition and the Knowledge Into Use (KIU) awards. These initiatives offer young individuals a platform to exchange innovative solutions and showcase resilience evidence in their communities.

Through the Resilience Evidence Forum, young people contribute new sources of evidence, such as Cinderella Ndlovu's work in highlighting the impact of increasing climate change on local and Indigenous knowledge bases.

On the other hand young people surfaced the knowledge of How do we collect, analyse, and mobilise the evidence bases.

This includes the utilisation of methods rooted in cultural heritage, arts, or performance, which can creatively codify evidence and engage a wider audience. Approaches such as participatory theatre, dance, music, filmmaking, photovoice, murals, and games contribute to evidence-building while enhancing communication and engagement. concrete examples from the KIU are demonstrated by Aranya Design, who collaborated with students and educators from three local government schools in a small Indigenous hamlet in Sarodhi, a village in the Valsad district of Gujarat, India. Together, they created a zine and activity book that not only educates students about their Indigenous knowledge and ecological heritage but also introduces scientific methods for examining plants, soils, hydrology, and landscapes. Additionally, Nabeel Peterson, partnered with academics at the University of Cape Town to capture stories of community-based, climate resilience activities through comics and murals. These pieces of art aim to raise the awareness among the university students and lecturers on the communities' water vulnerability and resilience. This in turn inspired students and lecturers to incorporate new ways of doing research, like art and storytelling, that include the communities' stories and have local impact.

The Resilience Perspectives storytelling competition further amplifies young resilience actors' voices, promoting innovative solutions for a resilient future. These exceptional narratives shed light on personal experiences, social networks, and systems, advocating for various aspects of resilience. From advocating for biodiverse agroforestry systems to reimagining sustainable fashion, championing climate justice, conserving water resources, and empowering communities against disasters, the tales explored the dilemmas and trade-offs of resilience decisions while showcasing the unexpected surprises and outcomes that emerge along the way.

Capacity strengthening, including internships; the Global South Pool Talent, is another way GRP engages young professionals. These initiatives foster a deeper understanding of resilience, measure progress, and empower young individuals to participate in global decision-making spaces. Insights gained from these activities are synthesised into knowledge products, contributing to a more nuanced policy and knowledge discourse driven by and for young people engaged in climate resilience activities.
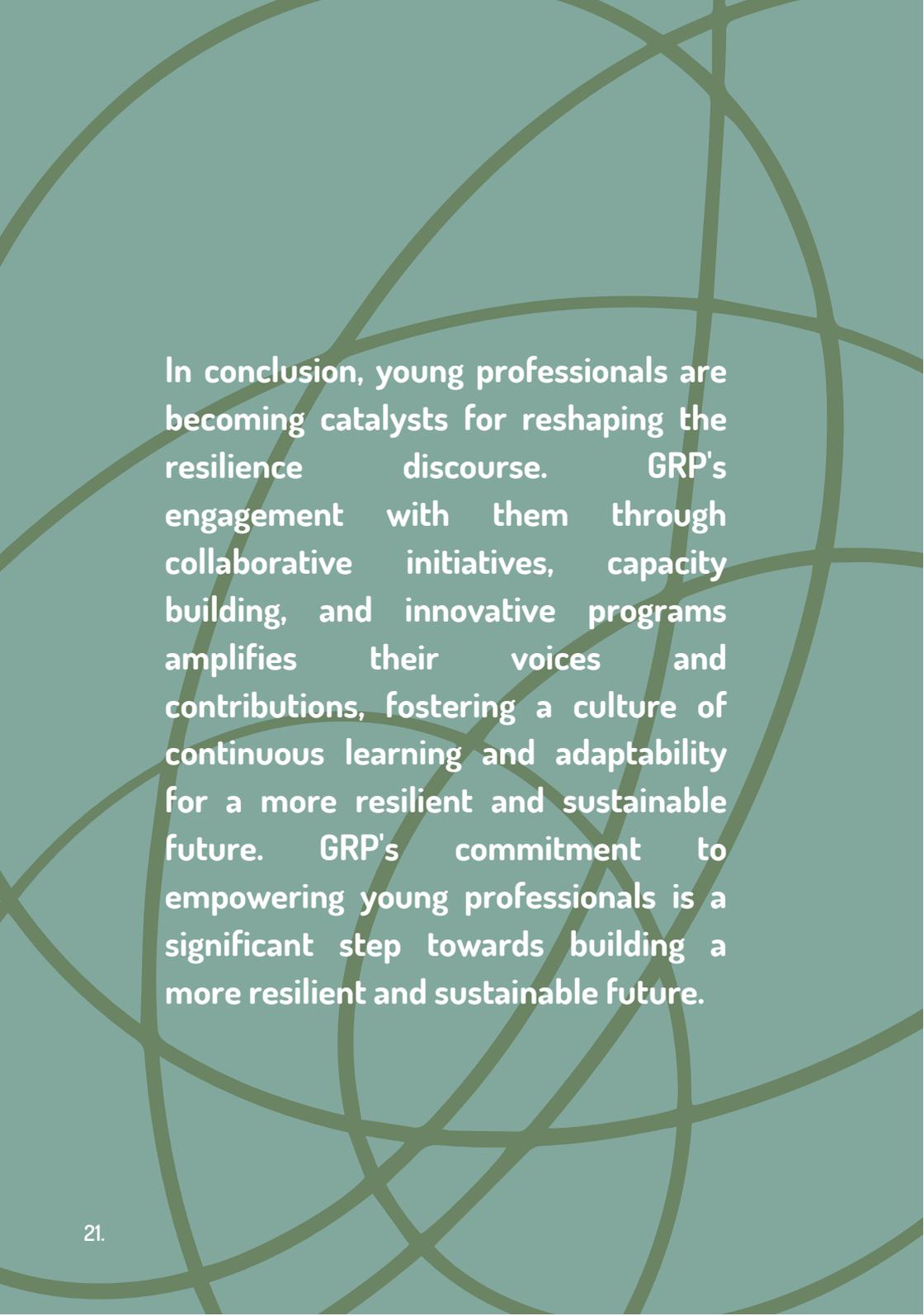
In conclusion, young professionals are becoming catalysts for reshaping the resilience discourse. GRP's engagement with them through collaborative initiatives, capacity building, and innovative programs amplifies their voices and contributions, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability for a more resilient and sustainable future. GRP's commitment to empowering young professionals is a significant step towards building a more resilient and sustainable future.

WALKING THE PATH OF SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

by Lourdes Albarnoz, The 50 Percent

Pluriverse and Situated Knowledge

The thoughts that I want to share here with you today grew from a valley haunted by persistent colonization, where bodies and territories have learnt how to survive with the resilience that we inherited from the elders. In the same way that the Añañuca, a flower of the desert, patiently waits for the first rain to bloom. With the bravery of the puma that hides in the caves of the hill until its prey appears.

A thought that is not debated or studied, a knowledge that is cyclical like the world itself, that knows how to live, that is based on its past and is validated in its possibility of the future.

From the margins of the current global system, we have been sharing our ideas and listening to ways of knowing born in centers of globalized thought. Let's take "scientific thinking" as an example. We returned to the contributions of the Club of Rome to dialogue with them. The "dynamic system models" that they have been creating try to explain the existence, functioning and the various possible scenarios within what they call the "Global System". With this statement, the wise men of culture and science based in the Global North convey to us an idea that we share: the world is round, it is one.Starting from different paradigms and knowledge methodologies, we have reached the same conclusion: industrialized civilization can collapse due to the overexploitation of the resources available on Planet Earth.

In light of these findings, some speak of "collapse", emphasizing that the decrease in industrial and economic growth could damage food production and people's lifestyle, generating social problems of catastrophic dimensions.

We speak of balance and imbalance. Pachakuti, return to the Earth, return of time. The moment we clear the soil to make room to sow new seeds.
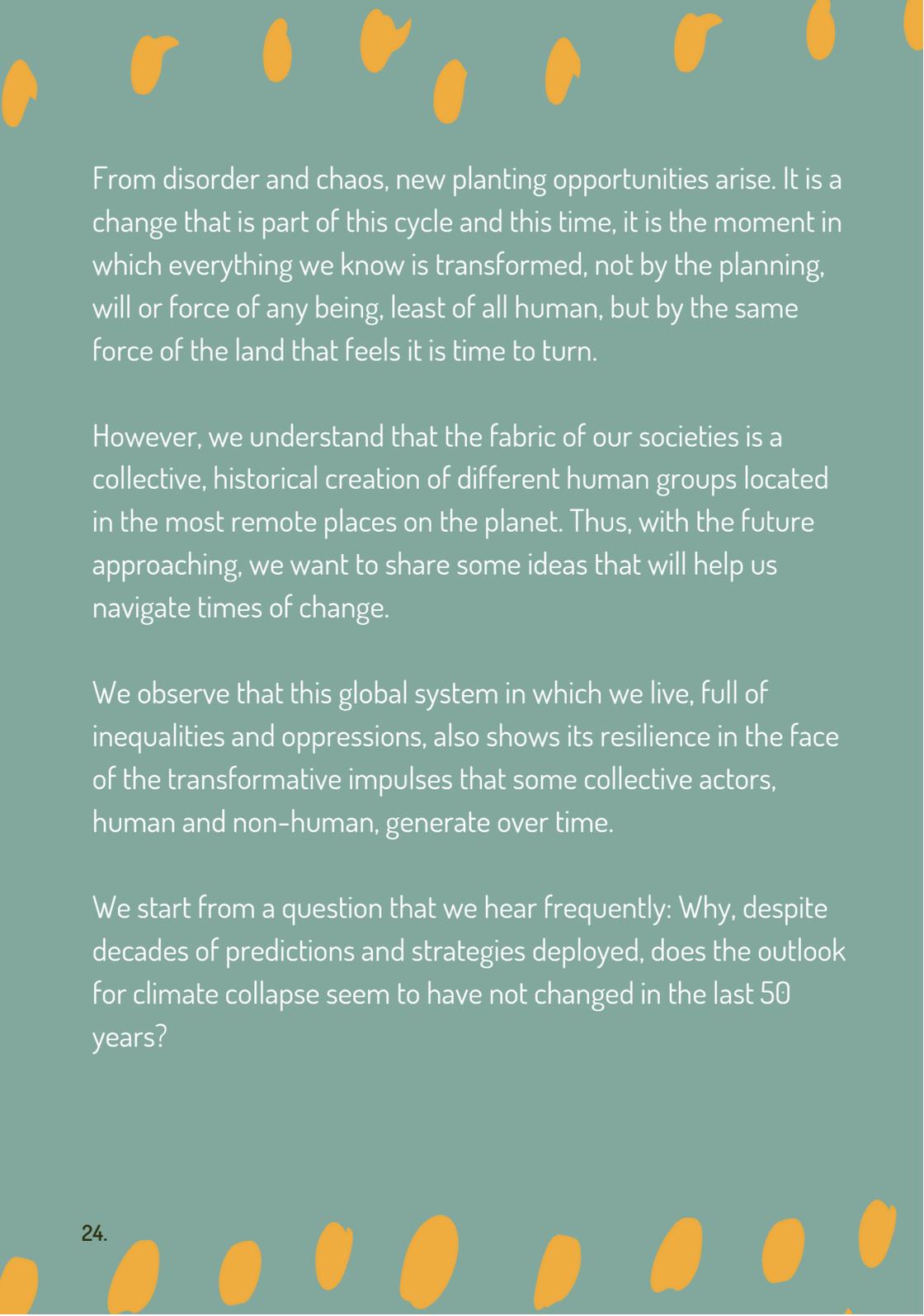
From disorder and chaos, new planting opportunities arise. It is a change that is part of this cycle and this time, it is the moment in which everything we know is transformed, not by the planning, will or force of any being, least of all human, but by the same force of the land that feels it is time to turn.

However, we understand that the fabric of our societies is a collective, historical creation of different human groups located in the most remote places on the planet. Thus, with the future approaching, we want to share some ideas that will help us navigate times of change.

We observe that this global system in which we live, full of inequalities and oppressions, also shows its resilience in the face of the transformative impulses that some collective actors, human and non–human, generate over time.

We start from a question that we hear frequently: Why, despite decades of predictions and strategies deployed, does the outlook for climate collapse seem to have not changed in the last 50 years?

A system that resists

Where are the cracks hidden through which the most unjust founding elements of the global system achieve resilience, and continue to be replicated?

The world we inhabit constitutes of a system in several senses:

On the one hand, it obeys its own dynamics of operation and reproduction, since it has different interdependent components, with different degrees of autonomy from each other. We identify that some of these parts change, adapting to external influences, over time. While other parts that make up that nucleus subsist and remain invariant.

Examples of sub-systems within that global system include financial, economic, social, technological, military, political-institutional, cultural systems, among others. All of them are in permanent interdependence with the natural ecological world of which, of course, it is a part.

The global system generates resistance to change, ensuring its own resilience, so that it has the capacity to regenerate and find new points of balance.

THE NARRATIVE OF GLOBAL ELITES:

they permeate science, research, cultural products, the policies of companies, states and multilateral organizations.

In the same way that colonization considered that it should save the souls of heretics, while appropriating their natural resources, much of the Western paradigm of knowledge production bases its practices on the social representation of it's subjects of research as lacking, in need of tutelage, of knowledge and resources other than those they possess. For example, the premise that education will save the world, without asking what type of education that is, leads to the creation of educational programs that seek to protect and impose Western paradigms of knowledge, while devaluing the actions of local subjects, all under the pretense of the pursuit of "global change."

Other narratives that are worth mentioning:

TIME AND SPACE AS LINEAR PHENOMENA

the past behind, the future ahead. They consider as "development" the dynamics of Eurocentric societies, without understanding that the mere existence of developed countries is based on the exploitation of conquered territories.

THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Often considering those who face the injustices of the global system as punishable subjects, making use of legal frameworks created in the 19th and 20th centuries, oriented towards the defense of private property, capital, and individual well-being. When it does discuss the generational oppression of individual groups, it does so by debating their rights and selecting individual subjects as a "sample" (tokenism) to "represent" and speak on a particular cause, but only if they do so while still enriching and reproduce the founding elements of the global system, without representing a real threat to it, and without questioning its fundamental contradictions.

The 50 Percent engages local youth in systems thinking at LCOY Argentina

MONOPOLY ON LARGE-SCALE TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Mainly oriented towards military and economic purposes, while only a small piece of technology advancement reaches large communities which allows the world's superpowers and multinational corporations to continue with their financial speculation with promises of individual progress. In this way, they seek to expand on a minimal scale the limits of everyone's economic growth, brutally expanding the limits of overexploitation of the natural resources available in the world.


Intergenerational discussions in Costa Rica

Radical Sustainability: that which has no roots will fail.

In the scenario presented where the current global system, based on the oppression and exploitation of communities and ecosystems alike, protects itself and makes itself resilient to any real meaningful change, what realities do we need to look at?

We ask ourselves: Is it possible to move towards a horizon of de-growth?

We are facing a cosmological problem: accumulation as a practical philosophy of "civilized" societies. The analyzes of systemic change that hegemonic science has been proposing conceive the human being as a rational, infinite, omnipresent being, capable of analyzing and directing global transformations from projects, programs, COPs, actions and initiatives born from Eurocentric logics.

Perhaps we have not yet understood our own limitations as people whose capacity for transformation is limited also by the boundaries of time and space. Perhaps part of this shift can begin by rethinking how we perceive ourselves, to start to see humans as limited beings, like the Earth itself.
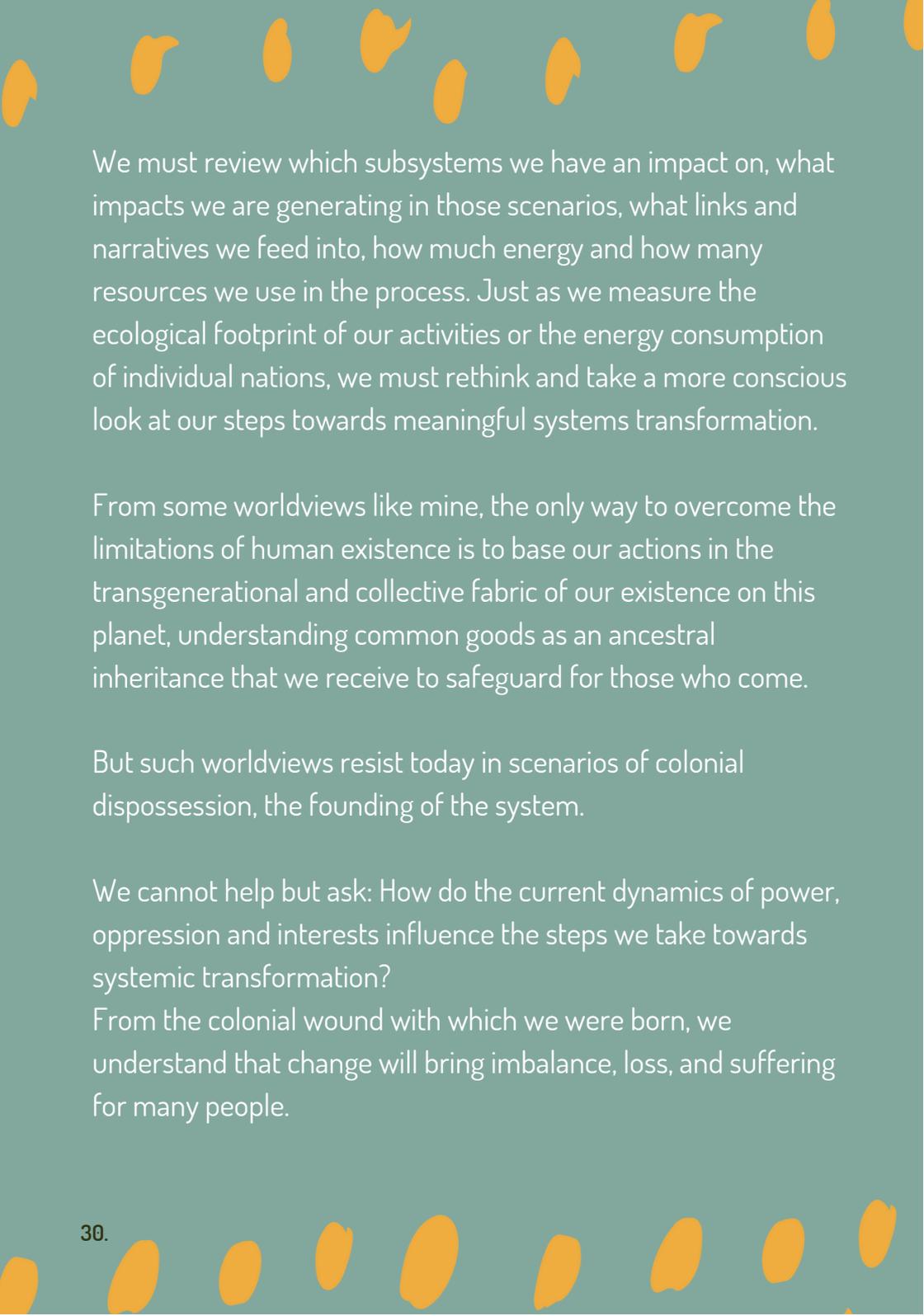
We must review which subsystems we have an impact on, what impacts we are generating in those scenarios, what links and narratives we feed into, how much energy and how many resources we use in the process. Just as we measure the ecological footprint of our activities or the energy consumption of individual nations, we must rethink and take a more conscious look at our steps towards meaningful systems transformation.

From some worldviews like mine, the only way to overcome the limitations of human existence is to base our actions in the transgenerational and collective fabric of our existence on this planet, understanding common goods as an ancestral inheritance that we receive to safeguard for those who come.

But such worldviews resist today in scenarios of colonial dispossession, the founding of the system.

We cannot help but ask: How do the current dynamics of power, oppression and interests influence the steps we take towards systemic transformation?
From the colonial wound with which we were born, we understand that change will bring imbalance, loss, and suffering for many people.

A system that is truly sustainable, and therefore, a system that is genuinely affordable for humanity – in all different senses of the world.

I share this text with you, these ancestral perspectives with you, because the arts can be a window to explore those oppressed narratives, within which many diverse worlds exist. A window that allows us to create worlds in which each person is the owner of a body, of resources, of power, of knowledge, of territories, of natural goods, that they can use and enjoy in a single life. Nothing more and nothing less.

ON URBAN RESILIENCE

by Aaron Acuda, IIED

Can we build healthy and resilient urban futures without considering rural areas?

Urban areas are currently home to <u>over half of the World's population. By 2050, over 70% of the world's population will call urban areas their home</u>. Climate change presents a significant challenge for urban areas, given the unprecedented growth in urban populations and the need to protect urban livelihoods, ensure resilience and reduce inequalities. Ensuring urban population resilience and, most importantly, addressing the root causes of vulnerability is critical to a sustainable and prosperous urban society. This article highlights climate displacement as one of the driving forces of urban vulnerabilities. It suggests that it is essential to address the root causes of urban vulnerabilities for a resilient and healthy urban future.
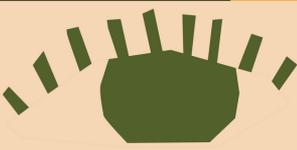
Urban areas usually have higher standards of living but are also very vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Urban areas generate more than 80% of GDP, making them economically attractive for many people. The living standards in urban areas are also comparatively higher compared to rural areas. Access to electricity, improved drinking water and sanitation, and use of cleaner and improved fuels are generally higher in urban areas. However, urban areas are also among the most vulnerable geographical areas to climate change due to the geographical locations and socioeconomic and political challenges that disadvantage certain groups of people. Over 65% of the world's urban population lives in coastal zones prone to climatic and hydrometeorological risks such as sea level rise, flooding and tropical storms. By 2025, this proportion will likely increase to 74%. A significant proportion of the urban population resides in slums—about 1 in 3 people live in slums. In Sub-Saharan Africa, slums are very prevalent, with some countries having more than half of their populations living in slums while others such as South Sudan, Sudan and the Central Africa Republic, have more than 90% slum population.

Slum areas are characterised by poor housing conditions and limited access to basic services, including water, sanitation and electricity. These areas are usually very prone to climatic hazards. Moreover, people living in these areas have low adaptive capacity due to limited resources and low income. The impacts of climate change are likely to aggravate the current socioeconomic and other disparities between impoverished and wealthy urban areas, while also creating new vulnerabilities.

Climate displacements could also be responsible for an increased urban vulnerability.

When people move from rural areas or other areas to urban centres, some do so willingly and others forcefully when they lose their means of survival and hope for a better life in urban areas. The pressures, including political, socioeconomic and environmental pressures, on communities in rural areas play a significant role in vulnerability in urban areas. Addressing urban vulnerability without considering all these driving forces to rural–urban migration will not be possible. Climate-induced natural disasters render people's livelihoods, including those living in rural areas, unsustainable

In some cases, their homes are destroyed. These people are compelled to migrate to other areas. The rate of climate displacement is increasing. In 2020, disasters displaced 30.7 million people, three times more than the 9.8 million people displaced by conflicts and violence. Almost all of the people who were displaced by disasters (98%) faced weather and climate hazards. The majority of the displaced people, over 50%, whether from conflicts or climate-induced disasters, find themselves in urban areas.

However, increased urbanisation rates are not just a result of rural-urban migration but also a result of rural transformation, where previously rural areas become urbanised due to population growth or urban expansion. The rate and scale of urbanisation bring with it several challenges, including pressures on housing, basic services such as water and sanitation services, and functioning infrastructure, for example, drainage systems.

Improving resilience in rural areas can contribute to a reduced urban vulnerability.
Actions to safeguard livelihoods and improve resilience to shocks and stressors in rural areas have co-benefits for urban centres.
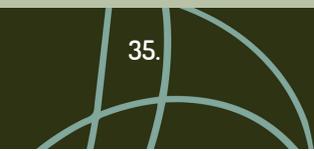
Since 2021, <u>locally-led adaptation (LLA)</u> concept, where communities initiate and lead their adaptation solutions, has gained traction as one of the effective ways of ensuring resilience to the impacts of climate change. LLA has a promise of unlocking, supporting and leveraging the enormous potential within communities to develop and implement effective, equitable, transparent and sustainable adaptation solutions.

For people who end up living in urban areas that are highly exposed to climatic risks and hazards, it is imperative to prioritise <u>solutions that institutionalise locally-owned</u> processes and go beyond externally managed 'participation' to build resilience. For example, in the Urban slums of Kenya, the members of <u>Mungano wa wanviji</u>, an affiliate of <u>Slum Dwellers International</u> and a network of slum dwellers and urban poor, collect their own data about the different aspects of their settlements. The data is then used in various initiatives like advocacy and <u>settlement planning</u>. This empowers the community and promotes local leadership for urban resilience.

Guaranteeing resilient, healthy and prosperous urban centres will require holistic approaches that address vulnerabilities in both urban and rural areas.
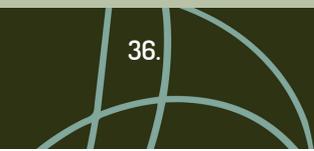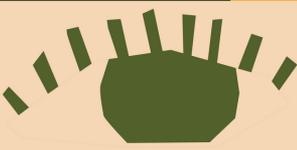
This will avoid duplication of efforts and promote more ownership and sustainability of solutions. Isolated efforts to shield only specific urban areas from the effects of climate change will only increase migration pressures from rural areas and other urban areas.

HOW LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE CAN HELP CREATE SYSTEMIC CHANGE AND BUILD RESILIENCE   by Saifullah Mahmud, ICCAD

Local knowledge refers to knowledge systems embedded in the cultural tradition of a regional group, developed through collecting facts through generations and relating to the entire system of concepts, beliefs and perceptions that people hold about the world around them.

This includes the way people observe and measure their surroundings, how they solve problems and validate new information. It includes the processes whereby knowledge is generated, stored, applied and transmitted to others. Resilience is having the capacity to persist in the face of change, to continue to develop with ever changing environments. We realize local knowledge from the people of Kalapara to make systemic changes to build resilience.

In the Patuakhali district of Bangladesh lies Kalapara, a place where the rhythm of life is set by the ebb and flow of the Bay of Bengal. Beyond its picturesque landscapes and vibrant culture, Kalapara holds a treasure trove of local knowledge and experiences that, when harnessed, can pave the way for systemic change and build resilience in the face of challenges.

Kalapara's residents have long been the custodians of a unique set of skills and insights passed down through generations. This local knowledge, deeply rooted in the community's relationship with nature, holds the key to addressing contemporary issues such as climate change, economic instability, and social inequality.
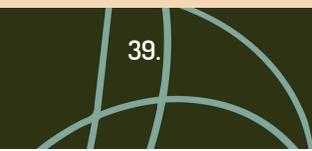
One of the most pressing challenges facing Kalapara is the increasing frequency and intensity of cyclones. With a rich history of weathering storms, the community's elders possess invaluable insights into traditional methods of resilience. From the construction of robust homes using local materials to the strategic placement of settlements, these time-tested approaches offer a blueprint for sustainable living in the face of climate-related adversities.

Moreover, the community's deep understanding of local ecosystems has allowed them to develop sustainable agricultural practices. Kalapara's farmers, armed with generations of knowledge, have mastered the art of cultivating crops that thrive in the region's specific climatic conditions. This localized expertise not only ensures food security but also mitigates the impact of changing weather patterns on agricultural yields.

The local fishing community in Kalapara provides another example of how traditional knowledge can be harnessed for systemic change. Through generations of experience, fishermen have learned the art of sustainable fishing, respecting seasonal bans and using non-destructive methods. This approach not only preserves marine biodiversity but also ensures the livelihoods of those dependent on fishing for their sustenance.

The close-knit social fabric of Kalapara is a testament to the community's resilience in the face of economic challenges. The barter system, deeply ingrained in local culture, fosters self-sufficiency and reduces dependency on external economic forces. By sharing resources and supporting one another, the community has created a robust economic foundation that withstands external shocks.

To leverage this wealth of local knowledge for systemic change, initiatives should be undertaken to document and integrate traditional practices into contemporary development plans. Collaborative projects between community leaders, researchers, and policymakers can help bridge the gap between local wisdom and modern strategies. Integrating traditional agricultural practices into government agricultural policies, for example, could enhance the resilience of farming communities across the region.

Education plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting local knowledge to younger generations. Establishing community-based learning centers that celebrate and teach traditional skills ensures that the essence of Kalapara's wisdom endures. By combining this knowledge with modern scientific understanding, the community can evolve strategies that are both culturally rooted and technologically advanced.

Furthermore, empowering local leaders and involving them in decision-making processes is vital. Their firsthand experiences offer insights that often elude external observers. By integrating local voices into policy discussions, the resulting strategies will be more nuanced, effective, and sustainable.

In conclusion, Kalapara stands as a beacon of resilience, rooted in the collective wisdom of its people. The local knowledge embedded in the community's practices, whether in agriculture, housing, or social cohesion, offers a transformative pathway towards systemic change. As we navigate an era of unprecedented challenges, it is imperative that we recognize and harness the power of local knowledge, for in it lies the key to building a resilient and sustainable future.

THE INNER DEVELOPMENT GOALS (IDGS) FRAMEWORK: A BRIEF EXPOSITION

by Abdulbaki Ahmad, The 50 Percent Storytelling Fellow

The world we live in has been rather aptly described as VUCA: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

It is a world full of inequalities. Of radical, almost daily, changes. And of disruptions. Whether it is climate change, lack of access to quality education, or energy poverty, among others, the one thing that seems to be constant throughout the world are the challenges that humanity faces.

While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework to address these challenges, the creators of the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) recognized a critical omission in our approach: our focus on the world "around" us at the expense of the world "within" us. Comprising 24 skills and tools categorized into Being, Thinking, Relating, Collaborating, and Acting, the IDGs present a shift in perspective by focusing on developing the internal ability to live in harmony with the self, others and the universe; serving as catalysts towards realizing the SDGs themselves. Below, I give a brief exposition of the five dimensions.

BEING

This dimension centers on the self. It entails the cultivation of our inner world and the deepening of our connection to our thoughts, emotions and physical presence which, in turn, helps us to remain present, purposeful and non-reactive when confronted with life's challenges. Under this dimension, there are five essential skills and abilities. The inner compass is the first and it entails a profound sense of duty and dedication to values and goals that serve the greater good. Openness and a learning mindset involve vulnerability in the sense of receptive listening and understanding of others' viewpoints, coupled with a curiosity for learning. Integrity and authenticity are the pillars of honesty and sincerity in dealings with oneself, a task that often challenges our inherent bias. It demands recognition of insincerity within, affecting both the self and the wider world. Presence is the ability to be in the here and now. Lastly, perhaps most importantly, self-awareness encompasses an understanding of our thoughts, emotions, desires, and physical sensations, complemented by the development of self-regulation.

THINKING

Under this dimension, we get to develop the cognitive skills and abilities of critical thinking necessary to properly "review the validity of views evidence, and plans." We learn to put forth sound and valid arguments in guiding the actions of the self and in engaging the whole. Next to critical thinking is complexity awareness which entails having the understanding as well as the skills of navigating a "complex and systemic conditions and causalities." Sense-making, another vital skill, revolves around recognizing patterns, structuring the unknown, and consciously crafting narratives. It is through sense-making that we unravel the various domains of decision-making, be it in the realm of clarity (known knowns), complexity (known unknowns), chaos (where clarity is too elusive for a knowledge-based response), or confusion, where events defy classification. Perspective skills that our perspectives are just what they are: "interpretation based on a limited and selective set of data and complemented by assumptions and judgments not backed up by proven facts." Finally, long-term orientation and visioning. develops our ability to envision the future and cultivate the visions needed to shape it.

RELATING

In the first dimension, which is the realm of Being, we had the opportunity of nurturing our relationship with ourselves. In Relating, the self serves as the initial point of connection, but it also extends further into the realm of the collective (people + nature). It's crucial to emphasize the integral role of nature within this interconnected whole, as neglecting this perspective has largely contributed to our unsustainable "take, make, & waste" lifestyle. The primary skills or abilities to be cultivated in this dimension are appreciation and gratitude—to both the self and to the whole. The second skill involves cultivating a sense of connectedness, feeling that we are integral components of a larger whole. Be it a community. Humanity. Or the global ecosystem. Approaching this "larger whole" with humility as well as empathy & compassion are the skills that conclude this dimension.

COLLABORATING

This dimension strives to bring out the "social" part of our being. Under it, we have skills and abilities such as communication skills, co-creation skills, inclusive mindset and intercultural mindset, trust, as well as mobilization skills. Communication skills are pivotal, allowing us to not only comprehend the perspectives of the entire collective—both human and natural—but also to express our thoughts effectively. This is usually achieved through active listening (emphasis on active), the capacity to advocate viewpoints constructively, and the skill of posing open-ended questions. Co-creation skills are the abilities needed to cultivate and facilitate collaborative relationships with diverse stakeholders. These relationships are characterized by psychological safety and authentic co-creation, establishing an atmosphere of trust conducive to effective collaboration. Inclusion involves the capacity to embrace diversity and the intercultural competence to navigate differences and to approach them as an opportunity to both learn and see things we (think) know in a new light.

ACTING

What does it require to drive change? This is the fundamental inquiry at the center of the acting dimension. It is where all the insights and skills cultivated in the preceding four dimensions converge. The first ability here is courage. The courage to think beyond the ordinary. To envision new possibilities. To make decisive choices. To question the status quo. To disrupt established norms. And to drive change. Courage extends to nurturing values that align with both personal well-being and the greater whole, and it encompasses the determination to uphold and, when necessary, redefine those values in the face of evolving circumstances. It is the courage to ACT. Creativity is the ability to see beyond existing boundaries. It involves innovation, imagination, and the ability to redefine the limits of what is achievable. And, perhaps most importantly, it is about the optimism and the perseverance to push such a change through. To see light when all seems dark. To have hope, and to communicate the same to the whole. To imagine the possibility of meaningful change and to be resilient during setbacks. It is to be "patient even when efforts take a long time to bear fruit."

CONCLUSION

In a world punctuated by challenges and uncertainties, the IDGs offer us an icing on the cake of the SDGs towards addressing our global challenges. They remind us that we need not constantly focus our gaze on the outward for solutions to the challenges we face. That the best is to turn our lens to the base of the problems themselves: ourselves. Together, they equip us to thrive and to propel the world towards a brighter & more harmonious future.

Intergenerational dialogues are crucial for addressing global crises and building systems thinking competencies across generations.

By bringing different age groups and backgrounds together, we can **exchange ideas, develop comprehensive solutions, and promote empathy and understanding.**

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