



Documenting Systems Change through Effective Collaborative Action

The Early Signals of Change
Self-Assessment Tool



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What is it about?

Documenting early signals of systemic change in effective collaborative action initiatives.

This is a qualitative exercise aimed at supporting participants of effective collaborative action initiatives to identify and track early signals of change related to their individual and collective journey of transformation. It is not an exhaustive list of indicators. While there are many potential “signals of change”, we are focusing on the ones where we want to put stronger attention - where we think one small thing can have a big impact (e.g. changing the way we listen).

Signals of change are grouped in the following 10 key principles that reflect the building blocks and essential practices of effective collaboration action:

1. Build a safe collective space - *building trusted relationships*
2. Understand the system - *embracing complexity and aligning around a powerful shared intent*
3. Build systems leadership capacity - *developing the necessary skills and competencies to drive system change*
4. Include and work with power - *understanding and shifting power dynamics*
5. Work through conflict - *creating spaces for divergence*
6. Collaborative actions and investment - *experimenting our way forward together and demonstrating value*
7. Participatory learning - *continuously reflecting and adapting*
8. Communicate effectively - *building a common and compelling narrative*
9. Gender equality - *equal rights, resources, and opportunities*
10. Institutionalize the new - *sustaining long-term outcomes*

It is recommended to complement the “Early Signals of Change Self-Assessment” with the “Signals of Change Harvesting”, an exercise based on outcome harvesting and aimed at capturing emerging and more advanced signals of change, including at organizational and system level. Please get in touch with your UNDP Green Commodities Programme (GCP) counterpart, or write to methodology.feedback@undp.org for more **information** on the “Signals of Change Harvesting” exercise.

Why?

To encourage experiential learning and support adaptive management in effective collaborative action initiatives, through engaging participants in a periodical assessment of progress and change, aimed at fostering group reflection and planning, informing capacity building needs, and driving group innovation.

Who is it for?

Participants of effective collaborative action initiatives and Backbone Support Teams, to inform co-creation and adaptation to existing plans.

When?

At a minimum, at the start (after a few kickoff sessions), mid-point and end of the initiative. Ideally, with a fixed cadence throughout the lifecycle of the initiative, depending on the frequency at which participants meet (e.g. every 6 months, if participants meet at least monthly). The assessment can also be planned and effectively used at key decision-making points or other significant junctures in the initiative.



How?

Group self-assessment engaging all participants of a certain effective collaborative action initiative.

Thinking about their engagement with the initiative, each participant can select in the tool whether s/he thinks that the limiting condition and/or any of the five early signals of change apply for each principle. It is important to note that participants can select more than one early signal of change for each principle. Additionally, participants can also write their own emerging signal/s of change, if they find the proposed selection incomplete.

After each participant has completed their individual assessment, the results should be aggregated and used to inform a sensemaking session aimed at unpacking the reasons why change is or is not materializing (and is there agreement among participants on whether change is materializing and where?), and inspire co-creation and planning of the continuation of the journey.

The process of completion, aggregation and reflection on the results of the self-assessment should be facilitated through expert facilitation and duly planned by the Backbone Support team. The “facilitation tips” section further down in this document provides important inputs. The monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) unit of the UNDP Green Commodities Programme can also provide advice on how to plan the assessment properly.



The Early Signals of Change Self-Assessment Tool

Handout for individual voting

Select the actor that you represent:

1. ☐

2. ☐

3. ☐

4. ☐
5. ☐

6. ☐

7. ☐

8. ☐ Other

Instructions: For the voting, tick the small boxes within the descriptions. For each of the 10 principles, you can select the limiting condition and/or any of the five early signals of change. Additionally, in the last row, you can also write your own emerging signal/s of change if you find the proposed selection incomplete.



KEY PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIVE ACTION	LIMITING CONDITIONS <i>What gets in the way of effective collaboration</i>	EARLY SIGNALS OF CHANGE					YOUR EMERGING SIGNALS OF CHANGE
1. BUILDING A SAFE COLLECTIVE SPACE <i>Building trusted relationships</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Conversations between stakeholders are mostly focused on technical content. Building trust and relationship are neglected resulting in limited personal connections among stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective tools such as <i>check-ins, storytelling, mindfulness, generative listening</i> and <i>conversation practices</i> are being used to better connect stakeholders within themselves and to each other.	<input type="checkbox"/> Backbone support team designs and facilitates interventions in ways that encourage stakeholders to learn and practice systems thinking, collaboration and trust.	<input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders feel in a safe space that cultivates trust and relationships and have personal connections to one another. They can say what they really think and voice significant concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders directly and explicitly welcome and encourage different voices, opinions and perspectives to the table; show a sustained capacity to listen, reflect and take in perspectives different than their own, to the extent of even being able to change their own views and opinions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders support each other outside of formal dialogue events, including through establishing new collaborations and/or partnerships.	
2. UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM <i>Embracing complexity and aligning around a powerful shared intent</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Dialogue is focused mostly on the parts of the system, such as sharing information on individual initiatives, or discussing symptoms rather than underlying structural problems. Oversimplification of issues and failure to identify interconnections.	<input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders actively share their knowledge, experience and welcome other stakeholders' inputs to collectively understand the system they are part of and are trying to change through practices such as (but not limited to) systems mapping, learning/sensing journeys, scenario planning, iceberg model, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> There is evidence of breakthrough in how the system is understood by stakeholders. New insights emerge, and leverage points (key elements to work on that can produce significant impact) are identified.	<input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders recognise that no single entity has authority over or the capacity to change the entire system. Collaboration between stakeholders is strengthened by a shared intention to work together.	<input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders collectively build (co-create) a clear and powerful shared vision of success, which provides energy and purpose to collaborate across boundaries, take risk and act beyond their individual scope of direct influence.	<input type="checkbox"/> Shared solutions with potential for system change are proposed as a result of sustained collaboration.	



<div>3. BUILDING SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP CAPACITY</div> <div>Developing the necessary skills and competencies to drive system change</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> There are no capacity building activities in place to support stakeholders in developing their ability to facilitate/drive system change. Leadership is happening in institutional and/or initiative silos. Low appetite for collaboration. Personal development/individual change is neglected.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> There is an intentional, explicit commitment to devote time and financial resources to build leadership capacity of stakeholders to facilitate/drive systems change.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> A comprehensive and tailored leadership skill building/learning plan exists and is implemented to support stakeholders in their journey.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders are showing initial evidence of applying the learnings from the leadership skill building, including self-reflection on their own strengths and opportunities for further improvement and starting to focus on the 'bigger picture' and the interconnections of the system rather than the separate parts</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders are actively and regularly displaying systems leadership capacities such as, but not limited to, showing self-awareness, authentic openness and curiosity about other stakeholders' points of view, genuine interest in driving collective action beyond their immediate sphere of influence</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders have incorporated the practice and ongoing development of systems leadership capacities such as (but not limited to) self-awareness, working with the whole system, facilitating trust and collaboration as a new way of working.</div>	
<div>4. INCLUSION AND WORKING WITH POWER</div> <div>Understanding and shifting power dynamics</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> A few key actors drive the process. Marginalised groups are not represented (may not have the opportunity, permission, skill, language, or confidence to participate). Power is not discussed or analysed.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> A thorough mapping exercise endorsed by early-stage actors reveals all stakeholders, their interests and positions in the system. Particular attention is being paid to peripheral voices, who is not at the table and why.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders are given the tools to jointly explore different forms of power and what to do about it.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Power dynamics are identified and named. Actions are taken to shift the power imbalance and build more equitable relations (for example through creating inclusive decision-making rules).</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Better/different working relations between the marginalised groups and those who have more power are emerging. If needed, strategies for change are developed to support marginalised group and reflected in collaborative actions.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> All stakeholders now have a voice and a sit at the table. Whenever power imbalances emerge, stakeholders feel confident and safe to voice these out and take corrective action.</div>	



<div>5. WORKING THROUGH CONFLICT</div> <div>Creating spaces for divergence</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Significant and sensitive issues are denied and avoided. Unresolved conflict is present and taints the relations between stakeholders and the work Too much emphasis on the harmony of the group – too diplomatic yet superficial/limited impact.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Spaces are created for conversations about divergence and the “Elephant in the room” so these topics are not ignored and instead proactively explored for greater understanding. The backbone team has the confidence and skill to do this.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders are given the tools to address conflict efficiently by looking at underlying causes and how to address them.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Solutions to prevent or resolve existing conflict are starting to emerge.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Conflict is addressed and actively worked through. Compromises are being made. Deals are agreed that are clear, acceptable and attractive to each negotiating party.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> A safe space for people to be honest about their beliefs, daring to disagree and shifting their perspective is established for all stakeholders. This leads to increased collaboration amongst previously distanced parties.</div>	
<div>6. COLLABORATIVE</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Zero or fragmented collaborative actions</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders start to</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration among</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> A series of actions are eloped ll relevant taken ely by s.</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders can see the benefits of collaborating with each other as they achieve 'quick wins' and positive impact on some dimensions of the initiative/platform/dialogue</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Successful collaborative prototypes are going into full implementation and are resourced adequately.</div>	

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_31338

