

Solidaridad

A 21ST CENTURY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION

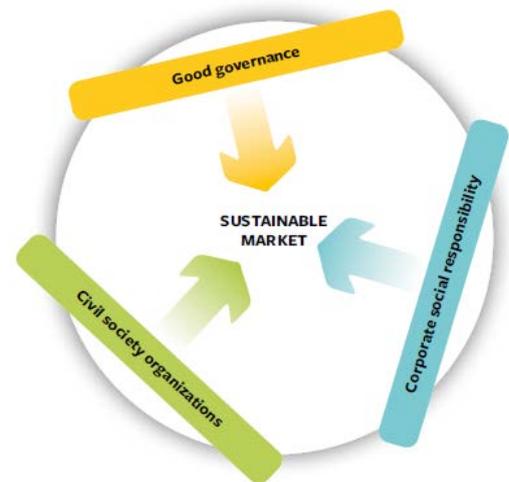
Solidaridad Network strives to be an organization that understands the signs of modern times. An NGO is no longer defined as what it is not – a NON-governmental organization - but instead, what it wants to be - a civil society organization (CSO) with its own place and role in society, while simultaneously interacting with governments and markets.

Solidaridad realizes that a paradigm shift is currently taking place in the world of development cooperation.

THE NEXT GENERATION CSO IS *SOLUTION*-ORIENTED

A primary trend to recognize is that markets will play a crucial role for positive impacts in the future. Markets are becoming legitimate channels for social and ecological change, and are also likely to be, on balance, more efficient and effective than more traditional approaches. But the rules of the game will obviously be very different. The ‘watchdogs’ of the past should not become the ‘lapdogs’ of the future, but rather the ‘guide dogs’ skilfully leading the way to a sustainable future.

Looking for market solutions means transforming markets to make them more inclusive and sustainable. Market processes should produce socially and ecologically desirable outcomes that help to sustain the planet for future generations. These market processes can bring about fundamental change if managed within a participatory and multi-stakeholder framework.



A MODERN CSO IS LOOKING FOR *MARKET-BASED* SOLUTIONS

CSOs of the 21st century have to develop new ways to drive social change and deliver social and environmental value to their partners, clients, beneficiaries, funders and other supporters. Funders are becoming more supportive of CSOs that are actively trying to influence change through market pressure. As a result, opportunities for new market-focused approaches are available, but this often requires solutions that are not simply based on single-issue strategies. The shift from government-based regulations to market-focused approaches offers much potential because public and private sector partnerships are increasingly important for leveraging change.

THE MODERN CSO WILL BE A GLOBAL NETWORK ORGANIZATION

The time for strategies based on social biases from the global North is behind us. In part, this is because the old models used by western NGOs, which prescribe how other parts of the world may develop, are not adequate anymore. The world is gradually, but inevitably, transforming into a multi-polar community with a dominant geopolitical shift from the West to the East. Emerging economies in China, India and Indonesia are growing rapidly in production and consumption. Japan is actively seeking a more prominent role. Many African economies are growing rapidly and, despite the current crisis in Brazil and Argentina, South American countries are developing and preparing their economies for a global marketplace as well.

Globalization in markets, politics and cultures does not only produce more shared political and economic power at the highest echelons of power, but has also consequences for the **globalization from below** in grass root movements and in the world of CSOs. Anti-globalizers will still challenge globalization energetically, but pro-globalization momentum will continue to be expected from innovative CSOs who wish to be prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

In the coming years, a remarkable shift will take place as traditional organizations for development aid evolve into organizations for **international cooperation** with joint policy development and shared responsibilities for funding and programming.

The 21st Century NGO/In the Market for Change:

'Governments and business may resist their advocacy, but there is a real interest in the potential roles NGOs can play in developing and deploying solutions.'

Recommendations:

'The first thing is to recognize that markets are central to our future. Markets are becoming legitimate channels for social change and are more effective than more traditional approaches.'

Conclusions from the UNEP report, The Global Compact, Sustainability, 2003

A NETWORK ORGANIZATION GROWING TO THE MATURE STAGE

After many years of preparation, testing and evaluating different alternatives, while also saving up money to make the initial investments possible, Solidaridad began working under the principles of the Multi-Annual Strategic Plan I (MASPI) in 2010. Since then, Solidaridad has undergone an enervating journey to transform from a traditional Dutch organization for development cooperation into a network organization for international cooperation for sustainable development. The initial premise was to operate under the so-called **10/10 formula**.

The theory behind the 10/10 formula was that creating a mature network organization would take 10 years and would require an investment of 10 million euros. Solidaridad is at the halfway point now. So far, Solidaridad

'The main asset of Solidaridad is its staff. Not the structures, or the money, but the people. The values, dedication, expertise and experience of the Solidaridad teams all over the world are decisive for the role we can take as an organization. In a knowledge-intensive organization people have to make the difference. Only an empowered staff can meet the needs of our empowered partners. Diversity is a strength bringing together people with different backgrounds, of different cultures and gender.'

Nico Roozen, Executive Director/ New year message 2014

has spent five years implementing adapted strategies and has made an investment of 6.4 million euros setting up the needed infrastructures. The mid-term evaluation is encouraging; much has been achieved and the basic structures and processes are in place. However, there is still much that needs to be done in the next five years, guided by the principles and structures set forth in the MASP II.

The decision for a gradual transformation in organizational structures was primarily based on a positive evaluation of previous decisions to create a **network of Regional Expertise Centres (RECs)** covering Solidaridad's main regions of operation.

The main lesson learned from past experience was that the quality, outcomes and impact of Solidaridad programmes could be significantly improved if the organization made **maximum use of local expertise** from local staff. Their knowledge and expertise was a cornerstone of Solidaridad operations, not just for the implementation of programmes, but also for their design, management and evaluation. For the benefit of the new network organization that Solidaridad has become, policy development, evaluation and planning must be shared responsibilities.

From this perspective, a leading principle of the burgeoning network organization was the idea to structure management at the lowest level possible, meaning in the regions where projects are being implemented. This is the so-called **subsidiarity principle**: empowered RECs under local management with a strong mandate to plan and execute formed the core structure of the new organization.

CREATING A NETWORK STRUCTURE OF REGIONAL OFFICES CALLED FOR INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH

Future growth was closely connected to better access to funding, both from the public and the private domain. It was becoming ever more obvious that there was a tendency among funders to decentralize their decision making processes on budget allocations to the regions of operation and to restrict eligibility to local organizations. A Dutch-based organization could not (easily) get access to embassy funds or funds from international donors, foundations or companies who held a preference for funding local organizations.

A **shared responsibility and mandate for the RECs to raise funds** created a new dynamic and facilitated further growth. RECs with a local identity were a pre-condition for a successful local fundraising strategy and unlocked new funding opportunities.

From a broader perspective, a certain level of 'local identity' for RECs is required, particularly at the level of governance and management, which puts an emphasis on capacity of local structures and people. Balancing **interconnection and autonomy remains essential** for making the shift from a centralized operation in the Netherlands to a decentralized global network structure that could create considerable new potential, mobilizing local human capacities and funds.

At the same time, there was an understanding that a balanced approach was needed. **A loose network would soon prove to be a lost network.**

Sole emphasis on the autonomy of the regions would not stimulate inter-REC cooperation and would hinder the creation of a integrated global network with effective global strategies, a clear branding principles, unified mission and vision, productive global partnerships and dependable quality standards.

Initially, there was also a feeling that new paths should be explored in this regard. New leadership principles for the network organization had to be defined. Traditional top-down policy development and enforcement would not bring the relationships and quality Solidaridad was looking for.

A better way forward was soon developed, a new organizational principle: **participation** in a global policy setting as a means to create **ownership** of these policies in order to generate the **responsibility** and **accountability** needed to deliver the jointly defined objectives in a disciplined and effective manner. Although this principle has become the basic mechanism in the Solidaridad network organization, it needs to be defended and renewed on a regular basis. In addition, a fall-back mechanism was created for situations in which this – ideal – mechanism did not function properly. These **corrective powers** were embedded in policy and assigned to the highest authorities within the network: the International Supervisory Board at the level of governance and the Executive Director at the management level. The corrective powers are mainly linked to consistency issues at the policy level and maintaining the integrity and quality standards of the organization.

In the coming years, the Solidaridad Network will continue to evolve until it reaches the mature stage of an **interconnected network**.

*If you want to go fast...
go alone.*

*If you want to reach far...
go together.*