



E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

From Alliance to International: The Global Transformation of Save the Children

TEACHING NOTES

INTRODUCTION

This is a case of significant organizational change in a major International NGO. The case examines how leaders --at several levels -- in Save the Children were driven to consider major organizational transformation, how they created a sense of urgency around the case for change, and how they created a coalition for such change. The case also illustrates the types of implementation issues that may arise when large INGOs undergo significant transformation, and points to signals of early results, as well as remaining issues, tradeoffs and dilemmas that leaders will have to consider as they attempt to strengthen the resilience of the change.

The main points illustrated by this case are the difference between leading and managing change; and the complexities when a loose alliance of 29 members in a confederation with an organizational culture of strong members decides to transform itself into a much more centrally coordinated, networked and integrated INGO with deliberately constructed, in-built interdependencies.

This case is the Snow Foundation Award Winner for the best case or simulation in Collaborative Nonprofit Management in E-PARCC's 2012-13 "Collaborative Public Management, Collaborative Governance, and Collaborative Problem Solving" teaching case and simulation competition. It was double-blind peer reviewed by a committee of academics and practitioners. It was written by Steven J. Lux and Tosca Bruno-van Vijfeijken of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. This case is intended for classroom discussion and is not intended to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. It is brought to you by E-PARCC, part of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University's Collaborative Governance Initiative, a subset of the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC). This material may be copied as many times as needed as long as the authors are given full credit for their work.

Part A

Part A introduces the initial impetus for change through the eyes of one of the key protagonists, and allows students to understand how Save the Children evolved historically, its nature and the scale of the organization.

Part B

Part B elaborates on the drivers for change as perceived through the eyes of a range of key protagonists, and the key role of strategy change compared to organizational change (“form following function”). It illuminates the processes through which key change leaders created urgency for change and developed a coalition to guide such change.

Part C

Part C introduces two new change protagonists, who focus primarily on board composition and other governance related aspects of organizational change that they felt needed to be addressed first – often in a painstaking way -- before other organizational transformation decisions could be taken and implemented. This part also illustrates how early, modest-scale examples of greater coordination and integration built a climate for further change. The part focuses on sources for resistance to change, and questions that elucidate the uncertainties that remained among key stakeholders in how, and how far, Save the Children should transform itself.

Part C also includes explanations of the collaborative, consultative mechanisms through which the organization examined various change options and then decided what choices to make. It also illustrates how ‘the devil is in the detail’ when it came to the tough and protracted negotiations around the All Members Agreement which formed the pinnacle of formal agreement on change among the 29 members.

Part D

Part D focuses on major implementation challenges once the major change decisions were made, and describes some of the change management strategies and tactics the transition team used in steering change. It also describes early, anecdotal signs of results from the change. Finally, this part points to some continuing questions that are as yet unanswered, and potential challenges to the resilience of the change that was decided upon and instituted

Teaching questions

The questions below generally refer to questions posed to students after each individual section is read. Ideally, this case is taught in parts whereby students read Part A, the teacher poses questions, there is a discussion, and then repeated for Part B, C, and D. We are interested in students assessing the actions of the characters in the case, thinking through alternative courses of actions and then asking students what they would do next if they were leading Save the Children.

Specifically, for each element in organizational change offered in the literature, students may be asked the following questions:

Part A

What was Barry's strategy towards leading change in this phase? What did he do to initiate change?

What could he have done differently?

What should he do next?

Part B

What do you imagine are some of the main drivers for organizational change in INGOs as described here?

Which drivers typically are paramount within the total range of drivers? Which drivers might matter more to certain types of stakeholders/members?

How do you compare what Kotter says about drivers for change with what happened in the case of Save?

What should they do next?

Part C

How was any sense for urgency created? Which events were important in creating and marking that sense of urgency, and how do these moments and strategies compare with how Kotter discusses the topic?

What was the role of specific leadership personalities and styles in this phase of change?

What did leaders achieve, and how did they deal with resistance to change?

Why do you think the final negotiations around the All Member Agreement became so tough and protracted? What were the main interests at stake for both bigger and smaller members?

Part D

What should change implementation leaders such as Rudy and Pam do next to secure full implementation?

What do you think may challenge the resilience of the change initiated in Save the Children?

What factors may reinforce that resilience?

Cross-cutting question:

How does this change process compare with other processes in INGOs you may be aware of?
What do we know about the nature of organizational change in such types of organizations?

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