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# WELLBEING INSPIRES WELLDOING

HOW CHANGEMAKERS'  
INNER WELLBEING  
INFLUENCES THEIR WORK

RESEARCH REPORT



CO-CREATED WITH ASHOKA, ESALEN, IMPACT HUB,  
SKOLL FOUNDATION, PORTICUS AND SYNERGOS

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## SHARING GUIDELINES

It is the ambition of all those who contributed to this project that the findings of this research are shared and used to benefit others, and to implement policies and practices which promote support for changemakers. The Wellbeing Project asks that the intent and quality of the work is retained.

The Wellbeing Project must be acknowledged in the following ways:

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*I now feel like [wellbeing] is not so much about alleviating suffering. In fact, sometimes it's turning toward suffering in a way that I had avoided it in the past. It's much more about how do I free myself enough to be present to it, whether it's physical, mental, or spiritual? To open myself up to my options around how to meet that—which might be escape, digging in, or not necessarily changing anything, but having awareness around it.*

*- Cohort Participant -*

Changemakers including activists, teachers, non-profit leaders, social workers, social entrepreneurs and health care providers, are people engaged in solving some of the world's most complex problems; a world which is becoming increasingly dynamic, uncertain, and yet more interconnected than ever before.

While the changemakers are finding solutions to some of the most intricate issues facing humanity today, they are facing a host of strenuous challenges themselves. On one hand they are experiencing increasing levels of burnout and stress coupled with high rates of depression and the early onset of chronic illness. On the other hand, they are encountering distress within personal and professional relationships.

Numerous studies have indicated that the incidence of burnout and depression in the social sector is on the rise. While some professionals are able to handle the pressure, others cope by resorting to unhealthy behaviour including substance abuse.

To learn more about the challenges surrounding contemporary changemakers, The Project conducted interviews with 50 leading social change leaders from around the world who engaged in deeply honest and vulnerable conversations, shared their personal struggles and expressed the need for wellbeing support.

Moreover, to understand the issue of wellbeing more extensively, the Project conducted a comprehensive

multi-round, sector-level Delphi study over six months. The study was conducted with an international group of 300+ changemakers from 55 countries recruited from the networks of Ford Foundation and Impact Hub. While 75% respondents felt that looking after their wellbeing was 'very important,' merely 25% reported that they looked after their wellbeing 'to a great extent'.

The primary reasons cited by them for neglecting personal wellbeing include a range of health-related issues, a lack of adequate resources, a feeling that their work is never done, and perceiving self-care as self-indulgence. It emerged that it is difficult for respondents to distance themselves from work because of how closely their identities are interlinked with their roles.

Over the course of the Delphi process, it became clear that the majority of respondents expressed a need for inner wellbeing support and regarded inner wellbeing as an essential component of healthy and sustainable social change work.

The Wellbeing Project (TWP) was created in 2014 to catalyze a culture of inner wellbeing for all changemakers in response to the demonstrated need for inner wellbeing support. The Project was built on the premise that a healthy relationship with self is imperative for sustaining relationships with others and that it also affects the way we connect with our work.

The Project undertook a model 18-month Inner Development Program (IDP) to offer deep and continuous inner wellbeing

support to three cohorts of 20 changemakers from 45 different countries. The participants applied via four social change networks: Ashoka, the Schwab Foundation, the Skoll Foundation and Synergos.

The Project collaborated with TerraLuna to conduct longitudinal research over a period of three years in order to document the changemakers' journeys during the course of the 18-month program. This research elucidated the impact of the provision of inner wellbeing support on the lives of changemakers and sought to illustrate how various participants defined wellbeing.

The research team gathered data through multiple methods including observation, interviews, surveys, reflection, and by analyzing the existing documentation provided by cohort members. Different members of the research team were introduced into each of the 18-month immersion experiences.

The research findings validated our initial hypothesis - inner wellbeing translates to a better and healthier relationship with self, one's social environment and one's work.

As their affiliation with the Inner Development Program drew to a close, participants reported shifts which included being kinder to themselves, rejecting the hero model at work, redefining what success means to them, and recognising the need to take care of themselves before taking care of others. Beyond the changes observed at an individual level, the participants observed shifts both at an organisational level and at a

sector level. At an organisational level, participants started to connect with others not just as professionals but as human beings and adopted a leadership style in which they were willing to be led by others and trusted the capabilities of others. At a sector level, they developed collaboration as a principle of working and welcomed diverse perspectives to solve an issue.

At the end of the research, a new definition of wellbeing emerged which included the experience of wholeness and interconnectedness, and recognised wellbeing not as a mere pointer entry on a checklist but as a lifelong journey of inner work and conscious and intentional choices. Different participants identified with different practices of wellbeing - some decided to spend more time with family/friends, others started practicing meditation and journaling, while some others decided to take back the practices of wellbeing to their organisations/communities.

Since the inception of the Project, the team supporting The Wellbeing Project has noted a tremendous shift in how wellbeing is valued across the sector. Previously taboo, wellbeing is emerging as an important topic of discussion among international panels and forums. Moving forward, The Project aims to continue to support the inner journey of changemakers to enable their flourishing and that of our broader world.





## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

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*Although no definite statistics exist on the state of burnout and depression in the field of social change, more and more studies seem to suggest that the level of burnout and stress in the field is on the rise.*

A recent study involving 200 charity leaders in the UK found that more than half of them specified increases in workplace-tension over the past three years and stated burnout as a major concern in medium and long term.<sup>1</sup> The study also established a direct relationship between large charities and high levels of concern relating to stress. Another study, conducted in 2010, among 10,000 members of the nonprofit professionals, found that more than 90% of respondents regarded burnout as the principal reason for leaving the sector while 69% cited job related stress.<sup>2</sup>

A survey conducted by Unite (for people employed by charities and NGOs) found that 80% of respondents mentioned experiencing workplace stress in the last 12 months, while 42% respondents believed their job was detrimental to their mental health.<sup>3</sup>

Individuals engaged in helping professions such as nurses, doctors, teachers etc, are prone to a high level of trauma and depression due to the nature of their work – work which requires them to take care of others. In the humanitarian sector, human rights advocates who took part in a 2015 study related to mental health and wellbeing fared in the following manner: 19.4% met the criteria for PTSD diagnosis, 18.8% met the criteria for subthreshold PTSD,

and 14.7% met the criteria for depression.<sup>4</sup> Research performed by Maslach and Leiter in 2016 recognized burnout as an occupational hazard in various people-oriented professions such as human services, education and health care. The therapeutic or instructional services provided by such professionals necessitate the maintenance of interpersonal relationships with recipients, which are characterized by intensive levels of emotional contact. Although such relationships can be rewarding and engaging, they can also be quite strenuous. Within such occupations, the prevailing norms are to be selfless and put the needs of others first; to work long hours and do whatever it takes to help a client, patient or student; to go the extra mile and to give one's all.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, a significant number of people joining the field of social change have a history of childhood trauma, which shapes the way they identify with their work. A 2004 study by Howard Gardner argues a significant number of people who join the field of social change (including social entrepreneurs) have deep-rooted beliefs about society which get formed in the early stages of childhood because of traumatic or other formative experiences.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charity Risk Barometer 2019 - Risk and reward in an uncertain world;

<sup>2</sup> Stepping Up or Stepping out - A Report on the Readiness of Next Generation Nonprofit Leaders, 2010;

<sup>3</sup> <https://unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2019/may/charity-workers-suffering-an-epidemic-of-mental-health-issues-and-stress-survey-reveals/>;

<sup>4</sup> Joscelyne A, Knuckey S, Satterthwaite ML, Bryant RA, Li M, Qian M, et al. (2015) Mental Health Functioning in the Human Rights Field: Findings from an International Internet-Based Survey. PLoS ONE 10(12): e0145188. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0145188>;

<sup>5</sup> Maslach, Christina & Leiter, Michael. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry. World Psychiatry. 15. 103-111. 10.1002/wps.20311.

<sup>6</sup> Barendsen, Lynn & Gardner, Howard. (2004). Is the social entrepreneur a new type of leader? Leader to Leader, 34(Fall), 43-50. Leader to Leader. 2004. 43 - 50.

Another broad category is comprised of individuals who get exposed to social issues at a young age through politically active parents or through volunteering, leading to the formation of beliefs which shape the work that they undertake.

The consequences of burnout and stress at work can be far-reaching. A 2016 study conducted by the British Association of Social Workers and Community Care found that 57% respondents resorted to emotional eating and 35% reported using alcohol to cope with work-related stress. In addition to this, 63% of respondents had difficulties sleeping, 56% said that they were emotionally exhausted. Moreover, 35% already felt unable to cope at work and 15% currently take, or have taken within the past 12 months, antidepressant medication as a result of their social work role.<sup>7</sup>

In itself, work can be a cause of high levels of stress and exhaustion, but stress is further exacerbated in organisations that do not prioritize the wellbeing of its employees.

According to Beth Kanter & Aliza Sherman, in their recent article<sup>8</sup>, “Those of us who work in the nonprofit sector often distort our view of what ‘good work’ means because we think the nature of our work is about sacrifice. The fact that nonprofits are often financially strained and under constant constraint to do more with less amplifies this phenomenon. As a result, we push through our to-do lists at the expense of taking care of ourselves. Our organizational leaders, boards, and fellow workers reinforce the idea that everything about our work is important—everything is a level 10. And together, we create a culture of overwork and overwhelm.”

All in all, there has been an increase in the number of people voicing the need for a work-culture which safeguards the wellbeing of employees. A recent publication in the New York Times written by Courtney E. Martin prescribes sabbaticals as the answer to the problem of burnout in the non-profit sector.<sup>9</sup> The article argues that sabbaticals offer changemakers the capacity to think clearly and expansively.



## UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

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### DELPHI PROCESS

*The Project started with the collection of information through interviews and deep conversations with 50 leaders working in the arena of social change.*



<sup>7</sup> <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2016/09/28/stress-impacts-social-workers-theyre-trying-cope/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/updating\\_the\\_nonprofit\\_work\\_ethic#](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/updating_the_nonprofit_work_ethic#)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/18/opinion/productivity-saving-careers.html>

During the interviews, changemakers shared their personal struggles and vulnerabilities which included a lack of adequate time for family, the inability to have conversations unrelated to work and the struggle to achieve happiness and balance in life; they also expressed the urgency for support. People who had undertaken inner work, such as seeing a therapist or a spiritual teacher, over a considerable period of time reported improvements within their lives and relationships. Additionally, they observed a considerable shift in the way they and their organisations engaged in social change.

To acquire a broader understanding of the need for wellbeing in the field of social change, the Project conducted a web-based Delphi process with an international group of 300+ social changemakers. Participants were recruited from the networks of the Ford Foundation and Impact Hub. The Delphi process was selected over a traditional survey because its multi-stage approach allowed respondents a chance to learn from the responses of others, participate in meaning-making, and support a learning community where participants engage with one another's responses. In this manner, working with these networks allowed the Project to test key themes such as exploring the need for inner wellbeing, understanding the challenges surrounding the pursuit of wellbeing and examining the existing support initiatives.

Delphi also helped the Project to comprehend the variations in language used to describe experiences related to wellbeing.



## THE PARTICIPANTS

319 individuals in the age range of 18-55 years agreed to participate in the Delphi process and share their experiences by responding to questions related to social changemaking and inner wellbeing.

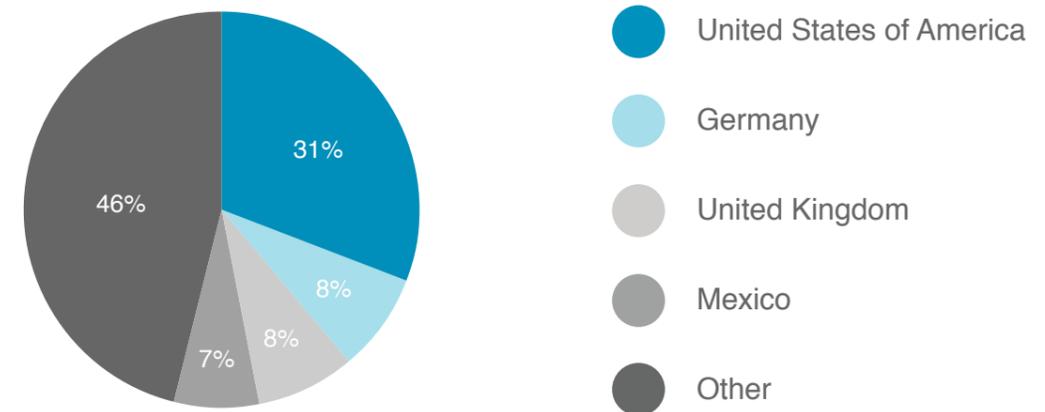
- 39% worked for a non-profit organisation
- 32% identified as social entrepreneur
- 25% described as social activists
- 2% identified as investors or donors
- <1% other

More than half (59%) respondents identified social change as the primary focus of their work and 36% indicated that their work is in some way related to social change.

The detailed breakup of the ages of the study participants was as follows: 47% were between 25-34 years old and 30% were aged between 35-44 years.

Out of the entire batch of respondents, 70% were female. Participants held various job-roles and worked in different sub-sectors within the field of social change.

Participants held citizenship of 48 different countries.



76% of participants worked in their countries of citizenship. There were 22 countries/regions which none of the respondents were citizens of but worked in them, and citizens of 13 countries/regions inhabited other locations for their primary work.

We asked, "What is the primary language, if any, you use when talking about your inner wellbeing?"

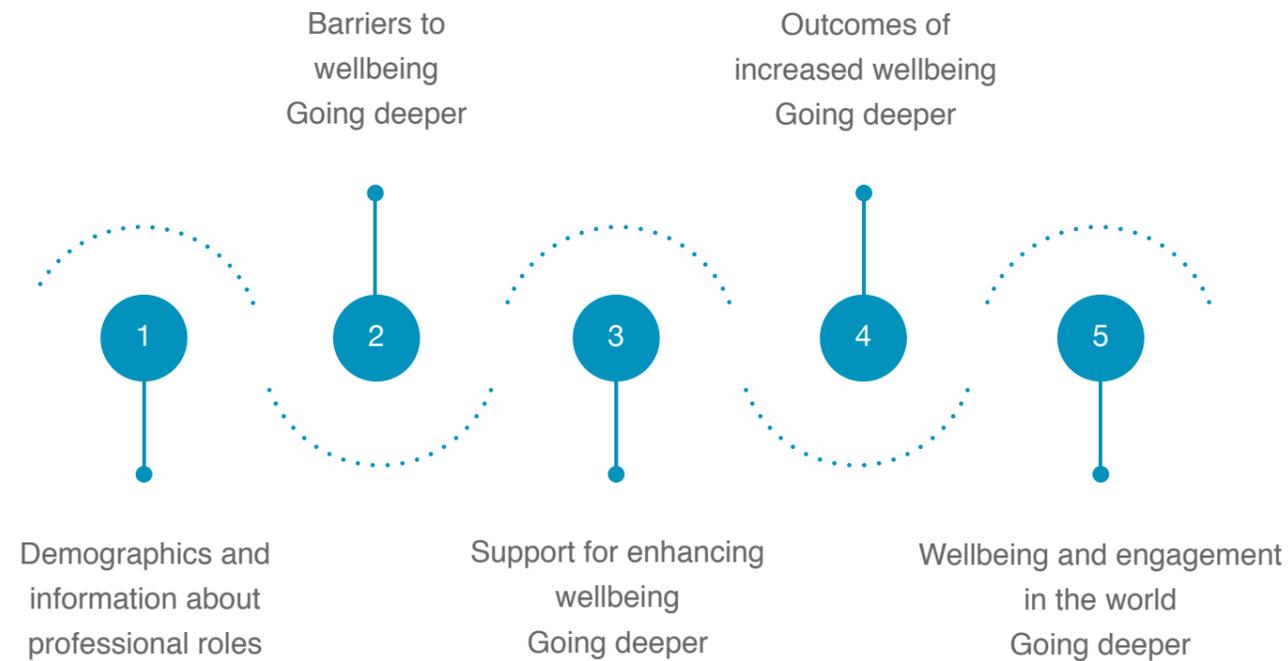
- > 50% of participants indicated that they primarily speak English to talk about inner wellbeing
- 11% of participants indicated that they primarily speak Spanish
- 8% of participants indicated that they primarily speak German
- Other participants indicated that they primarily speak Arabic, Bengali, Croatian, Dutch, French, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Moroccan, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, and Turkish.



## THE DELPHI PROCESS

As shown in the diagram below, the Delphi process began with an introductory survey consisting of general demographic questions as well as questions about how they describe their work in terms of purpose and respective roles. The five subsequent rounds had two parts each and, therefore, a total of eleven surveys.

### DELPHI PROCESS ROUNDS AND TOPICS



### THE FOUR SUBSEQUENT ROUNDS OF THE PROCESS PROCEEDED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Participants responded to a survey constructed by the researchers based on the initial findings of The Wellbeing Project's Inner Development Program.
2. The results were analyzed and shared with participants so they could discover how their responses compared to the responses of other group-members.
3. Participants were then invited to suggest additional questions related to the topic under investigation.
4. Researchers developed a second 'going deeper' survey based on the responses of the participants.
5. Participants completed additional surveys. Those who completed the first round were invited to participate in the second one; those who completed the second round were invited to the third round and so on.

### ADDITIONAL THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE DELPHI SURVEYS INCLUDE:

- Dimensions of wellbeing.
- Challenges in building a workplace culture that supports inner wellbeing.
- Qualities of a work culture supportive of inner wellbeing.



## BARRIERS TO WELLBEING

Respondents mentioned multiple barriers to wellbeing such as having to work in crisis-mode, experiencing a lack of purpose, facing difficulties in their search for a life partner, feeling guilty about not giving enough time to their homes/work, being exhausted and overwhelmed, not having a safe environment for physical exercise (e.g. unsafe neighborhoods, gender violence), being lonely, wanting to spend more time in nature, exhibiting patterns of addiction and an array of health-related issues.

Respondents reported a discrepancy between the importance attached to caring for one's wellbeing (75% "very important") and the actual practice of caring for oneself (25% to a "great extent"). Delphi respondents explained the discrepancy by suggesting that they did not possess enough time to tend to personal wellbeing and that they struggled to prioritize their own needs over the needs of others.

## FAMILY AND CULTURE

Many described a results-oriented focus in their families and culture—particularly in the workplace and the classroom—prioritizing professional over personal development, undervaluing relationships and emphasizing perfectionism and success. Respondents often said that they were expected to be strong and tenacious and were forced to suppress their personal needs in order to go about their work.

## PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FINANCES

Delphi respondents spoke about the significance of adequate financial health to their wellbeing and frequently associated feelings of personal financial insecurity with a perceived loss of personal freedom. Respondents were just as likely to correlate their organization's financial prosperity and stability to their inner wellbeing. "Worrying about financial security is something that doesn't happen all the time," one respondent wrote, "but when it does, it is a constant worry in the back of my head that can affect how I react/view normal things in my everyday life." The people who did not express financial concerns often cited availing of external support such as financial support from family members.



## SUPPORT FOR ENHANCING WELLBEING

Delphi respondents illustrated a link between inner wellbeing and being able to experience their "whole selves". They described their personal and professional lives as interconnected. Many maintained that relationships (with themselves and others) are critical for supporting inner wellbeing and that many aspects of such relationships are important; participants ascribed high values to relationships which allow them to give and receive love, those that support them in their personal and professional endeavours and finally to those which impart them with a sense of security and safety.



## OUTCOMES OF INCREASED WELLBEING

The survey participants identified several positive outcomes that resulted from their experience of wellbeing. The most common were an increased sense of purpose, more collaborative and supportive relationships with others, and healthier management of personal and professional boundaries.

### AN INCREASED SENSE OF PURPOSE

Respondents described that when they felt most well, they experienced an increased sense of self. This was experienced as an increased awareness and expression of needs, desires, and clarity in one's purpose in life. For some, this self-clarity had positive ripple effects in their communications and interactions with others. Others found that increased inner wellbeing clarified their long-term visioning, which made it easier to plan for personal and professional goals.

*My purpose in life is more clear. I can feel and understand things with more clarity. Life and its sensations are brighter, as well. I'm more self-confident and this has effects in my relationships (I feel that I'm more funny and chill and people trust me) and at work (I'm more proactive and thinking permanently seeing the big picture of things, and my colleagues trust me more).*

Several described that this increased sense of clarity and purpose increased their capacity to cope through turbulence and feelings of instability at work or in their personal life.

### MORE COLLABORATIVE AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

Increased inner wellbeing positively affected the relationships with others. Respondents described an increased capacity to step outside of themselves to understand the viewpoints of others and gain a more holistic perspective.

One individual shared that when they experienced wellbeing, they were “slower to anger,” allowing them to “listen well and with compassion.”

Ninety percent of respondents indicated that when they are feeling most well it was ‘very true’ or ‘somewhat true’ that they feel better able to support others and be more open to accepting support from others.

### HEALTHIER MANAGEMENT OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Previously, when participants discussed boundaries at work, they found that boundaries were easily set, but difficult to maintain. Respondents reported that experiencing wellbeing supported their ability to respect and maintain the boundaries they set for themselves.

*In general, when I am most well, I am much better at drawing boundaries. I am better at not taking on work I do not have capacity for. I am better at encouraging colleagues to do the same.*

Maintaining boundaries, in turn, supports their own wellbeing and contributes to a work culture that prioritizes wellbeing.



## CHALLENGES IN BUILDING A WORK-CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS INNER WELLBEING

Many respondents said that they worked for organizations which claim to care about the wellbeing of their employees but whose work culture fails to demonstrate any such concern. Most recognized the requirement of leadership models which place emphasis on inner wellbeing. Leadership gets “so busy and they don’t know how to create a culture of wellbeing,” wrote one respondent, “staff sees the leadership working like crazy and not taking care of their own wellbeing. Verbally they express that wellbeing is important, but they don’t lead by example”. The upkeep of maintaining the wellbeing of employees is directly related to the creation of more sustainable and collaborative organizations.

Respondents suggested that when an organization fails to provide the requisite support needed for the cultivation of the wellbeing of its employees, the consequences are stress at home and work, decreased productivity and a sense of “feel[ing] eaten up by work.”

An absence of wellbeing support by enterprises negatively affected the energy-levels of its workers. It also has an adverse impact on the employees’ feelings towards themselves, their

colleagues, the organization and their mission according to respondents.

Some spoke of how a lack of opportunities to take time off for themselves results in them feeling “taken for granted” and becoming less creative. They also described a ripple effect whereby a lack of wellbeing support from respective organisations led to feelings of frustration and disappointment, to the creation of a risk-averse culture and to the generation of unhealthy competition.

These detrimental consequences made it difficult for many individuals to achieve their targets and forced some others to leave their organizations.

Some participants mentioned working for organizations which offered inner wellbeing support initiatives but described the offered programs as either inaccessible or unacceptable. Others declared that their organizations create the structural potential for inner wellbeing support but struggled to foster a culture which normalized inner-work. The major obstacles stated by them were a lack of encouragement by organizational leaders and the fear of judgment.

One leader of a non-profit organization and Delphi respondent said that it is hard for leaders to model healthy work boundaries because the success or failure of their organisations rested on their shoulders.



## QUALITIES OF A WORK CULTURE SUPPORTIVE OF INNER WELLBEING

Respondents engaged by organisations with work cultures supportive of inner wellbeing identified several positive outcomes of inner work: decreased stress, increased positivity, personal and professional growth, increased engagement, higher levels of productivity and commitment to work, increased commitment to the organization, a desire for alignment between personal values, inner work and the organization’s mission.

Participants were able to clearly identify the different kinds of support they needed from their organizations. They noted a gap between what they needed and what their organization provided.

Examples of gaps are listed on the following page:

### ALIGNMENT BETWEEN PERSONAL VALUES, INNER WORK AND THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

Many expressed a desire for the internal organizational culture to reflect the organization’s publicly stated values.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE TO TAKE TIME OFF FOR THEMSELVES.

Some respondents reported that their organizations encouraged people to take time off for themselves but that their leadership failed to model this form of

self-care. Leadership must make it clear, through their own behavior, that they value self-care such as taking advantage of paid time off, exploring their personal interests and passions, and doing “anything else that is necessary for [employees’] physical or mental health”.

### RECOGNIZING, CELEBRATING AND SUPPORTING THE WHOLE PERSON

Participants disclosed making use of organizational communications and actions that are welcoming of the whole person within the workplace to create a space for socializing and celebrating the contributions of all team members.

### EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO TAKE OWNERSHIP AND WORK COLLABORATIVELY

Encouraging development and growth, creating a culture of shared ownership and rewarding high-level performance.

### LEADERSHIP OUGHT TO EXPRESS CARE AND ACTIVELY SUPPORT INNER WELLBEING

Leaders who engage with their staff about their inner wellbeing help to foster an organizational culture that prioritizes and supports it.



# INNER WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR CHANGEMAKERS

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## INNER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## AN INTRODUCTION TO INNER WELLBEING

Inner wellbeing lies at the heart of the Project. Given how the term ‘wellbeing’ is regularly used across the fields of social change and health in various contexts, the Project does not prescribe to any single definition of wellbeing.

For the Project, wellbeing is an ongoing personal journey towards wholeness and connection. It is a journey of inner work that entails healing, personal development and ultimately integration of self. The Project embraces the many and varied pathways to inner wellbeing.

The goal of the Project is to help participants explore what wellbeing means to them and to be supportive of their journey by providing them the resources required for inner work. For some individuals, inner wellbeing could symbolize the creation of a healthy balance between personal and professional life, while for others it could imply being true to their values or being emotionally, physically and mentally healthy.

As a result, the practices that support an individual’s inner wellbeing vary depending on his/her needs. Instilling a habit of meditating every day, taking a walk or spending more time with family, reflecting on one’s life, starting a journal, seeing a therapist or exploring practices through retreats are all examples of pursuing wellbeing. Therefore, wellbeing may or may not require the support of others - it can be achieved by oneself, collectively or with the help of professionals.

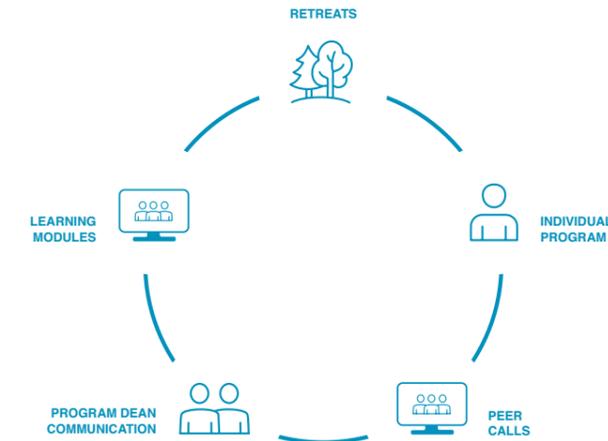
## AN INTRODUCTION TO INNER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

By offering a model 18-month Inner Development Program, The Wellbeing Project delved into what happens when changemakers are provided with inner wellbeing support and aimed to explore the shifts in the way changemakers connected with themselves, with others, and with the work they do when they are offered this support. Cohort participants starting point often mirrored what we heard from Delphi process participants.

### COHORT PARTICIPANTS

The participants came from 45 different countries, ranging in age from 28 to 75, with a median age of 41. The group included people from different professional backgrounds including founders, executive directors, and activists and represented different sub sectors of social change including environment, women’s rights, work in the prison system, microfinance, and grassroots community work. 60% of the cohort participants were female.

## THE IDP COHORT EXPERIENCE CONSISTED OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS



### RETREATS (ONE EVERY 6 MONTHS)

At each of the three retreats, cohort participants worked with three facilitators over a period of six days, engaging in group and individual exploration, somatics (movement and bodywork) and process work.

### INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM

Each participant was supported through a \$2000 stipend for the purpose of finding either individual or group support for additional inner work between retreats (e.g., therapy, coaching, retreats).

### PEER CALLS

Participants were encouraged to integrate their ongoing development into their work and personal lives through facilitated monthly calls with 2-3 cohort members.

### PROGRAM DEAN COMMUNICATION

Each participant had regular one-on-one calls with the IDP Program Dean, who was responsible for tracking the experiences and emerging needs of participants, offering counsel and support in individual programs.

### LEARNING MODULES

Participants were invited to attend webinars with ‘wisdom teachers’ who hailed from different walks of life. Discussed topics included relationships, self-compassion and resilience.

As part of our analysis of participant experiences, we identified nine guiding principles applied in the design of the program. These guiding principles are listed in the table below.

<b>JOURNEY-ORIENTED</b>	Understand inner development work as unique to each person, multidimensional, multifaceted and ongoing.
<b>INVITATIONAL</b>	Invite people to take part in inner development work while allowing them the freedom to choose how to participate and engage.
<b>WELCOMING OF THE WHOLE PERSON</b>	Place individuals, not their work, at the center. Invite participants to engage without premeditated expectations about personal or professional outcomes.
<b>NURTURING COMMITMENT</b>	Create dedicated time and space for inner development work.
<b>FACILITATING DEPTH</b>	Create opportunities for the discovery and integration of capacity-building practices and experiences that support enhanced self-care.
<b>PROVIDING MEANINGFUL FRAMEWORKS</b>	Provide a variety of therapeutic and/or healing modalities and opportunities within consistent, coherent and useful inner development frameworks.
<b>CULTIVATING SPACE</b>	Trustworthy, credible and skilled staff create and hold a sacred, confidential space for vulnerability, connection and inner development.
<b>WISE FACILITATION</b>	Provide trustworthy, credible and skilled facilitators experienced in supervising both interpersonal and intrapersonal journeys with compassion and detachment.
<b>ACCEPTING CARE</b>	Offer participants opportunities to be cared for by others and to cultivate care for themselves (changemakers are accustomed to taking care of others. It is a challenge for many 'givers' to receive).

## ROLE OF THE FACILITATORS

Facilitators interacted with participants during retreats and during peer calls as coordinators. While modalities varied across the three cohorts, cohort members acknowledged the role of facilitators, pivotal to the promotion of their inner work, include the following:

- Creating a safe space
- Opportunities to safely challenge cultural and familial norms
- Deep listening (to one's body, inner voices, environment, etc. )
- Eliciting vulnerability; taking risks and speaking up
- Encouraging movement and creative artistic expression
- Employing capacity-building tools, practices and strategies to support inner wellbeing
- Nurturing equanimity

## ROLE OF THE COHORT COMMUNITY

The cohort community became an inner-work support-system for each individual member. Participants spoke of the many ways in which this support-system nurtured and modeled new approaches to relationships with self and others, by:

- Exploring the community and its relationship to wellbeing
- Experiencing the power of witnessing/ being witnessed
- Raising awareness with regard to inner wellbeing and how a sense of wellbeing influences our interactions with the world
- Illustrating different elements and traits of relationships (with family, friends, colleagues and peers) and elucidating their impact on social-change work and our daily interactions in general
- Depicting various elements and qualities of organizational culture (including power structures, leadership models and theories of change) and demonstrating how these affect social-change work and our engagement with the world in general





# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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*To ascertain the impact of inner work on changemakers as well as on the process of social change, a team of seven researchers explored the connection between inner work and the quality and effectiveness of social change work during and following their 18-month immersive experience. The research was adaptive and participatory in nature*

An evaluator/researcher was introduced into the initiative as a participant-observer of each cohort in order to gain first-hand experience of the Inner Development Program and a deeper understanding of the Project and its impact, along with its approach and terminology. Information was gathered through observations, interviews, surveys, reflective practices and the analysis of existing documentation provided by cohort members. Across the three cohorts, we conducted 171 interviews and 406 surveys. This report, prepared by TerraLuna Collaborative (the Project's research and evaluation partner), describes and highlights the need for prioritizing wellbeing in the field of social change and the ways inner development work can impact the sector.

## APPROACH TO RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The Research and evaluation approach consisted of two components: evidence-based, principle-focused developmental evaluation and interpretive longitudinal qualitative research.

## DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

The research and evaluation team worked alongside the Project team to conduct surveys and provide relevant feedback. In contrast to a traditional objective evaluation role, the research and evaluation team were active participants in the implementation process and were asked to provide critical feedback rather than neutral perspectives.

The evaluation focused on the following three areas:

### 1. PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

The evaluation provided feedback over a three-year period to assist Project staff in providing meaningful support to the inner journeys of participants and ultimately, to their social-change work.

The evaluation and learning process was participant-centered and involved documenting the process in which cohort members identified the experiences that supported their inner work.

### 2. IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING KEY CONCEPTS

Many terms and phrases used in this project such as 'wellbeing' and 'inner journey' are broad terms, open to multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations.

The evaluation process aimed to define these terms in context of this project through participant experiences and perspectives.

### 3. LEARNING

The evaluation team supported the development of the Project's model.

The longitudinal research explored the effect of inner work and the linkage between inner work and the quality of social change work.

## LONGITUDINAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative inquiry facilitates an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the motives which govern it; it provides rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are typically under-explored in literature.

Our research, conducted over three years, tracked the changes in how individuals perceived the impact of inner development work on their relationships (including relationship to self and work). We selected an interpretive approach as The Project sought to understand, instead of having already defined, participants' meaning of wellbeing, in the given context, over time.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The high-level research questions were:

1. What key concepts have emerged and what do they mean in the context of this project and from the perspectives of the cohort members?
2. What are the impacts of the Project's Inner Development Program on social change-makers' individual journeys?
3. How and when are individuals making links between inner development and social change?

## DATA COLLECTION METHODS

### PARTICIPANT OBSERVER

Participant-observers become familiar with the communities they observe in a more intimate and comprehensive manner than those who simply conduct surveys and depart after. Consequently, a participant-observer is privy to more thorough information that would otherwise have been inaccessible to traditional researchers; gaining intimate first hand insights helps them identify specific issues. Each cohort had a different participant observer. All three observers were members of TerraLuna Collaborative's research and evaluation team.

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with Inner Development Program cohort members, facilitators and staff. All cohort members participated in these interviews, conducted by two members of the TerraLuna team. (If TerraLuna researchers were participant observers in a particular cohort, they were deliberately not the interviewers for that cohort. They took this measure to ensure that interviews were conducted by people experiencing the community for the first time and to preserve the relationship of the inserted participant-observers with their fellow cohort members). These audio-recorded interviews were performed over the phone and lasted approximately 30-60 minutes. Recordings were transcribed, de-identified and entered into qualitative analysis software.

A team of three people coded the transcripts using a coding scheme developed and endorsed by the TerraLuna team. Some coders were observers and some not, allowing for an eclectic perspective in the interpretation of the data.

### SURVEYS

Paper-based surveys were designed for the purpose of gathering data from all cohort members participating in the Inner Development Program during and immediately following each of the retreats.

### DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

All qualitative data related to the IDP cohorts was processed through a qualitative analysis software and the texts were perused by the research and evaluation team. The initial coding system was formed based on themes identified through our observations and the first read-through of the texts. We used an emergent coding approach because we were committed to identifying terms that were meaningful to cohort participants and to better comprehend their meanings from the perspective of the cohort members in the context of this project. The application of external, preset definitions would result in the deposition of new ones emerging from the data.

The primary sources of information for this report were interview transcripts and survey responses. Wherever possible, participant quotes were used in order to preserve the intentions of respondents.

## LIMITATIONS

Given that the field of social change is large and sophisticated, researchers encountered several limitations during the facilitation of this study. First, a study of this size could not hope to capture the infinite complex ways in which social-change leaders go about their work. Our research focused primarily on cohort participants who were selected through specific social-change fellowship programs. We also conversed with small sample-groups comprised of the colleagues of some of the participants to gain an extrinsic perspective of the effects of character-shifts on the participants' personal and professional lives. Second, all segments of the Project including the research and evaluation work were conducted in English. Since English was not the primary language of many cohort participants, certain nuances of their accounts could have been lost in translation. Third, we dealt primarily with self-reported data.

This report is not a how-to guide, nor is it meant to represent definitive conclusions with regard to the definition of wellbeing or the components of inner-work. This report cannot verify the long-term effects of the Project on participants. Instead, this report is a methodical attempt to reflect the participant experiences during the course of the Project and the cohort experience.

We believe these findings will be conducive for the advancement of a culture of inner wellbeing support for change-makers around the world.

## PRIVACY AND ETHICS

TerraLuna Collaborative commits to facilitating research and evaluation in ways that are respectful, ethical, rigorous and useful.

### Intrusiveness

Researchers participated as observers, which meant cohort members did not have to be taken out from their communities for evaluation purposes. The only exceptions were surveys completed by them during cohort retreats. We intentionally designed these surveys to be short and open-ended so as to stimulate reflection with the hope that such exercises would bolster the cohort experience instead of taking participants away from it.

### Respect for privacy

When we inserted ourselves into the cohort experience, we observed and documented patterns and themes within the groups but refrained from recording individual experiences.

### Sensitivity to vulnerability

In spite of being international and constantly growing, the sphere of social change is still quite small. During the compilation of our reports, we ensured the anonymity of all participants. The research and evaluation process should not be a cause of any kind of harm, be it emotional, social, economic or otherwise.

### Informed consent

We solicited informed consent from cohort participants at the beginning and the end of the project and before each interview.

### Useful

The research and evaluation should be useful to social-change leaders and people who support and influence the arena of social change. We inquired about people's experiences along with the meanings they attributed to them and reported our findings alongside our analysis.

### Rigorous

We conducted rigorous, systematic, in-depth fieldwork that yielded high-quality data. We also coordinated a systematic and conscientious analysis of said data to ensure its credibility.

(Patton, 2015, p. 653).<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Patton, Michael Quinn. (2015) *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications.



# INNER JOURNEY OF CHANGEMAKERS

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*During the Inner Development Program, participants were led on a facilitated journey to make meaningful contact with their inner selves, something they earlier regarded as arduous or even impossible.*

Participants told us over and over that there is a profound interrelationship between their inner development work and the actions they take in the world, and that there are distinct outcomes for changemakers participating in the Program.

The visuals below represent the Inner Journey Outcomes of changemakers. These outcomes, as observed during the journey, are not linear and do not forecast or determine the trajectories of subsequent outcomes. Varying responses and results showed up throughout the journeys of the participants and often appeared to be mutually exclusive.

## CHANGEMAKERS' INNER JOURNEY OUTCOMES

### - IDENTIFYING AND SEEING -



#### SAYING YES AND RETURNING TO YES

Saying “yes” to the project’s invitation to explore “the profound connection between how our relationship with ourselves deeply influences the way we are in the world”  
Returning to “yes” by choosing to continue the exploration.



#### EXPERIENCING AND OPENING TO NEW RELATIONAL POSSIBILITIES

Experiencing and opening to new possibilities in their relationships with (self and others), to their daily work, and to the work of changemaking in general.

### - UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTING -



#### DISCOVERING AND ACCEPTING THE WHOLE SELF

Growing more fully and deeply to whole selfhood. Experiencing greater awareness and presence, and less self-judgement.

### - BEING AND BECOMING -



#### MOVING TOWARDS GREATER INNER WHOLENESS

Integrating parts of oneself that had been fragmented or denied, relief and healing from burdens, and creating space for a whole person to emerge leads to a different way of being in personal and professional spaces.



#### ALIGNING INNER WELLBEING AND OUTER ACTION

Aligning (in service of the world, nation, community, or group) from a sense of greater wholeness and awareness of new possibilities to bringing the inner life andf outer work into greater alignment.

# IDENTIFYING AND SEEING: SAYING YES TO WELLBEING

*“There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”*

— Thomas Merton <sup>11</sup>

## SAYING ‘YES’

The Wellbeing Project’s invitation to changemakers was “to commit to their wellness and inner development by giving themselves the time and attention they need to become healthier and happier as individuals and on that basis also become more effective as co-creative leaders”. “This program is for you,” the Project’s staff wrote in their invitation letter<sup>12</sup>, “if you have wanted to take time for yourself, to explore yourself; gotten to the point where you are looking for another way of doing things; wanted to work with issues or challenges that you are facing.” Each person who chose to apply to the Project effectively said ‘yes’ to this invitation, and we consider that ‘yes’ to be the first outcome of the Project.

It is clear from the applications that the invitation connected with certain common experiences among applicants,

who described feeling stagnant, burned out or depleted. Their passion for their work was waning. They were worn down by the bureaucracies they have had to navigate and drained by the seemingly endless pursuit of funding. Through participant interviews, we also know that they came to The Wellbeing Project worn down by the stress of founding and/or managing an organization, by their having to travel constantly to promote their work, by the ongoing internal and external pressures of a particular identity—of a specific kind of leader, idealist or hero. They spoke of the toll all of this had taken on their relationships with family and friends and especially with themselves.

For applicants, saying ‘yes’ to this invitation was a step towards saying ‘no’ to an existing state of affairs.

<sup>11</sup>Merton, T. (1968) *Conjectures of a Innocent Bystander*. Image; Reissue Edition

<sup>12</sup>Wellbeing Project. (2015) “Wellbeing Project Invitation Letter.”

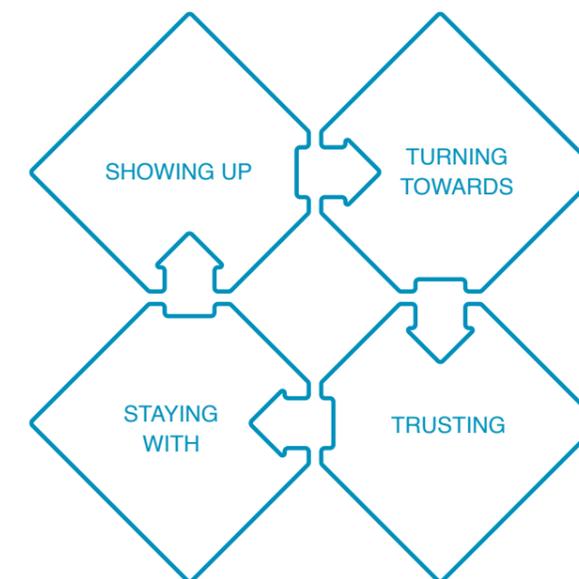
## RETURNING TO ‘YES’

After being accepted into the Project, participants embarked on an 18-month journey that was effectively a series of opportunities to say ‘yes’ to inner exploration (or to choose ‘no’). Participants welcomed inner work each time they showed up for a retreat, joined a small group call, or engaged in individual inner work.

They returned to ‘yes’ each time they made a decision, inspired in some way by the inner work undertaken by them as project participants, which impacted their relationship with themselves, others, their daily work and the work of change-making in general.

## WAYS OF SAYING ‘YES’

For participants, the act of saying ‘yes’ took several forms:



## SHOWING UP

‘Showing up,’ as participants described it, implied something more than just being physically present. It connoted a quality of presence and openness at its core, defined by retreat facilitator Chris Price as “equally meeting whatever arises with receptivity and equanimity.”<sup>13</sup>

Participants depicted showing up differently to situations unburdened by internalized expectations about what a social changemaker ought to uphold or sacrifice in the service of change-making (a set of expectations participants often referred to as “the hero model”).

### - PARTICIPANT VOICES -

*“I’m aware of the fact that I’m showing up differently for myself. I’m curious whether or not people see that.”*

*“I’m showing up as more calm and loving and a listener ... I’m showing up in a profound way in painful moments ... I’m there for people, [but] it doesn’t exhaust me. And what I give to people, they say, is a level above and beyond.”*

*“I’ve developed a practice of presence. Learning to not bring past stories, experiences, conversations, or expectations into the present moment, but to enter each moment as it appears.”*

*“Really listening and [connecting with] someone—how could that ever be a bad thing? If you get better at that, that’s a great thing. It’s not easy to slow down and be in the present. Everything about our world pulls us away from that.”*

*“My connections to people are much deeper. They were never dishonest, but they’re much [deeper].”*

*“[The Project] woke me up to how important it is that I have a loving presence. The work that I do to learn how to have a healthy relationship with my own emotions can be very powerful. I can transmit in really powerful ways. And that’s one of those things that helps heal the world.”*

*“[There is a] different quality in my work, in my team, because I make myself more visible and also more vulnerable, so it’s not this superhero—‘I can handle everything.’ But also, admit that I don’t know, or that I need something, or that I’m not feeling strong. This gives a different quality in the team. More people show themselves also. It’s a deeper connection in the team.”*

*“Some have assumed my social entrepreneur life was easy—anyone can succeed with that level of funding, they said. But it has not been easy. I push myself and my team so that we are successful in achieving impact. I am learning that there is another way of being and working that is not exhausting.”*

## TURNING TOWARDS

Participants were asked to ‘turn towards’ all the distinct kinds of feelings and experiences with openness. Within group settings, when others were expressing feelings or experiences, participants were asked to turn towards those participants without judgment, as listeners. Another guiding quote by Chris Price is as follows: “We invite each person to say what is true for them—about their own

experience, with the idea that we can listen and receive that. And in some ways, let that be comfortable, uncomfortable, pretty and sweet, messy and hot and heavy, clear, like a crystal bell ringing, confused and stormy... All of it!” Participants were also encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and feelings without judgment, an invitation which participants described as cathartic.

### - PARTICIPANT VOICES -

*“If you’re somebody like me, who had this pride in being strong, and being resilient, and in not being a victim, and in always trying to make other people feel better—to fall down in front of a group and say, ‘Actually, I can’t even speak because of the pain inside me. I can’t even put words to the pain that I feel now and that I’ve carried for so long, and I’m scared.’ It was huge. And that’s what was unique.”*

*“[I learned that] trying to escape emotions can be more painful than the pain of feeling them.”*

*“I now feel like [wellbeing] is not so much about alleviating suffering. In fact, sometimes it’s turning toward suffering in a way that I had avoided it in the past. It’s much more about how do I free myself enough to be present to it, whether it’s physical, mental, or spiritual? To open myself up to my options around how to meet that—which might be escape, digging in, or not necessarily changing anything, but having awareness around it.”*

*“[What has been reinforced is] being open and direct ... [and] lowering resistance to dealing with contentious issues.”*

*“I was hearing myself say things that I’ve never even said out loud, to any human being. I surprised myself, how much we bury those wounds, but they’re very much part of [us]. I didn’t know how much I carried inside ... I was stunned that all of that was stuffed inside of me like a teddy bear.”*

*“There is nothing the same. I inhabit my body differently. I am suddenly aware of so much more sensation. I am more aware of pain and pleasure. I can literally feel synapses and cells reconnecting.”*

*“I lost my many, many occasions to live my own life. I was the least [important]. If you want to change the life of other people, you have to [look at] your own life. [If you do not], you are an empty soul working for other people.”*

*“[My definition of wellbeing, now, is] to be connected to my potency—to my strongest, healthiest spot—so that I can look at [a] challenge in the eyes, and work with it, deal with it, dialog with it, instead of being taken by it, being surmounted by it.”*

<sup>13</sup> Price, C. S. (2015). *Gestalt Awareness Practice: Christine Stewart Price. The Gestalt Legacy Project.*

## TRUSTING

Participants mentioned that to show up and ‘turn towards’, it was imperative for them to trust their respective facilitators, their cohort and the process as a whole. While trust is something that was actively cultivated by facilitators and the Project team, it was still another form of saying ‘yes’ and making a conscious choice. In the context of the Project, ‘trust’ includes placing one’s trust

in self, in loved ones, in colleagues and in the process of inner work and outer action. Trust, in the context of the Project, allowed people to experience and perceive vulnerability as a strength rather than a weakness and enabled individuals to experiment with new ways of thinking, doing, being, as well as to practice new ways of being in relationships.

### - PARTICIPANT VOICES -

*“What the Project did so well is it created that environment of calm and trust, and caring.”*

*“I’m not the one who goes on stage and exposes [my] feelings, and terrible stories, or whatever. I need time to arrive, and to have trust ... I made a conscious decision not to act like I usually act, to be the last one to share. It was a big step for me ... This only could happen because I trusted, very much, the group leaders.”*

*“The other participants and the facilitators are so open. I really feel trust in them, and this makes me feel comfortable and able to be present, totally.”*

*“I did not feel alone. I also felt the need to be alone. I felt the cohort members enabled both my need to be alone and to be together. The cohort was a circle of trust, each of us played a role in building it.”*

*“Mutual trust [enabled me] to open up. The whole setting was important—the combination of good company, good framing, and confidence in the other participants. For me, it must work well together, so that I can open up.”*

*“You’re trusting people with your wellbeing, with your mental state, with a lot of things ... The biggest gift for me, has to be to be - to have this peer*

*community that I really deeply trust, now, that I can learn from.”*

*“I discovered in myself a deeper experience of trusting [a] process in the face of conflicting opinions, varying levels of understanding, cultural and familial programming and perceived power differentials.”*

*“I am [dealing] with things in a different way, with more letting go, and trusting, and finding my place in the things—knowing that I will not be responsible for everything, and I’m not controlling everything. And that is good.”*

*“I’ve noticed a difference ... it’s a culmination of the whole experience of being with people, of trusting, of the nurturing nature of the way this was done, that leads you to be able to get more insight into yourself, and how you can better interact with people.”*

*“In general, be it with the team I work with, with family, and definitely with friends, I’m much more tuned into [and] trusting my intuition ... trusting intuition [rather than following] obligations sometimes leads to things that are better for relationships, for the work, or whatever it may be ... There has been much more space and confidence for that.”*

## STAYING WITH

‘Staying with’ applies to each of the aforementioned ways of saying ‘yes’ - It is choosing to stay with (or return to) the exploration. To stay present without turning away, all the while trusting the process, granted that doing so caused

no harm or re-traumatization. Speaking to participants, retreat facilitator Judith Hemming emphasized the power and potential of ‘staying with’:  
“If you go more deeply into the truth, the truth produces change.”

### - PARTICIPANT VOICES -

*“It takes bravery and courage to really look into those bits that, from my perspective, having grown up learning to repress them, to allow them to really have a moment, and to have the light shone on them, is ... it’s continuous, it’s hard, it’s beautiful, it’s challenging, and it’s amazing.”*

*“I think I started with a simplistic idea of wellbeing. And the deeper you delve, the more complex it gets ... Simplistic layers would be practical, pragmatic stuff and strategies. The deeper layers probably move into areas of spirituality and the meaning of life.”*

*“In order to experience life without unnecessary suffering, we have to give attention to the suffering that we’ve experienced, that we’ve ignored, the ones that continue to influence our lives in ways that don’t allow us to be fully present.”*

*“I learned that your relationships [are] very sacred, very meaningful. But you cannot maintain or hold onto that meaning, if you are not at peace within your own self. If you have not processed the contradictions in yourself. And then, to ... come back deep inside yourself, and back again.”*

*“You can turn towards your pain. It is not only essential, but I will forget to grow if I am not able to give time and space for that which is difficult.”*

*“I learned to stay in the present. This staying in the present is helping me a lot. Noticing what is happening inside of me, not just what is happening [around me]. I keep this with me—not avoiding the nervous thoughts, just paying attention to them. And because I notice how I’m feeling, I can control it. For the first time, I’m feeling sadness, but the sadness doesn’t stun me. I feel the sadness, but I’m not unhappy. You understand? ... Thanks to the Project, and the work within me, I can pass through all these things. I don’t give up.”*

*“I have begun expressing myself a lot more ... It feels good to have a heavier head sometimes but a more secure, lighter heart. This is a big change from where I was before, where all my emotions were bottled and rolled up and I could not tell the difference between what I was feeling and how it made me feel. I am also beginning to trust my own instincts in being able to work through challenges. I have been unable to deal with in the past, the stress and anxiety that leadership created in me, an inability to meet or process loss and grief, not giving myself the space to learn, reflect and removing the pressure and expectations from which I told myself I always needed to meet. I feel like I have found a new family who get it and who are able to hold me with kindness and love. It feels pretty special.”*



# IDENTIFYING AND SEEING: EXPLORING NEW POSSIBILITIES

These practices of showing up differently, turning towards or facing one’s feelings and emotions as well as those of other participants, trusting new people and processes and standing by whatever arises were introduced and facilitated by experienced professionals in the controlled environment of a retreat. This kind of support was sustained through ongoing support from the dean, contact with intimate groups and individual work. Participants described the resulting impacts on their relationships with themselves as well as with others. They also narrated effects on their relationships with their work and change-making in general. Many participants said they viewed these

relationships through a new lens, one that enabled them to evaluate which relationships were life-giving and which were life-depleting. They also evaluated their approaches to those relationships; how showing up in different ways impacted the people and organizations to which they were connected. This method affected the lives of participants – some new relationships were established while some existing ones were either altered or terminated altogether because of this new approach and perspective. Opening oneself up to new possibilities within one’s relationships with self and others was a fundamental part of the IDP experience for many participants.

## CHANGES IN ONES’ RELATIONSHIP TO SELF AND OTHERS

Changes in this domain were either an increase or release of a relational element.

### CHANGE IN ONE’S RELATIONSHIP TO SELF

#### Types and qualities of changes in one’s relationship to self

Participants reported the following improvements to their personal selves

- Increased sense of self separated from cultivated hero identity
- Higher awareness and presence
- Heightened self-compassion
- Deeper connection to personal core values
- Conscious prioritization of wellbeing
- Being comfortable in solitude
- Being comfortable identifying personal needs and asking for help
- Possessing a higher sense of personal power

Participants acknowledged being able to liberate themselves from the following traits

- Hero identity
- Anxiety
- Shame
- Inner-judgment
- Fear of vulnerability
- Anger
- Trauma

## CHANGE IN ONE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

Types and qualities of changes in one's relationship with others	Participants described showing up differently by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening more deeply</li> <li>• Making deeper connections</li> <li>• Being more open</li> <li>• Being more flexible</li> <li>• Being more joyful</li> <li>• Being calmer and less reactive</li> </ul>
	Participants described appreciating others differently by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judging less</li> <li>• Trusting more</li> <li>• Allowing for vulnerability</li> </ul>

## RELATIONSHIP WITH DAY-TO-DAY WORK AND THE WORK OF CHANGE MAKING

The table below illustrates the changes in relationship with work and social changemaking.

Changes in this domain were segregated into four categories: Changes in relationship with work, changes in leadership style, increased efforts towards building an organizational culture of wellbeing and finally the shifting definitions of success.

### CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIP WITH WORK AND SOCIAL CHANGE MAKING

Changes in relationship with work and social change making	Participants reported functioning differently by virtue of the following	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing less anxiety around failure.</li> <li>• Being more present with their staff, colleagues and peers</li> <li>• Working fewer hours</li> <li>• Creating space to imagine what is next</li> <li>• Seeing personal motivations for the work in a new light (e.g., connected to an unmet need or a childhood experience, rather than pure idealism)</li> </ul>
	Participants described leading differently by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No longer ascribing to the belief that "If I am not there (or: in charge, always working, responding to emails right away, etc.), things will fall apart"</li> <li>• Placing more trust in staff, colleagues, and peers.</li> <li>• Recognizing and encouraging others' capacity for solving problems (letting go of "I must solve" or "only I can solve")</li> <li>• Releasing internal pressure to preserve their hero identities and hence, creating possibilities for introducing new approaches to collaboration with colleagues, peers and organizations</li> </ul>

CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIP WITH WORK  
AND SOCIAL CHANGE MAKING

Changes in relationship with work and social change making

Participants mentioned investing in an organizational culture of wellbeing by

- Addressing the importance of a culture of wellbeing at the board level
- Demonstrating meticulousness in saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to opportunities by weighing their impact on the wellbeing of self and one’s staff
- Integrating awareness practices and other wellbeing exercises into meetings, workshops, and presentations
- Offering wellbeing opportunities for staff, colleagues, and peers

Participants described shifting their definitions of success by

- Equating professional efficiency with maintaining a personal sense of wellbeing
- Decreasing emphasis on scaling

# DISCOVERING, UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTING

*“The most fundamental aggression to ourselves, the most fundamental harm we can do to ourselves, is to remain ignorant by not having the courage and the respect to look at ourselves honestly and gently.”*

- Pema Chödrön -

*“It seems that gradually, painfully, the individual explores what is behind the masks they present to the world, and even behind the masks with which they have been deceiving themselves. Deeply and often vividly they experience the various elements of themselves which have been hidden within. Thus to an increasing degree, they become themselves—not a façade of conformity to others, not a cynical denial of all feeling, nor a front of intellectual rationality, but a living, breathing, feeling, fluctuating process*

*—in short, they become a person.”*

- Carl R. Rogers -

The work performed by changemakers is highly relational. Fundraising, staff management, public speaking, media appearances, government-lobbying and direct service work are many of the duties performed by changemakers. They are often expected to play the roles of heroes (Participants referred frequently of this phenomenon, calling it the “hero model”

of social change). No one individual can be innately adept at all of the above-mentioned roles, so to perform such a variety of duties can become overly laborious and the strain that accompanies such labour can distort an individual’s sense of self. The discovery, examination and acceptance of the “whole self” was fundamental to the journeys of participants.

The table below illustrates the changes in discovering and accepting the whole self.

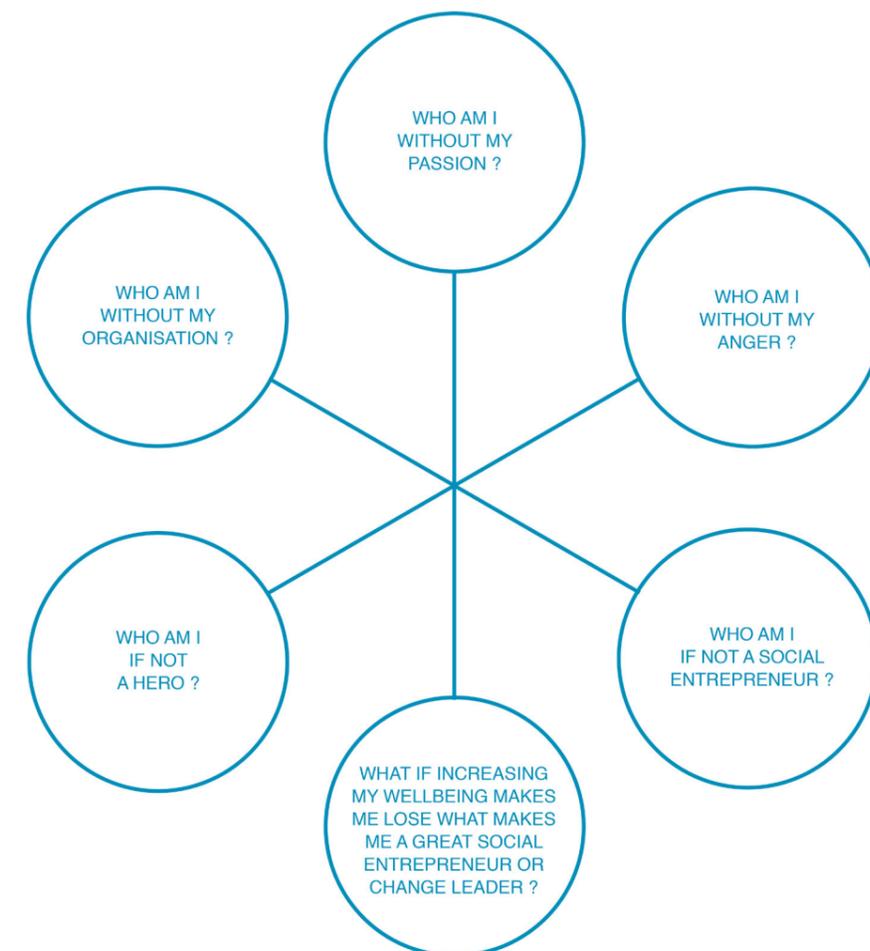
### CHANGES IN DISCOVERING AND ACCEPTING THE WHOLE SELF

<b>Qualities of change</b>	Participants recounted discovering or recovering the whole self by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing the difference between one’s true self and cultivated identity</li> <li>• Recognizing over-identification with work identity</li> <li>• Recognizing over-dependence on one of a few dominant capacities</li> </ul>
	Participants elaborated on accepting the whole self by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing what is true for them</li> <li>• Accepting the parts of self that haven’t traditionally been recognized or celebrated</li> <li>• Creating space and time in one’s life for interests outside of work</li> </ul>

## DISCOVERING THE WHOLE SELF

Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Catholic monk and interfaith scholar, explained that being human “has two different aspects, which must be clearly distinguished.

One is I and the other is myself.” The ‘I’ is the part the world sees. It’s the part that can be perceived, celebrated or demeaned. The self, he explained, is “the watcher who nobody can watch.” Within The Wellbeing Project, the work of distinguishing the ‘I’ from the self was often evinced through the questions asked by participants in facilitated exercises, interviews and during reflections. These included what we call “Who am I?” questions, including:



Overall, there were few conclusive statements with regard to the whole self, few examples of people saying “My whole self is this, this, and this...”. What we have included instead are instances and examples (like the questions above) of people illuminating their paths of discovery. This is important because the pathways to personal wellbeing are a substantial focus of The Wellbeing Project.

- PARTICIPANT VOICES -

*"I was missing myself. I sometimes don't even know what I have been missing. I am discovering that the starting point is to discover my whole self, my complete self."*

*"[This] is a real retreat to self. This retreat created a space for 'me', 'my self' [and for] seeing myself with a reflective lens rather than a judge's lens."*

*"It just gave me space ... Some of the exercises allowed me to go into rooms in me that are part of who I am [but] have been closed, or that I've not had the time, or the space, or the skill to enter."*

*"[The Project] has helped me to look at situations from the past really square in the face. By doing that, to get to understand how they affected my sense of self, how they've affected the work that I do ... I didn't realize how the events of my personal history had affected my professional decisions. It was not clear to me until I did this work."*

*"I keep trying to have the space to focus on my own wellbeing ... Sometimes it's difficult [with] work and travel. But this is an internal space within me, that I can carry around. So, it's being conscious about this space."*

*"I realized that all of us have our own stories and struggles. And we are just very fortunate that we are able to [go] deeper into our stories. [It's] the very core of who you are coming out. And you can enjoy it, at last."*

*"We never talked about work, which was very good. You could be what you are, rather than the work representing you as what you are. This was a big relief."*

*"When we were told not to talk about work, it just completely sidelined me. I was thinking, 'Wow. What do I talk about?' And I began to realize that I had truly become my work. I'd immersed myself in it, and it fueled most conversations ... When I would be around family and friends, I'd be there, but I wouldn't be there. Behind my eyelids, there would be an ongoing to-do list, or someone would say something that would inspire an idea for a campaign. I'd just be always continuously working ... I've witnessed a change. I'm not doing that as much anymore. I do actually believe [in having] a life outside of my work and developing my interests outside of my work."*

ACCEPTING THE WHOLE SELF

Having discovered and explored the various elements pertaining to the whole-self, participants described what it felt like to achieve acceptance of the self. It is important to distinguish acceptance from discovery. Much of the work of retreats

and the small group-calls involved the facilitation of a transition from self-discovery to acceptance. Below are some illuminating accounts provided by participants in connection to their journeys en route to personal acceptance.

- PARTICIPANT VOICES -

*"I really enjoyed learning about this very different aspect on being a social entrepreneur, because before that ... it was more about the hero model, about being the star entrepreneur, and managing well to scale up your program—producing sustainability for the Project, for the finance, for the team. Nobody spoke about sustainability for social entrepreneurs themselves."*

*"[What wellbeing means to me now [is] full awareness of myself as a whole. And conscious effort [to] pay attention to my whole."*

*"Wellbeing is a state where one is fully mindful of [their] whole being, and able to make choices to cater to [their] individual needs."*

*"Overall, I have a much better sense of self. I feel a lot more grounded. I feel like I've been able to make better decisions for myself ... Before all of this, I was much more reactive and made decisions more emotionally, less with that inner wisdom ... [Now I can] really take a step back, and check in to see what I truly want—what is my truth—in [difficult] situations, and then take appropriate actions based on that ... I feel like I have a much greater sense of what I want."*

*"It has become very personal to me, the wellbeing thing—in a personal and very spiritual way. Wellbeing, for me, is internal, a person's internal clarity [about where] one is coming from historically or emotionally ... And coming out [of that] and connecting with your loved ones, and your relations in the world ... [It impacts] your expectations and values ... You're grounded in ultimate truth. That is what wellbeing is for me now."*

*"The constant demand to be better. Never being good enough. I really only became aware of that through The Wellbeing Project. It [has] really helped to remind myself I am good enough."*

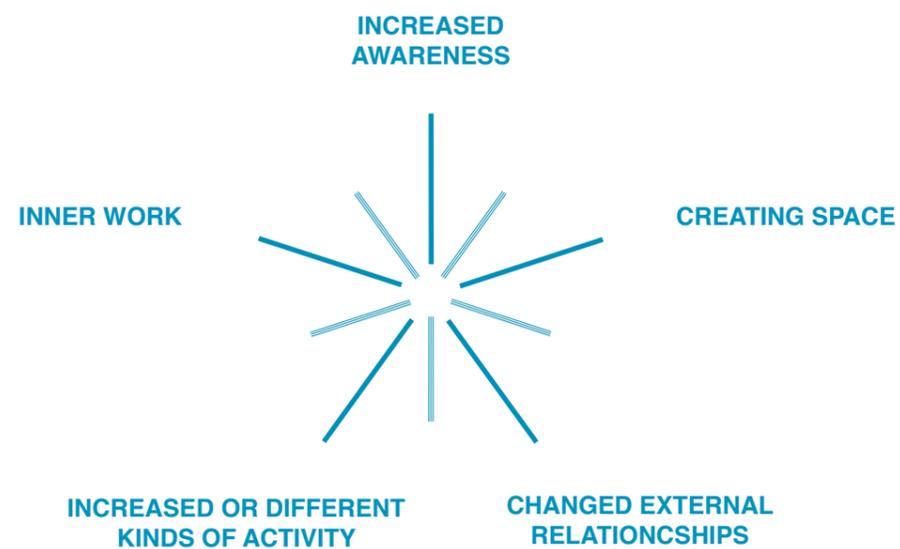
*"I've learned to love and forgive the parts of me that I'd often judge. And then, obviously, to meet [people] who can see those parts and still love you is incredibly powerful. To learn it's okay for things not to be perfect is incredibly powerful."*

# BEING AND BECOMING: BECOMING WHOLE

*“I’m very aware of the important and meaningful work that you do in the world. And I’m also well aware of the many personal and family-related issues that come along with the work you do—burn-out, strained relationships, lack of fullness in life—because we can become so single-minded about the one thing that has captured our attention, our minds, and our hearts. On and on it goes. To say the obvious, there aren’t any easy answers. We’re all on a journey toward wholeness. And wholeness does not mean perfection. It means embracing your imperfections as an integral part of life. Acknowledging all that is broken about you is part of being whole, paradoxically.”*

- Parker Palmer, speaking to participants -

Similar to the process of discovering the whole self, participants engaged in a process of identifying the components of a ‘whole self’. By giving so much of themselves (their time, energy and attention) to their organizations and causes, certain facets of individuals became fragmented or withered. For many, The Wellbeing Project was an opportunity to identify and reintegrate those parts into their personalities. During reflections and interviews, we asked participants “What is next on your wellbeing journey?” Their answers illustrated the make-up of ‘wholeness’ for people working in the social-change sector and also depicted the potential damage which can be brought about by gruelling work.



The table below illustrates the practices adopted by the participants.

Each practice was included if it appeared three or more times within participant responses.

## ASPECTS OF MOVING TOWARDS GREATER WHOLENESS

Aspects of moving towards greater wholeness	Participants described increasing their awareness of wholeness by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying more attention to their feelings and staying with them for longer</li> <li>• Recognising being out of balance or out of sync with one’s mind, heart and/or body</li> <li>• Asking oneself, “what do I need?”</li> <li>• Listening to one’s body</li> <li>• Practicing presence</li> <li>• Being true to one’s wants and needs rather than striving to meet others’ expectations</li> </ul>
	Participants described creating space to experience greater wholeness by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pacing themselves</li> <li>• Conserving a healthy emotional environment</li> <li>• Finding time for reflection and/or meditation</li> <li>• Spending time with family</li> <li>• Spending time away from family</li> </ul>
	Participants pursued inner work by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking a coach/therapist</li> <li>• Facing and overcoming their fears</li> <li>• Planning pragmatically for the future</li> <li>• Being grateful for what they have, who they are and working towards who they would like to be</li> </ul>

## ASPECTS OF MOVING TOWARDS GREATER WHOLENESS

Aspects of moving towards greater wholeness	Participants noted undertaking different kinds of activities including	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Body work</li> <li>Rest</li> <li>Yoga</li> <li>Walks</li> <li>Better diet</li> <li>Dance</li> <li>Play</li> <li>Being in nature</li> <li>Writing/journaling</li> </ul>
	Participants cited changing external relationships by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking with teams or staff about their experience</li> <li>Discussing their experiences with their spouses/partners and children.</li> <li>Connecting more to people through the heart</li> <li>Listening more</li> <li>Inviting more vulnerability into romantic, personal and professional relationships.</li> </ul>

We have illuminated progress towards greater inner wholeness through what we call “the contrast lens”. Through the use of common words or phrases which express contrast (e.g. ‘as opposed to’, ‘rather than’, ‘instead of’ and ‘versus’), we analyzed

interview and reflection data for evidence of shifts or movements (in behaviour). What people shared in their contrast statements matched and expanded on the practices in the above table.

Here are a few examples:

### - PARTICIPANT VOICES -

*“Much of my life has been about thinking with my head, rather than my heart. I often push away feelings, rather than just noticing them and letting them be. Having more acceptance of myself, my feelings, and the world around me is helping me to create a better sense of personal wellbeing.”*

*they had to be done, and I did them very well. I’m extremely successful. They just were coming from a place of, ‘What is needed?’ or ‘What do other people need’ rather than, ‘What do I see that I can do?’ or ‘What do I want to see hap*

*“I am infinitely more self-aware, and this is slowly becoming a better place for me to be. The ability to ‘show up fully’ for the moment and to be able to commit to meeting it is a very powerful concept and is helping me understand my present and live in it more fully, instead of being stuck in the past. It is also helping me come out of my shell in little bits and become more confident in my own skin. I like who I am a lot more these days.”*

*“I’m much more confident to say, ‘I can’t be in this place, and do the things that are important to me, and important to my family, and really important to the credibility of my work, unless I have enough room for me.’ That description of wellbeing—[that] I have to be in a place where I’m sure that I’m getting what I need—I’ve allowed that to happen. And so, wellbeing has a much more prominent position, rather than a side-position.”*

*“Much of my life has been about thinking with my head, rather than my heart. I often push away feelings, rather than just noticing them and letting them be. Having more acceptance of myself, my feelings, and the world around me is helping me to create a better sense of personal wellbeing.”*

*“A lot of these [changes] take commitment and consistency ... When work gets too much, sometimes I’ll get up, go for a walk, take some deep breaths, come back. Sometimes, I just stay in it, and just let that emotion fester, and that anger heat up ... I’ve got a really creative darkness in me ... So, to catch myself ... I’m still learning ... [The experiences of the project are] just a reminder of how special it is to be connected to yourself and to your body, rather than just always being camped out in your mind.”*

*“The change is where the work [I do] is coming from ... [In my professional life], I did things because*





By the end of their 18-month cohort journey, most participants had adopted new ways of going about their work. The participants acknowledged positive changes in their work-experiences, their openness to the ideas of others and their focus on trust and wholeness. They also noted prioritizing their wellbeing as well as the wellbeing of their colleagues and peers. They spoke of new ways of connecting with donors and other organizations. After the shift of their definitions of success, they were able to prioritize their work instead of scaling it, and go deeper, not just broader. In many instances, participants received prompt feedback from both staff and peers as they engaged in various activities. The changes were informed at the following levels:

- INDIVIDUAL LEVEL
- ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL
- SECTOR LEVEL
- SOCIETAL LEVEL

This section, divided into four levels, illustrates the inner shifts observed at each level.

## EVIDENCE BASED THEORY OF CHANGE

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SYSTEMS CHANGE FROM  
THE INSIDE OUT



# INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: IDENTIFYING NEW WAYS TO CONNECT WITH SELF

The role often assumed by changemakers is that of hero. Participants observed that, in the long term, however, playing such a role can distort an individual's sense of self and diminish their wellbeing. Participants shared that reclaiming an identity that is more whole, and less defined by work, enriched their work and their life more generally and allowed them to take care of themselves.

## EMBRACING A NEW MODEL: REJECTING THE HERO MODEL

The hero model continued to resurface throughout the program and participants articulated its limitations and negative effects at the individual, organisational and sector levels.

At the individual level, some of the reflections were:

“We have to overcome the hero myth. We are all strong. And we are all weak.”

Another participant talked about the dehumanizing effects of the hero model when it is imposed externally. They described being brought before a group to talk from the perspective of a hero and described the experience as feeling like “we’re the wild animals that are brought in as display and we should roar—and there should be a little bit of scary but primarily inspiration.”

A participant who felt liberated from the hero model through inner work expressed discontent with the model and a related concern for young change-makers:

“I worry deeply about how we set up our individuals to be on pedestals. Cause we’re going to fall off, right? It’s not sustainable ... I learned so much about myself, as a human being, by going through this process. I worry that we need heroes too much. And I think social entrepreneurs and the competition that’s set up between them—it breaks my heart. We pitch them, sort of like [the reality TV show] Dragon’s Den. Do you know what I mean? You pitch them in five minutes, and then you’re great or you’re not. I’m sorry, but that is actually, like a talent show. And that really upsets me. I get very upset watching that, and I don’t like it.”

Describing what it feels like to be free from the pressures associated with the hero model and to be engaging with the world in accordance with a new relationship with self, the participant said:

“I am just learning how to walk again. It feels like this is about the silliest way I can say it, because this is what a six-year-old girl would say .. But I feel like I’m trying to walk again—with wings. That is about the only way that I know how to describe how I feel now. Because if you had wings on your back, they would kind of topple you a bit, right? And what will you do with these wings when you’re going into a room?”

## REDEFINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Participants spoke of letting go of past failures and of detaching themselves from negativity. A participant noticed a divide between the principles imparted to them and the real-world practices: during retreats, participants were asked to embrace failure (rhetorically at least) and treat it as an inevitable component of learning; However, the reality is that failure can lead to individuals feeling and experiencing they are no longer valued in their respective fields.

“Failure doesn’t exist [for me] as a concept, per se, any longer. All of the work I was doing, failure was celebrated as something you learn from, you grow from, blah, blah, blah—they talked about it but didn’t really live it. Because in the end your enterprise is not allowed to fail because if it fails you lose all of your value.”

Another participant described finding courage as a result of letting go of failure:

“I just do not see failure in the same way ... It’s not that it doesn’t cross my mind ... But I tell you what, I am not punishing myself any more. I really do not feel that I punish myself anymore ... I can honestly tell you that it is the biggest relief ... Don’t get me wrong—it doesn’t mean that I don’t feel uncomfortable, and I don’t feel hurt. I do. I feel all those things. But it’s not as long, it’s not as deep—the wound isn’t as deep. I recover ... And that has given me intense courage—I’ve realized that I have found my courage again, and courage, I think, is different from brave. I have been brave in my life, but courage, for me, is about moving forward within it.”

Another participant reflected on redefining what work means to them and approaching work with a sense of joy and play.

“My relationship [to work] was ... hard work, all the time. The Wellbeing program is a shift, completely, from that attitude of needing to work hard, and this relationship to working hard, and results, and judging people on how much time they put in, to approaching work with ease, with an attitude of play.”

### **TAKING CARE OF ONESELF BEFORE TAKING CARE OF OTHERS**

Participants shifted to an orientation of valuing themselves and their self-care and recognised that to take care of others, they need to take care of themselves first.

“We work to change the lives of other people. But in the past, I was dedicated to changing lives, and I lost my many, many occasions to live my own life. I was in the last, and the least. Now I can understand: if I can’t change my own life, it’s very difficult to change the life of other people.”

“This is the real change, [to focus on myself]. In the past, I was all about other people. All of my compromises [over decades] were [out of] worry about other people and working with other people to change their lives. And now, if you change the channel, and you make [yourself] a priority too, it’s very difficult. It’s a tension between you and your purpose in life.”

Another participant described finding it difficult to maintain a balance between taking care of self and of others:

“It’s difficult because you have to maintain your new [priorities] while not worrying about how people could think about my new attitude, or my new way to live the life ... It is a tension between you and the people that you have dedicated all of your life to ... You have to [figure out] how you prioritize you and your work and try to find a kind of balance.”

“This tension is real. You can’t live without this tension, because it’s the normal tension of the life. But it’s not easy.”

### **PRACTICING VULNERABILITY AND BUILDING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE**

Participants described having a better understanding of their emotions, leading them to respond to situations with calm and ease. As a result, they also expressed having honest and vulnerable conversations which allowed them to have deeper connections.

“I came back [from the first retreat] somehow less angry. So before, I would react to situations in a very compulsive way. And now, I generally take more time. And there is this realization of—I always considered wellbeing of the person in front of me, but where they’re coming from, why they’re reacting this way now ... Generally, I communicate much more and I understand where certain emotions are coming from. So, it’s easier for me to analyze the situation and to communicate from a less emotional standpoint ... Things are definitely smoother at work.”

“In my team, [now] I make myself more visible and also more vulnerable. It’s not this superhero, ‘I can handle everything.’ Instead, I admit that I don’t know, or that I need something, or that I’m not feeling strong, you know? And this gives a different quality in the team. More people show themselves also. It’s a deeper connection in the team.”

“I’m also more conscious of the fact that in terms of the different social change fields we each work in; we don’t talk with each other; we don’t share what we fail at. [This is] very much tied to some of the skills and reflections that we [have learned] in The Wellbeing Project, which is about the quality of the relationship that you have with yourself and what is around you. I think you have to have a certain level of comfort and security within yourself as a person to also be in a professional space where it’s comfortable to be professionally vulnerable to other people.”

# ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL: IDENTIFYING NEW WAYS TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Once participants embraced an identity beyond work, they started to connect with others not just as professionals but as human beings. They also reported adopting a leadership style in which they trusted the capabilities of others and, therefore, were willing to be led by others. The organisations, these people led, therefore, developed a culture of trust and care in which members were regarded as whole people.

## CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER NOT JUST AS PROFESSIONALS BUT AS HUMAN BEINGS

Conversations which deemphasized professional work during Project retreats and the small group-calls and webinars allowed people to regard each other as human beings and not merely as professionals.

One participant reflected:

“It was a time to be with people; not having to say what you do, whether you’ve been a success, a failure, what your organization does, whether you’ve achieved something, or whether you haven’t. It took me back to my childhood, where you just meet other kids and you just get to know them.”

Another participant reflected on making an attempt to connect with others beyond work level:

“It’s showing care for my teammates, and not always [connecting] on the work level. We have tons of things to do, but ‘How are you?’ You know? It’s so easy to forget, because we’re always under time pressure. So, really caring and showing that it’s more than a work relationship, it gives a quality that is very beautiful in the team. It allows also [for a team member to say] ‘Hey, I need a day off,’ and nobody will jump on you, and say ‘What are you doing? Do the job.’ So, it’s a bigger acceptance, and this releases more energy and power from the team for the work. So, everybody is highly motivated, but also, we try to take care of each other, so not to over-do it and blow the motor, you know? Keep a good pace and take care of each other. So, I’m working with my team in our culture.”

“Before, I was very oriented towards results. Like, ‘Okay, I have half an hour, and we need that result.’ Now, it’s like, ‘Okay, how are you?’ I recognize of the people involved in that result, [there is] more contact in the process.”

## SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY FROM SELF TO STAFF

Participants described shifts in their leadership styles as a result of partially shifting their responsibility onto staff and making a conscious effort to empower them through capacity-building.

Some of the reflections were:

“My attitude to my work in social change has altered during this process. I really did feel that the responsibility for the success of everything we do [was on me], despite my using the language of empowerment. Now, I look back on my own work, and I feel that I’ve been taking too much responsibility, which disempowers other people, without me realizing that that’s what I was doing. I’ve felt that if I take responsibility for something, I can make big changes ... I can see that’s what I do in my family, my social circles, and in my work ... That’s not a good thing, because it puts too much of a burden on me. It disempowers other people. Now I think about it, it’s not a leadership role, either ... I have realized that my job really is to enable other people to take the responsibility ... I have changed my attitude [and now] I see that approach being much more helpful to society changing.”

Even in moments that were challenging, participants shifted from an ‘only I can fix it’ approach to prioritizing relationship-building as the first step of problem solving.

“Soon after the [first] retreat, I had a long talk with senior staff, and told them things were going to be different, because I needed to be different. And that’s held. Part of it is senior staff making decisions on their own, not coming to me for everything, and looking toward grooming their own successors and empowering the people around them that they work with.”

“I love it. A kind of extreme contentedness and peace has come into me after this program. I created [this work]. It was my own idea, [decades] ago. My relationship [with that work] is now more distant. Enjoying it, being there when needed, but not really overshadowing everything.”

“Before, I was working [with the attitude that] if I don’t do things, it might not be done. And if I don’t get so-and-so to make so-and-so do this or that, nobody will remember. But when I stepped back and I just let it be, the people around me whom I used to feel I have to coach and guide, they are just performing so beautifully, and my work is going into great leaps and bounds to a very large scale, with a lot of vibrancy and activities. I can’t even keep up with it. It’s just taking its own direction now, which I always wanted.”

## **BUILDING A CULTURE OF TRUST AND CARE**

Participants (especially leaders) placed trust in others and took a step back; they allowed themselves to be led by others and to adopt a model of co-learning, co-working and co-sharing:

“[Now] we try to create, first, an air of trust—that you’re part of this team because we trust that you will bring something—the best in yourself—to this work. And because we trust you, you don’t have to come to us to have every question answered. The answer is usually within you. And if it isn’t, the other thing that we really emphasize, is that we’re collaborative. That nobody has to work in a silo. You should feel free to call on anybody in the team, and it doesn’t always have to be me. I have a new employee, a new senior staff, just this week. We just finished a couple of days of retreat and that’s the message that I’m sure they got—that you have all the power that you’re ready to take, and everybody in this group is there for you when you need it.”

“[Trust is important] because of the work that we do, which is very sensitive. We work in a very iffy political climate, and we’re partnering with government. Sometimes people are afraid to make decisions, or to take a step, because they don’t want to screw it up. And it’s important for people to know that once they’ve been trained and once they really understand the point of view of this organization, then we have to trust that they’re going to make the right choices. But I think it’s sometimes hard for people, when you’re doing something where you know you could just blow the whole thing up. The big change this year, is I’ve really been [working at] boosting confidence, and really telling [staff] that we’re all relying on them to make these decisions whenever they can. And of course, if they can’t, there’s somebody at your back.”

“[With the people our organization serves], I make it very personal. Our work is about helping companies in distress ... [There are] legal and economic aspects of a company, but nobody looks at the entrepreneur. We work with small companies, and their whole life depends on this company. We start with the entrepreneur, and we really build up a personal connection, we really care for them. So, how is their personal situation? How is their relationship? How is their health? And this opens up a space of trust. And then, [we deal with] the legal and economic [issues]. Technical questions become much easier to solve, because there is a connection, and there is a trust.”

“I think I engage from a much more open space. And I engage from how I feel, more than from how I was brought up—from should or shouldn’t. It’s allowing more time and space to talk about the wellbeing of the team, myself included.”

# SECTOR LEVEL: IDENTIFYING NEW WAYS TO WORK IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL CHANGE

As participants moved away from the hero model and moved towards a more whole self, they began to realise that they cannot do everything on their own and therefore, became more collaborative. Also, once people started to become more open to others, they welcomed multiple and diverse perspectives for approaching an issue instead of believing that their perspective is the only one to solving a problem.

## COLLABORATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF WORKING

Participants began to shift towards being able to be more open to others and to collaborate with them.

“We cannot do everything for the world. It’s too big. It’s too big ... It’s much better to do small pieces and have fun, rather than do big pieces and die ... Do what you do—slowly. And don’t have this pressure—this change-maker hero model stuff ... This hero model—I think it’s more or less finished, anyway. It’s much more networking and doing things together. I think during this Wellbeing Project, that was very clear to understand.”

“I think I would have said, before coming into this full experience, that [my rejection of the hero model] came mostly out of my understanding that we need all to be more collaborative with one another, and that we’re only going to succeed if we join hands, and stop trying to move out of this senior, or top-down position ... Esalen has this saying that you work on, in the world, what you need to work on most in yourself. So, my crusade to not have a hero model in the world is absolutely my internal journey as well, and I did not recognize it as I do now.”

## WELCOMING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

By opening more to others, participants were able to assimilate new perspectives related to social change:

“In the work that I did previously in social justice and human rights, I was very locked in one particular theory of change—this is how you solve this particular problem, this is how you change the world, this is how you empower people. I’m now a lot more open to the idea that several different tracks of work exist.”

“From a social change perspective, I have been wondering where a lot of this works when it comes to large scale systems ... If I was to look at this from a perspective of how does a city work, or how does a government work, or how does a country work—how would we be able to do some of this work better if we were more tuned into the quality of what we need from ourselves and what we need from each other? Would it make it easier to negotiate these different issues that we work on? ... So much of that has come down to how people treat each other in a space and how they choose to bring themselves into a room.”

## A DEEPER COLLECTIVE SENSE OF THE ISSUE INFORMING SOCIAL CHANGE

Many participants reported approaching work differently and more holistically - while some participants were able to place themselves in the shoes of the communities they serve, others were able to approach work in a more healthy way - with a sense of ease and play.

One participant, who leads an organization focused on exploring the relationship between physical spaces and child development voiced his discontent at government administrators (central to moving said organization’s vision forward) for being “devoid of feeling.” The participant’s objective in those meetings (and the purpose of the organization) was “sensitizing people in how to work for children.”

“People in [the] public sector, they are still doing a kind of a job in many cases—they are not passionate and not connecting to the work with a sense of self. The discussions have always been “We should do this because it is mandated by law and blah, blah, blah.”

He wanted to “introduce the feeling component and the personalization of the larger intent,” and decided to experiment with a Project-inspired practice:

“So now I make them reflect about their own childhood—kind of a meditative exercise for a few minutes. It’s a guided meditation—even for top administrators—so one is able to feel a child inside; one’s own childhood. Whatever time one can afford to have in a workshop like this to go deeper and connect with one’s self is important.”

He noted that initially, top-level administrators were reluctant to accept or buy into certain practices but they approved of the practices after taking part in the exercises.

## SOCIETAL LEVEL

Research conducted so far has provided a beginning to understanding how social change takes place in society. This will be one of the areas of exploration for The Wellbeing Project over the next three years. For now, we have seen our participants engage more deeply with communities and community members, work more collaboratively across silos and build or restore bridges, leading to more holistic outcomes.

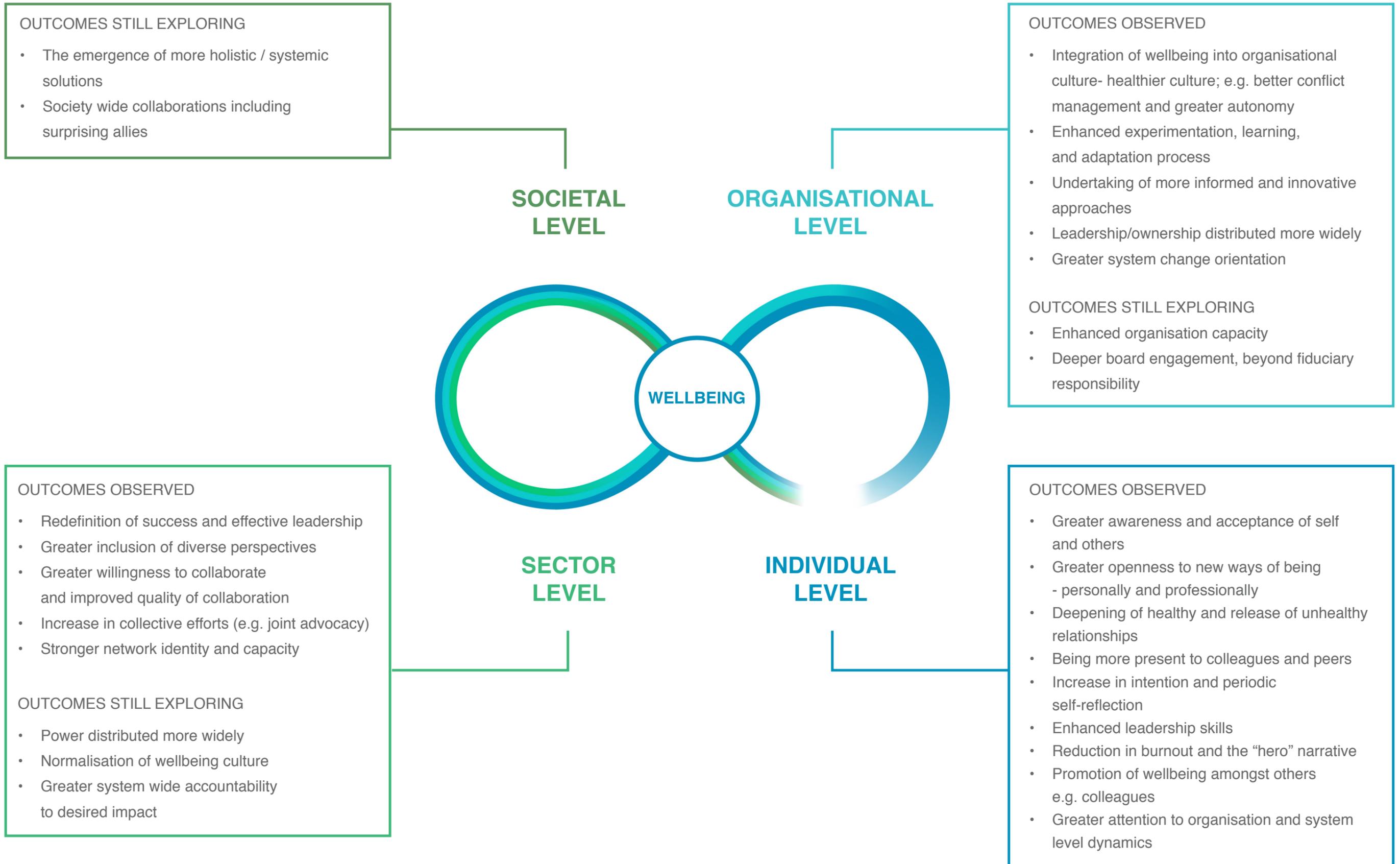
## EVIDENCE BASED THEORY OF CHANGE

We have observed significant results to date and strong indications of a connection between inner wellbeing and the way social change happens. Consequently, The Wellbeing Project has updated its Theory of Change based on what we have learned and will continue to develop our research initiatives over the next three years. While the fundamental thinking behind The Wellbeing Project’s Theory of Change is that inner wellbeing leads to a deeper systems change orientation, the process of developing it has been iterative and informed by the various facets that have emerged based on the experiences of participants.

Some of the key ingredients of successfully engaging in systems change were observed during the journey of our Program.



# THE WELLBEING PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE





## AN EMERGING DEFINITION OF WELLBEING

*The term 'wellbeing' has found a very broad usage and connotation in today's world. It is used to sell products and services as often as it is used to describe an actual state of being. The research explored how participants initially defined wellbeing and how this definition changed during the course of their participation in the Inner Development Program.*

At the start of the cohort experience, participants mostly used broad strokes to illustrate their understanding of wellbeing – they wrote about physical, emotional and spiritual health and about the role which a work-life balance plays. Many also spoke of wellbeing as the experience of “being at peace.” A handful spoke of the relationship with self and of how wellbeing has certain cosmic or spiritual components. As the cohort experience unfolded, new definitions of wellbeing began to emerge in accordance with the following features: wellbeing is the experience of wholeness and connectedness, it is a continuous journey and is action-oriented.



### WELLBEING IS THE EXPERIENCE OF WHOLENESS

Wellbeing is the experience of wholeness, one that includes all emotions (not just those that are typically associated with happiness or pleasure). Happiness and contentment are certainly part of the journey, but participants described these feelings as markers of wellbeing and often emphasized the “whole self” component to wellbeing. “You will always hurt, you will always be happy,” explained one participant.

“I feel like I’m moving towards wholeness,” said another participant. “The notion of a whole is it includes the good and the bad, the pleasure and the displeasure.

[There is] no need to resist any part of that, but to embrace and be with it, because it’s all part of the unfolding. I just trust in the process of life a lot more.”

“Wellbeing is the dance that is always happening within me. Sometimes I cannot hear it but sometimes I am completely in sync and there is no greater feeling. Wellbeing is truth—it’s powerful and I am so grateful for it.”



### WELLBEING IS INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Wellbeing is not achieved through isolation. It is fostered by interacting with our inner selves, others and our surroundings.

One participant shared that they have a “deeper understanding of what we bring to our work - the interconnectedness of my personal experiences, history, burdens and positive things - and how it affects the work.”

Another shared “I think the primary development for me is the way of connecting ... The way the facilitators work has really opened me up to understanding so many more layers ... systems, ecosystems, how things affect each other.”



## WELLBEING IS ACTION-ORIENTED

When participants describe their experiences of pursuing inner work, they speak in terms of actions performed towards the realisation of wellbeing and their commitment to the same. They expressed that as the world around us changes, we must respond by taking measures to safeguard personal wellbeing.

Overall, participants' definitions of wellbeing shifted from emotional states (e.g., balance, happiness or joy) to sets of actions or practices undertaken for the prioritization of personal welfare.

These practices get integrated into their lifestyles rather than being one-off occurrences.

“What are the things that get in our way, that we don't need?” one participant said.

“That's now the factor in my definition of wellbeing – that's the action item.”

“I feel like it's integrated,” said another participant. “It's no longer a subjective thing. It's like, ‘Oh, yeah, of course I do that; that's how I live.’ And the days that I slip off what I have identified as very good practices ... I can really see the difference.”

Another addressed the association of privilege with wellbeing:

“You don't need to be privileged to work on your own wellbeing. You don't need to have everything done in your life to take care of your own wellbeing. It should be part of how you look at life, and how you enter life, in general.”



## WELLBEING IS A CONTINUOUS JOURNEY

Participants shared that wellbeing is a journey, rather than an end-point. One participant explained:

“I think what I've realized is it's an ongoing practice. It requires attention. It needs to be a priority. It needs to be consistently added to. It is not something I should take for granted. It needs to be invested in, it needs to be enjoyed. It is not a course. It is not a retreat. It is an integration into my life. I am important enough, and the people around me benefit when I'm in better form. I am a better business person for sure. I know that when I let my [wellbeing] practices drop ... I can see the difference in myself.”

“It's a lot more awareness,” said one participant in their final interview. “And I am aware that I have still a long journey to explore more of myself.”



## OBSTACLES TO CHANGE

*Wellbeing is a state where one is fully mindful of [their] whole being, and able to make choices to cater to [their] individual needs.*

*- Cohort Participant -*

## OBSTACLES FACED IN AN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Participants mentioned having to find new ways of going about their lives so as to keep an eye out for possible obstacles, which involved making certain changes in their professional lives. We also spoke with a small sample of participants' colleagues to get an external view of the obstacles. These obstacles are listed below along with reflective questions changemakers were asked to ask themselves as they worked to make the shift towards a culture of wellbeing:

- **SELF-AWARENESS OF THE PARTICIPANT**

Does the participant have enough self-awareness to predict how their talk of inner development will be received by colleagues (if, for example, the participant has been a toxic manager in the past)?

- **EXISTING TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE**

Is the relationship between participant and colleagues strong enough to trust/support new policies or practices in the workplace?

- **BOARD OPENNESS**

If there is a Board of Directors, are members open to talk of wellbeing (and the expense of tending to the wellbeing of staff)?

- **INTERNAL SUPPORTS**

Does support exist from within the organization?  
(Potential partners in a shift towards a culture of wellbeing, funds.)

- **EXTERNAL SUPPORTS**

Does the participant have the appropriate support (external to the organization) to imagine and lead a change in their organization's culture?  
(This is especially relevant once the Project's supports are removed at the end of the 18-month cohort.)

## OBSTACLES FACED IN THE SOCIAL CHANGE FIELD

The experiences of the IDP participants highlight the potential challenges associated with such a shift in culture.

Throughout interviews, reflections and observations, participants frequently articulated their experiences of the Project in the shadow of lingering arguments against it. Some participants wrestled with a feeling of guilt arising out of the fact that significant resources were being directed towards their personal wellbeing in a world full of unspeakable suffering. Others shared how they justified (or struggled to justify) leaving families, colleagues and communities behind for the three cohort retreats.

When participants discussed the Project with peers and colleagues, they often heard them express skepticism about pursuing wellbeing ("wellbeing is a luxury") but being intrigued nevertheless. ("How can I sign up?")

One participant elaborated on the skepticism:

"I'm met with a little skepticism, by some of my peers, about the deeply psychological aspect of the program ... There is a skepticism around sort of the privileged, well-resourced activist. There's this sense of privilege that gets attached to taking care of yourself, right? Where some of the communities we work with may not have the space for that. The flip side is that ... when I say, 'I'm in this cohort, and we're really thinking about wellbeing,' people will want to talk to me. There is a need in the community that I see very clearly ... I can talk about how helpful it has been for me to have peer support, how helpful it has been for me to have some psychological support."

Another participant observed that changemakers, as a group, are often reluctant to seek help for their mental, emotional, or physical wellbeing:

“I’ve been in the social entrepreneurship community for [decades], and when you get social entrepreneurs together, other than trading notes on donors, or getting advice on management challenges, other big themes are burnout and succession—very fundamental, personal issues ... Here are all these people who sacrifice a lot to make change in the world, and what if we invested in their wellbeing? You can do the calculus a number of different ways. Is it paying them back? Is it making it so that they live longer, or make bigger impact? I don’t know. When I talk to other social entrepreneurs, as a group, we’re less likely to seek help. And so, when you have a peer who says, ‘Hey, I went through this thing and it really helped’—people are more receptive to that.”

Participants often lamented struggling to communicate the changes they were experiencing to colleagues and peers, to prioritize their wellbeing, and in some cases, to not be swallowed up by organizational culture and pernicious patterns of behavior.

## RECOGNISING BARRIERS THAT EXIST IN IMPLEMENTING THE CHANGES ACROSS LEVELS

While many participants have stories about implementing changes within their organizations to support the wellbeing of staff, there are also participants who admitted to hitting a wall. These participant experiences and their thoughts on the pressing needs in the field/ community are representative of:

### COMMUNICATING TO THE DONORS/BOARD THE NEED FOR INNER WORK

“I worked with our organization’s board to try to figure out how I could create more [wellbeing] space for the staff. There are a lot of cool things we could do, but the reality is that it all just adds to core costs that are not covered anywhere. So, we did a review, but the bottom line is, if we can’t communicate [the need and benefits] out to the donors that are out there supporting us, then we’re just making our NGO that much harder to support.”

## MAKING INNER WORK ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE NOT JUST FOR LEADERSHIP

“I think people have a hard time imagining that next chapter, you know. How does that translate [into] pressuring the broad donor community to say, ‘This is important, let’s make it for everybody.’”

“[Support for] a retreat, being able to talk to somebody, having a coach. The people that can afford to have coaches, are the people at the top of their organizations, making a lot of money. The people that don’t have that resources, don’t have that access. So, opportunities that would trickle down to all levels of the organization.”

### ACCESS TO RESOURCES

“People wouldn’t be working any less hard, I hope, but they would be able to call on resources to make sure that their lives were in balance.”

“I’m not sure whether that would look different, but there would be opportunities and support [for staff] to understand balance in their lives.”

### GRANTS FOR WELLBEING

“It’s kind of like a ‘Me, too’ movement, which says, ‘We have to value our people.’ And the [big donors] would come out ... and say, ‘We really believe this is an important aspect to the success of the issues we’re working on—taking care of the partners that we have, that are working on these issues. And what we’re going to do is set aside seven percent of every grant,’ or, ‘We’re going to add seven percent to every grant. It’s going to be all about wellbeing.’ That would be the systemic signal that would allow this to work itself down to that associate, who’s 27, and working really hard.”

### CREATING AN UNDERSTANDING OF WELLBEING

“I think the issue is out there enough in the circles that we move in. So, everybody goes, ‘Yeah, yeah, I get it, really important, really like it.’ But you can almost see them snicker, and then say, ‘But you know, it’s not a systemic thing.’”





## CONCLUSION

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*I learned that trying to escape emotions can be more painful than the pain of feeling them.*

- Cohort Participant -

Our work shows that there is a profound need to support the wellbeing of changemakers so that they are able to help bring about the kind of change required to address the global challenges of society.

Longitudinal research undertaken by the TerraLuna Collaborative documented how participants underwent meaningful changes which impacted their lives in both the personal and professional spheres, offering important insights for the field as a whole. The understanding gained from the experiences of participants points the way forward for individuals, organisations, and communities looking to advance a culture of wellbeing.

Taken together with the Delphi findings, the research illuminates the importance of cultivating a culture supportive of wellbeing in the field of social change, which, our findings suggest, could unlock the extraordinary collaboration and innovation needed to tackle the social and environmental challenges of the world.

Over the past few years we have witnessed a gradual shift in the way the topic of wellbeing is becoming mainstream. While the subject was taboo a decade ago, it is becoming an increasingly important topic of discussion in international forums and panels.

Funders, many of whom never exhibited interest in wellbeing before, have started to prioritise the issue. Such developments infuse us with great hope and our sense is that it is just the beginning.

We are excited to see a new culture emerge in the field of social change - one that leads to a flourishing for each and every changemaker and for our global society.





# ABOUT THE WELLBEING PROJECT

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*The Wellbeing Project is focused  
on catalysing a culture of inner wellbeing  
for all changemakers.*

The Wellbeing Project is focused on catalysing a culture of inner wellbeing for all changemakers. The Project is co-created with Ashoka, Esalen Institute, Porticus, Impact Hub, Skoll Foundation and Synergos Institute and is organized into four pillars.

Each pillar plays a vital role in the larger mission of supporting and growing a movement towards wellbeing in the social change sector.

## THE FOUR PILLARS

### MODEL PROGRAMS

In addition to the Inner Development Program, this pillar includes the Organisational Exploratory Program (OEP) - a program that focuses on how organisations can put wellbeing at the center of their cultures.

### RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The Research and Evaluation pillar explores the connection between inner development, organisational development, and social change. While the first phase was qualitative research that explored the impact of IDP on social changemakers, the second phase includes both the IDP and OEP and will have a quantitative lens to the qualitative work that has been done so far.

### LEARNING, CONVENING AND ENABLING (LCE)

The Learning, Convening and Enabling pillar brings together global and regional leaders in the field of social change to learn from research and from each other, helping them make fundamental changes in the way they work to support the wellbeing of changemakers.

### STORYTELLING AND CONNECTING

The Storytelling and Connecting pillar shares stories from across the Project with the broader community through different media.

**THANK YOU**

