Greetings from the Pledge Secretariat:

Welcome to the 4th edition of the Pledge for Change Newsletter. Over the past quarter, the Pledge for Change community has gathered for two major events to promote collaborative action and highlight progress towards our collective commitments to #EquitablePartnerships, #AuthenticStorytelling and #InfluencingWiderChange.

It has been exciting to witness and feel the growing momentum around the Pledge for Change, and particularly to realise how Signatories, Supporters, and others in the ecosystem are using the pledges to create accountability for change. As usual, please feel free to share your comments and questions and tell us the stories that we’re missing!

Here are some of the highlights:
Pledge By Numbers:

The Pledge for Change community continues to grow! We currently have 13 signatories and 42 supporters, working in 165 countries around the world. This represents an extraordinary global movement for change.

We are delighted to welcome our new Signatory Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), and these Supporter organizations who have signed up in 2024: AMALNA (Our Hope) South Sudan, Cooperation Canada, Health Poverty Action, Hope Revival Organization, INTRAC, ODI, PRO VIDA, Pujiono Centre, Social Policy Institute (SPI), Somali Advocacy and Relief Organization (SARO), Tropical Agenda for the Minorities and Marginalized (TAMM), WILD Network, and the Zambian Governance Foundation.

The Pledge Supporter Sprint (19th to 21st March 2024)

“Learn who you are and unlearn who they told you to be.”

The Pledge Supporter Sprint was an online event to connect and encourage collaboration among Pledge supporters. Over three days the community gathered to get to know each other, challenge normative discourses, and catalyze action via a powerful support network that will fuel real progress and turn the pledges into tangible change. With sessions running over multiple time zones, Sidhee Patel, from the Pledge Secretariat, and Mo Ali, the director of the Innovation Community, facilitated the event. Together they focused on themes such as Wisdom, Courage, Visioning, Co-creation, Listening, Being, Connecting, and Play.

The sprint intentionally disrupted our expectations of what happens in Zoom rooms. One of the leaders gave their feedback and mentioned:

“I am impressed by the sprint. At my organization [...] there is a constant push for action and movement. I interpret Pledge grasping that seismic shift requires something different. This acknowledgement and atypical way of bringing together resonate with me as hopeful. I think of the adage that you don't get to a new place by doing the same old thing.”

To capture the experience, Mo edited a video showcasing participant reflections after each session. Nzilani, a visual artist based in Kenya scribed the last session where the Pledge leaders discussed their hurdles, hopes, visions, and commitments. You can find her work below:
The Pledge for Change April 2024 Retreat

"Getting comfortable with discomfort – this is how we move forward."

Marie-Rose Murphy

In rainy Nairobi in mid-April, members of the Pledge for Change community came together at the Ole Sereni hotel Nairobi with active participation of global leaders. The participants included Global Civil Society leaders, INGO leaders, funders, and representatives from across the aid eco-system.

In a world that seeks to categorize everything, labels can create a comforting illusion of order. Imagine dividing people into two groups – those who wear glasses and those who don’t - which may seem straightforward, but what about people who wear contacts? This was an example of one of the questions used during the social sculpting session, and this highlighted how the intricacies of labels can make uncertain complexities of reality. We were also confronted with those labels that we use every day in our work: local/international, global north/global south, etc, and realized how powerful our emotional responses are when applying these to ourselves.

The 2-day retreat offered a mix of activities to build connections, share experiences, explore accountability methods, and refocus on the three pledges: Equitable Partnerships,
Authentic Storytelling and Influencing wider change. The Pledge Secretariat, Marie-Rose Murphy, Reshma Khan acted as the facilitators of the various sessions.

Left to Right: Marie-Rose Murphy and Reshma Khan

Left to Right: Charter for Change, and Sofía Sprechmann, CARE International
The retreat also highlighted the importance of perspective and avoiding a one-sided narrative. This was showcased by Patrick Gathara, Senior Editor of the New Humanitarian where he shared a story about London from a viewpoint of the Global South, mimicking how the Global North typically tells stories. The Pledge community also shared some of their Stories of Change - see some quotes below and then deep dive into the stories via this link.
Botul Osman (Women for Women International) sharing her story of change to the wider group

- **Christian Aid on Due Diligence piloting:**

  "The current pilot has significant potential to involve P4C signatories, as a practical way of reducing complexity and bureaucracy among both local partners and INGOs, and more equitably sharing risk and balancing accountabilities."

- **Issiaka Traore's personal reflection:**

  "All rivers do their best for the sea."

- **Cordaid on Strengthening the Ethiopian Health System:**

  "Through the involvement of community-based organisations (CBOs), bottom-up accountability is integrated into the approach..."

Global Leaders of the Pledge community that attended the retreat also shared their revolutionary work in their respective regions. For example, Asier Hernando from The Sherwood Way presented the Latin American declaration to the retreat participants. The declaration argues that current practices perpetuate colonial-era power imbalances and propose steps toward a more just and equitable system. Some of the key points were about colonial legacy, shifting power, and decolonization proposals on local leadership,
fairer funding, committing to long-term social change, protecting activists and appreciating and integrating local knowledge in development strategies.

Overall, the declaration calls for a fundamental shift in international cooperation, one based on mutual respect, shared responsibility, and the dismantling of colonial power structures.

To accommodate colleagues who could not join in person, the Pledge for Change Secretariat hosted a hybrid CALL TO ACTION session to hear from leaders and donors about how they are realizing and committing to the pledges. The panelists were: Brandon Lee (Global Affairs Canada Director General of Grants and Contributions), Sarah Rose (USAID Senior Advisor for Localisation, Abby Maxman (Oxfam US CEO), Tom Hart (Interaction CEO), Ciaran Donnelly (IRC SVP), and Nana Asantewa Afadzinu (WACSI and RINGO).
Creating new paradigms and a more positive future takes energy. To energize and engage colleagues, we organized a social hour on the hotel rooftop at the end of the 1st day, to the sound of a wonderful Congolese Choir to singing about love and revolution. You can catch a glimpse of them in this video.

At the end of the retreat, participants shared what actions they would take to make a stronger aid eco-system together, and here are some of their responses:

- To focus on internal reflection and improvement rather than external verification
- To embed the pledges within their organizations and actively seek feedback from local partners.
- To move away from a system based on mistrust towards genuine partnerships.
- To challenge the status quo
- To work openly and collaboratively with stakeholders.
- To develop ways to measure and demonstrate progress toward decolonization.
- To hold all stakeholders accountable to the pledges

A more detailed report of the event, including agreed actions and next steps, will be shared soon.
Upcoming Events

German signatories of the Pledge for Change will gather in Berlin on May 14th for a closed meeting hosted by Oxfam Germany at the Robert Bosch Foundation. This key event aims to amplify the visibility of the pledge commitments in Germany and inspire deeper implementation within participating organizations. We are grateful to Marie Rose Romain Murphy and Pledge supporters working in global majority countries for contributing their leadership to this discussion and look forward to sharing the outcomes.

If you have any queries, kindly reach out to us at pledgeforchange@adesofrica.org and we would be happy to respond.

Our next newsletter will be shared in July 2024. Please send any content you would like to share (or let us know if you would like to feature in an interview or article) by June 30.

Thank you.

Click here to learn how you can become a signatory or a supporter and join the Pledge for Change 2030

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