



Change Perspective

Insights on delivering change in Africa

December 2014

*“traveller there is no path,
we make the path by walking”*

INTRODUCTION

Delivering change is hard. It takes the vision to see new ways of doing and being; it takes a deep understanding of the systems and power which underpin current realities; it takes a clear, shared direction; and above all it takes committed people who are able and willing to work together.

In the last year Wasafiri consultants have worked delivering change in diverse settings and on diverse projects. Be it working with The World Economic Forum on Grow Africa and enabling investment in agriculture, or embedded in The Government of Rwanda and supporting their development of strong institutions, or working with the British Government supporting fragile military and political progress in Somalia, we have tried, succeeded, failed and learnt new lessons about how to deliver change in Africa.

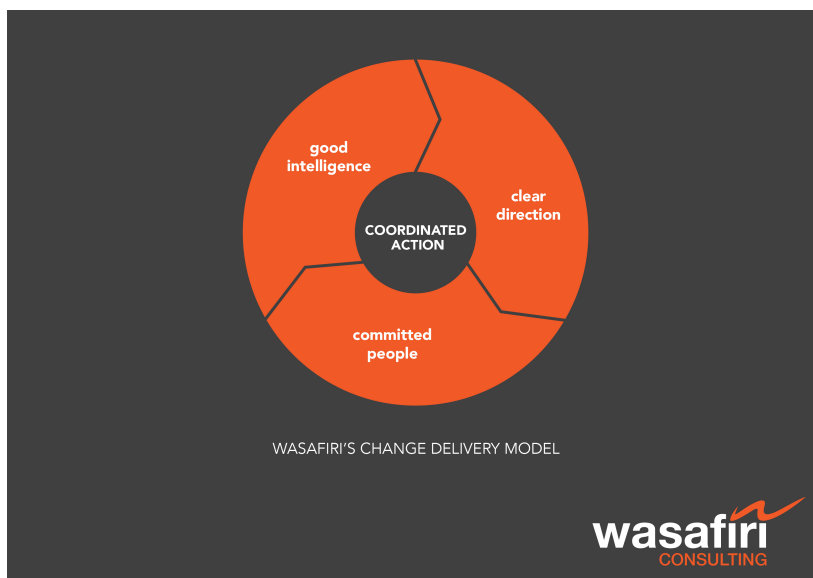
In August 2014 we came together at our annual retreat in Kenya to share experiences and learn from one another. The following insights report offers a summary of the key things we have learnt, collectively, about how to deliver successful, real change, in Africa.

We offer these insights to anyone who wants to create change. Please take them, try them add to them and, if you are willing, let us know what more we can all learn about delivering change.

THE WASAFIRI PRACTICE

Wasafiri helps deliver change for businesses, governments and institutions in Africa.

We believe that no single person or organisation has the power, resources or ideas to drive change alone. Rather, to deliver change to the political, economic or social systems which enable or constrain us all, we must act together.



OUR APPROACH

Committed people willing and invested in reshaping systems & organisations together

Good intelligence on how a system operates, used to guide decisions

Clear direction with a shared vision and a shared strategy to reach it

Coordinated action managing and facilitating action, tracking progress and scaling up

INSIGHTS ON COMMITTED PEOPLE

Change will be delivered by **people** - it will happen when those involved and affected are **committed** to achieving the same thing, are committed to each other and committed to working together through the obstacles to change.

INSIGHT ONE:

ADDRESS FEAR – If change was easy it would have already happened. Finding out what is holding change back, what people fear to face or talk about and then facing it, is essential to developing sustainable change.

Too often stakeholder engagement processes *avoid* the issues that divide stakeholders; they avoid underlying agendas and avoid the fear different stakeholders have about creating change. While avoiding these difficult topics makes for easier conversations, it is these difficult topics which will ultimately derail any change if not addressed. We have learned that the most important conversations to have are those which are the most difficult to have.

“To work with Faith Leaders to really tackle HIV stigma we had to talk about and address the things that people wanted to avoid.”

Katie Chalcraft,
Wasafiri Consultant

INSIGHT TWO

HOW YOU ASK WILL EFFECT WHOM YOU HEAR - Building commitment means engaging people and hearing their views and knowledge. It means seeking out the less powerful and those whose voices are missing from current conversations; and creating inclusive processes which allows people to safely share their honest opinions and experiences. Such processes can include anonymous feedback surveys, interviews conducted by neutral people and a number of other methods. But they must be transparent, they must understand fears and they must recognise power structures.

INSIGHT THREE

A TRANSPARENT PROCESS IS AN ENGAGING PROCESS - Changing systems is not an end point - it is a journey. Developing processes that are transparent, where *who* is involved is clear, where there are direct ways for everyone to participate, where decision-making and governance are explicit, become engaging processes. Indeed, the change you create will be determined by the process you use to create it.

INSIGHT FOUR

FIND AND WORK WITH THOSE WILLING TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN - Grow Africa has developed momentum; it has moved remarkably-quickly from concept to action and making change happen. Key in this has been its ability to work with those who *want* to create change. The lesson here has been to work with the majority who want to create change - whether these are the more or less powerful people within the system. Build a ‘coalition of the willing’, find those who are willing to engage in making change happen and get started. Keep inviting all stakeholders to join. Keep communicating but keep going.

INSIGHTS ON GOOD INTELLIGENCE

To change a system we have to understand that system. **Good intelligence** enables committed people to know what to change and how to change it.

INSIGHT ONE

CREATE SHARED INTELLIGENCE – A diverse group of stakeholders will collectively hold more insight, understanding and knowledge, than any individually could believe. The first challenge in generating the intelligence needed to change a system, is to draw out and, most importantly share across all stakeholders what is *already* known. Good intelligence is not just about research and reports, it is about creating processes and conversations that tap into existing knowledge out and help others to hear, understand and share what is already known.

INSIGHT TWO

TOO MUCH IS AS BAD AS TOO LITTLE - So much useful intelligence is buried deep inside reports, policy documents, white papers and institutions. How intelligence is shared and whom it is shared with determines its usefulness. Grow Africa has been quick to recognise that the quality (and brevity) of reporting is essential to its usefulness. Producing information in a way which those who need it can use it and will access it is fundamental to whether such intelligence gathers dust or generates change.

“What I have learnt this year is that once you have a purpose you can all get behind don't mess with it - maintain your collective focus and deliver.”

Ian Randall, Strategic Advisor to Grow Africa & Wasafiri Executive Director

INSIGHT THREE

UNDERSTAND THE POWER - Who has it? How do they use it? Where does it flow? What maintains the system that you want to change? Every system has power within it and there will be vested interests and needs which benefit from things the 'way they are.' To make change happen you need to understand the current system and, most importantly, the way power works within it.

INSIGHTS ON CLEAR DIRECTION

To work together to create change we need to all know where we are going and how we will get there. A clear direction is a shared direction.

INSIGHT ONE

HAVE A SINGLE MINDED GOAL - Grow Africa's success has been largely underpinned by the focused commitment to a single goal¹. An ingredient also supported by recent successes from the Tony Blair Foundation's work in Rwanda². In the case of Grow Africa, maintaining this single-mindedness has not been easy. The pressure to add new, worthy agendas has been constant. However important these agendas are, our key learning is that maintaining the momentum to deliver change (and not just plan it), demands a simplicity and focus, especially when complex stakeholder interests are involved.

¹ <https://www.growafrica.com/grow-africa-annual-report-2014>

² <http://tonyblairoffice.org/page/-/Rwanda%20SCBI%20Case.v2%20FINAL.pdf>

INSIGHT TWO

CREATE A CREDIBLE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE – Starting right and starting in a way which will get you through the difficult times is essential. Creating a governance structure that reflects all the stakeholders in the system you seek to change - and that all involved see as credible - is essential for getting through the challenging times ahead.

INSIGHT THREE

STRATEGIES ARE LIVE AND NEED ROOM TO EVOLVE -

Don't let the pursuit of perfection get in the way of 'good enough to get on with'. Strategies need to live and evolve. They need to be working documents that, while they hold firm goals, can be influenced as they are implemented, particularly when working in fragile environments or changing contexts.

“Delivering change in Somali is complex and hard. Without a strategy that we could all get behind, something that we believed in and which genuinely brought us together, delivering real would have been impossible”

Hamish Wilson, Senior
Stabilisation Advisor, British
Embassy Somalia

INSIGHT FOUR

A SHARED STRATEGY IS A REAL STRATEGY - At the stage of working out how to deliver change it can be easy to let the technocrats take over; easy to believe that the right tools of analysis, planning and presentation will produce the best strategy. But the best strategies, the ones that people actually work to, are those that people own. So the secret ingredient to a great strategy is that it is a 'shared strategy'. Using inclusive processes, engaging all voices and producing a strategy which those who have to deliver it understand and are committed to, is as important as the 'content' of the strategy.

INSIGHTS ON

COORDINATED ACTION

Making change happens needs energy, detail and planning. It needs constant learning, adaptation and **coordinated action**.

INSIGHT ONE

RELENTLESS COMMUNICATION – The fear of sharing too much or the wrong thing can lead to cautious communications. Our insight is that change happens when people are engaged and to achieve this relentless communication is vital. Refine & and repeat your story, share it in different ways and with different people, but keep on communicating.

INSIGHT TWO

HOLD PEOPLE TO ACCOUNT - Things get done when people do them. Know who is responsible for what, make accountability visible and build systems which encourage mutual accountability. And if things aren't happening or getting done then acknowledge this and solve it. Change processes that fail to hold people to account will fail. And the experience of failed attempts at change is the biggest barrier to future change processes.

CONCLUSION

Over the last year we have learnt many lessons on how to deliver change in Africa; and we will keep on learning. 2015 will be Wasafiri Consulting's busiest year yet; and through this work we will carry on our commitment to delivering change in Africa, and our commitment to constantly evolving and improving our practice.

Please let us know your insights on delivering change in Africa. We will aim to compile and share more resources to help us all make change happen.

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| COMMITTED PEOPLE | > ADDRESS FEAR |
| | > HOW YOU ASK WILL EFFECT WHOM YOU HEAR |
| | > A TRANSPARENT PROCESS IS AN ENGAGING PROCESS |
| | > FIND AND WORK WITH THOSE WILLING TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN |
| GOOD INTELLIGENCE | > CREATE SHARED INTELLIGENCE |
| | > TOO MUCH IS AS BAD AS TOO LITTLE |
| | > UNDERSTAND THE POWER |
| CLEAR DIRECTION | > HAVE A SINGLE MINDED GOAL |
| | > CREATE A CREDIBLE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE |
| | > STRATEGIES ARE LIVE AND NEED ROOM TO EVOLVE |
| | > A SHARED STRATEGY IS A REAL STRATEGY |
| COORDINATED ACTION | > RELENTLESS COMMUNICATION |
| | > HOLD PEOPLE TO ACCOUNT |