

How do we build **meaningful** **partnerships?**

Reflections on financing * A collaborative proposal that echoes and contains a lot of flavor.



In spanish: hacer ECO.

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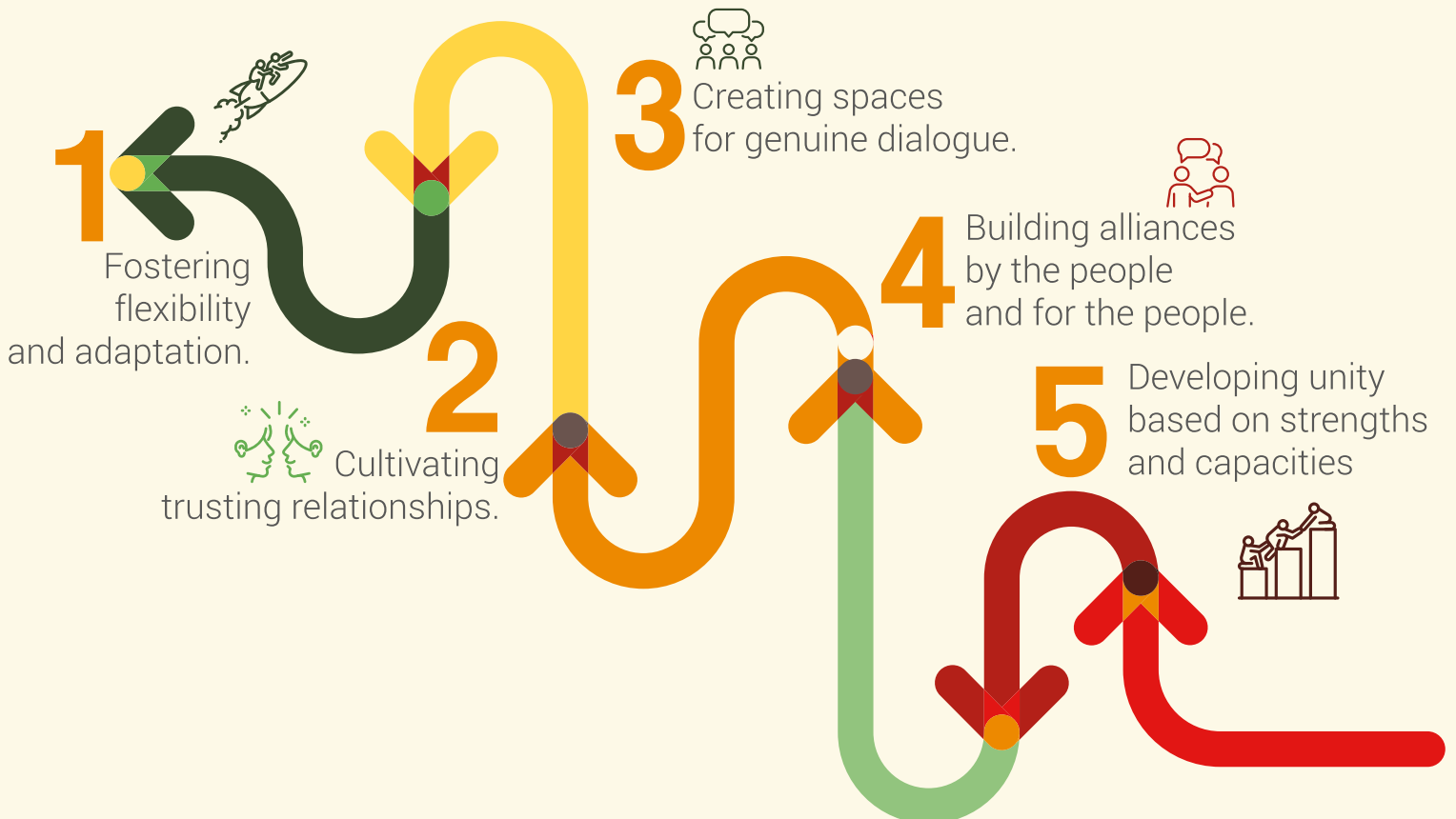


What to **expect** from this **document**

ECO is a group composed of 17 organizations, projects and individuals who seek to reflect, learn and build collective solutions based on our experiences to contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia and other countries.

In 2023, we decided to amplify our collective reflection on financing, partnerships and peacebuilding. We gathered together, got to know each other and proposed concrete actions to answer the question “how do we build meaningful partnerships?”.

We identified 5 actions or attitudes that ease and/or hinder the processes and relationships between funders, organizations, projects, communities and individuals, that is, between allies in the transformation processes:



These actions and attitudes are our ingredients and we propose a recipe to build more meaningful relationships and more powerful partnerships. We hope that each person can add their own special touch to this recipe.

Interested in
**learning
more?**



We invite you to read the complete document and propose your ideas, recipes and reflections [here](#).





ECO is a group composed of 17 organizations, projects and individuals who seek to reflect, learn and build collective solutions based on our experiences to contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia and other countries.

We work in different sectors spanning across civil society, private, academia, public and international philanthropy, whose mandates and purposes directly relate to the wellbeing of humankind in terms of dignity, equity and peace.

We began to meet together in August 2022 around one opportunity: we are all partners of Humanity United. After that encounter, we continued to share spaces around: **a) a shared conviction: believing a more equitable and fair Colombia is possible;** **b) a common task: contributing to the construction of peace;** **c) an interest that brings us together: reflecting, learning, and building collective solutions that strengthen our contribution to the country;** and **d) a method that we want to promote: collaboration.**

Why

What started as an Encounter to Get to Know Each Other (in Spanish *Encuentro para Conocerse*, ECO), became an opportunity to amplify messages, to serve as a container for reflections, to build a wave that generates proactive solutions and amplifies learning. This year, we decided to focus our collective reflection around the following questions: how do we build a meaningful relationship between funders, organizations, communities and individuals? How can we build meaningful, powerful and consistent partnerships?

In this journey together, we identified that our experiences regarding how we contribute to peace are pluralistic and diverse: the uniqueness of each of our structures, the issues we each address and the types of audiences we each work with. The variety of places in which we interact, the richness of the methodological, practical and academic experiences we have, despite other differences, allow us to engage in meaningful conversations from broad and open perspectives that are equally inquisitive.

We all have an anchor at the local level since we deeply value the bonds we have built with the communities and their territories through our work. We advocate that the local development be defined autonomously and ad-hoc by the communities themselves, and we know these communities give meaning and value to the work we do.

We contribute to local, regional, national and international peacebuilding efforts, seeking to improve and/or strengthen the conditions of the contexts in which we work in Colombia, so that its citizens can fully enjoy their rights in a dignified and non-violent manner.

We make these contributions in many different ways: strengthening leaders and decision makers' capabilities to improve their leadership skills and learn from their own evaluation experiences; supporting the development of productive and/or artistic-cultural initiatives of the communities that are, in some cases, victims and former combatants, and highlighting the power of local and collective action; promoting theoretical and practical reflections regarding the experiences of the Peace Agreement's implementation and transitional justice; and/or convening political leaders and creating spaces for dialogue for the development of public policies that respond to the needs of transformation of their contexts.

Based on the approaches and exchanges we have had, we agree that the result expected by all of us is a nation that overcomes the structural, cultural and daily causes of violence and armed confrontation that the territorial contexts have suffered for 60 years and that, in a way, they must continue to face while maintaining day by day the hope of escaping from the spiral of violence.

It is for this reason that in addition to multiple local and national commitments to contribute to peacebuilding, we have a national roadmap to move forward: The Peace Agreement signed in 2016 which, despite having different challenges in its implementation, has had valuable achievements in its first 7 years.

We agree that the transformations we work for are long-term. Most of us frame our work under a long-term perspective (10 years or more); however, on average our actino planning does not exceed 5 years.

This tension between knowing that processes require systems transformation approaches and acting in shorter time frames partly exemplifies **why we came together to reflect on the shared need for funding processes that are consistent with the processes we work on and the transformations we contribute to.**



We know that the argument about the need for different financing conditions and frameworks is not new, and we also recognize that it is usually addressed by targeting those who have the financial power. We want to contribute, faithful to our logic of collaboration, from a proactive point of view. Therefore, we begin by sharing our successful experiences with funders, and then focus on what we learned from the challenging situations regarding the relationship with them to imagine concrete practices with the potential for transformation.

Our reflections and analysis, far from pretending to be a final guideline, are rather the first draft to guide or start framing how we could cook new dishes in a collaborative way that will eventually lead us to new funding experiences.

If you made it this far, you probably have some interest in our work and/or the challenges of partnerships between financiers and change processes. Today we want to share our thoughts with you.

We invite you to discover what we have discussed so far and what we would like to try in our experimental kitchen to prepare more meaningful, powerful and consistent relationships between funders, organizations, communities and individuals to create transformative processes. We address this reflection based on our plural, open and assertive perspectives, and bring it to this space to enrich it with flavors from around the world.



We **look forward** to your **contribution!**

ECONO

• ENCUENTRO PARA CONOCERSE • AGOSTO 11 •

TENEMOS UN *horizonte* **COMÚN** PAZ

LO MÁS IMPORTANTE ES EL **PROCESO**

SOMOS A

ACCOUNTABILITY RESEARCH CENTER

SOMOS UNA ORGANIZACIÓN FILANTRÓPICA CON BASE EN EELW

UBUNTU

CULTIVAR LA LIBERTAD Y LA PAZ A TRAVÉS DE NUESTROS PROGRAMAS

QUE HACEMOS ES TAN IMPORTANTE COMO CÓMO LO HACEMOS

SOLO PODEMOS SER HUMANOS *"juntos"*

TENEMOS UN ENFOQUE SISTÉMICO, MÁS SALUDABLE

¡CAMINAMOS JUNTOS!

¡SOMOS APRENDICES!

VISIONES BASE PARA LA *paZ*

SOM APORTE CONJUNTOS A UNA CONSTRUCCIÓN GLOBAL DE PAZ

EQUIPO

EL TRABAJO EN EQUIPO ES FUNDAMENTAL

LA DIVERSIDAD SIEMPRE ESTÁ PRESENTE

IDENTIFICAMOS EL ROL DE CADA UNO

LA COMUNICACIÓN A NUESTRO ALREDEDOR ES COMPLEJA

DEBEMOS EMPESAR A ESCUCHARNOS

AUNQUE LA PAZ ES SIMPLE CONSTRUIRLA ES COMPLEJO

TRABAJAMOS CON SOCIOS Y ALIADOS EN TERRITORIO

SUSTITUCIÓN DE CUENOS ILÍCITOS

VEEDURÍA CIUDADANA

SANEAMIENTO DE AGUA

ADAPT PEACE BUILDING

TENEMOS ARTICULACIÓN SINÉRGICA CON TERRITORIOS

INVESTIGACIÓN ACCIÓN sistémica

CO-INSPIRACIÓN

NO MERMAMOS NUESTROS RECURSOS A LOS ALIADOS

INTEGRACIÓN VERTICAL

TRABAJO A NIVEL MUNDIAL

REGULACIÓN DE NUESTRO ROL COMO ORGANIZACIÓN A FAVOR

IMPORTANCIA CAPACITACIÓN

ÉTICA + ESPERANZA

CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN Y POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

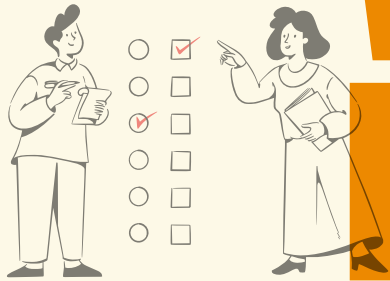
FOTO DIALPORA

EXPERIENCIAS

INVESTIGACIÓN Y POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

3

What **We** have



learned

As ECO we have met at different moments to reflect about our experiences and learnings regarding the financing processes we have participated in. This allowed us to identify 5 actions and attitudes that either facilitate or hinder the processes and relationships, both from the part of the funders and from the part of the organizations, projects and communities, that is, from the partners in transformation processes. These reflections and insights have allowed us to imagine new ways of cooking this relationship.

Be as flexible as
guadua—a Colombian
bamboo

1

2

3

Talking makes people
understand each other

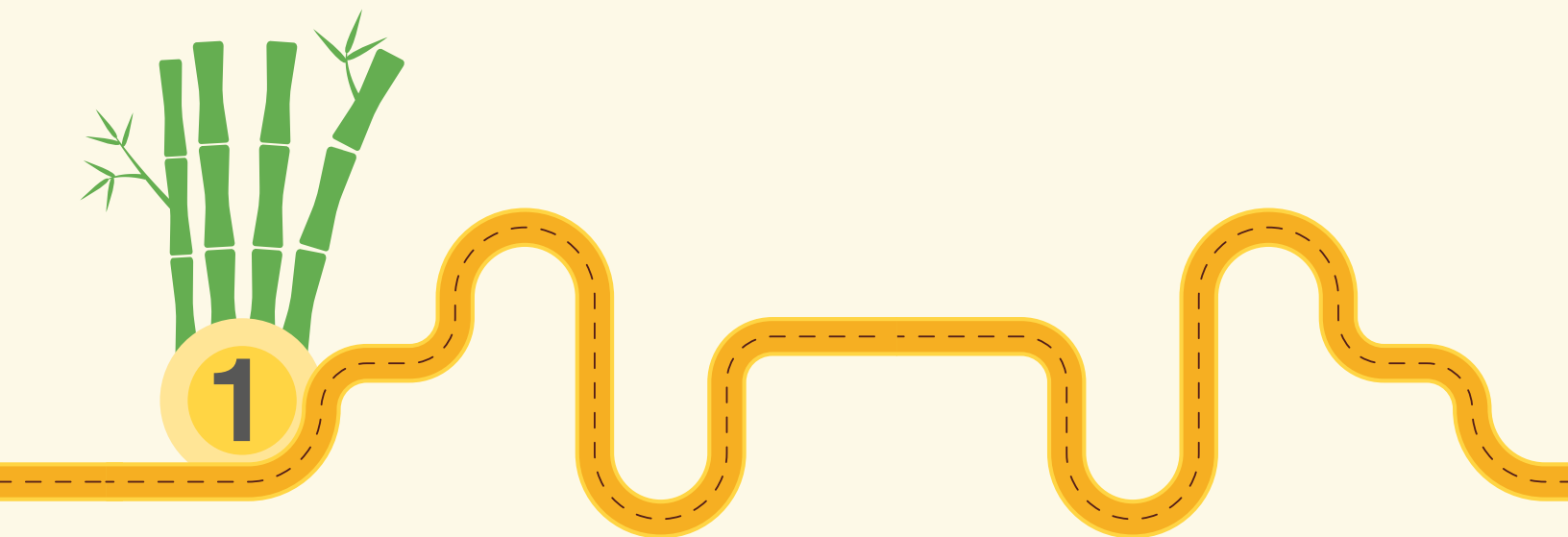
4

In sight, in mind

5

Unity is strength

*Las cuentas claras
y el chocolate espeso*—
Clear accounts
and thick hot
chocolate



Be as flexible as *guadua*— a Colombian bamboo¹

In order to achieve more meaningful and sustainable relationships, it is essential that all the people involved **are flexible and adapt without breaking**. In other words, they manage to build a common ground without losing their intention, purpose and identity. This will make it easier to propose ideas, suggest adjustments, build common agendas, make room to deal with unforeseen events, and achieve a more horizontal relationship between true allies.

This **flexibility** cannot be excessive, given that when there are no limits or agreements, it can hinder mutual understanding and have unexpected results for both parties. Therefore, as ECO we believe that flexibility must be framed in a common purpose and must be bound within agreements built between all parties involved. All this must fit within a communication's framework that enables relevant and comprehensive adaptation.

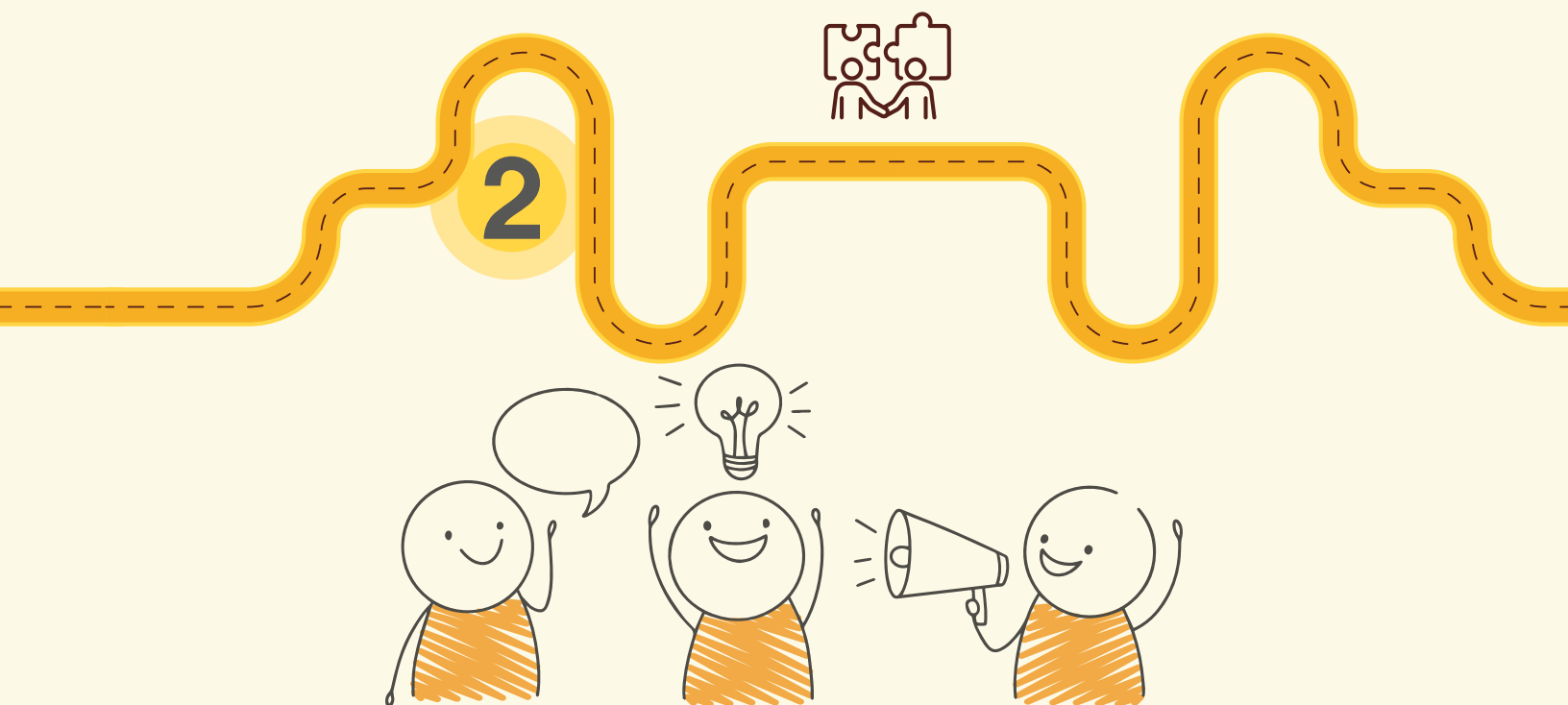
1. Guadua is the Colombian bamboo par excellence. It has been used by indigenous and farming communities for various uses and applications (hunting and fishing tools, musical instruments, housing, bridges, etc.).



How to achieve it?

Social processes are evolutionary and must adapt to change. Thus for us, we can achieve flexibility by **building agendas and actions based on the realities of the communities** (which are constantly changing), and not on what we understand from our distant offices. This flexibility does not imply a space to propose and implement without restrictions.

Rather, it should be understood as a space in which organizations and communities can propose, design and create strategies for the development of processes without losing sight of the objectives and the scope of their actions and intentions. For example, we can embed flexibility into our theory of change frameworks, the analysis of intermediate results and the multi-layered budgets that traditionally do not recognize that life changes at any moment. We can change these through co-created processes that recognize and incorporate the knowledge and expertise of the communities and that are based on learning.



Las cuentas claras y el chocolate espeso—Clear accounts and thick hot chocolate²

It is essential to build relationships based on trust that have: transparency of information and motivations; direct, bilateral and constant communication to build human connections; appreciation of mutual learning; good relationships and genuine respect between people; and the opportunity to work together based on each person's capabilities.

2. Popular Colombian saying that refers to the fact that speaking clearly is important to build trust and avoid confusion between two or more parties involved. This Colombian expression means that when things are spoken clearly, it is easier to understand each other.

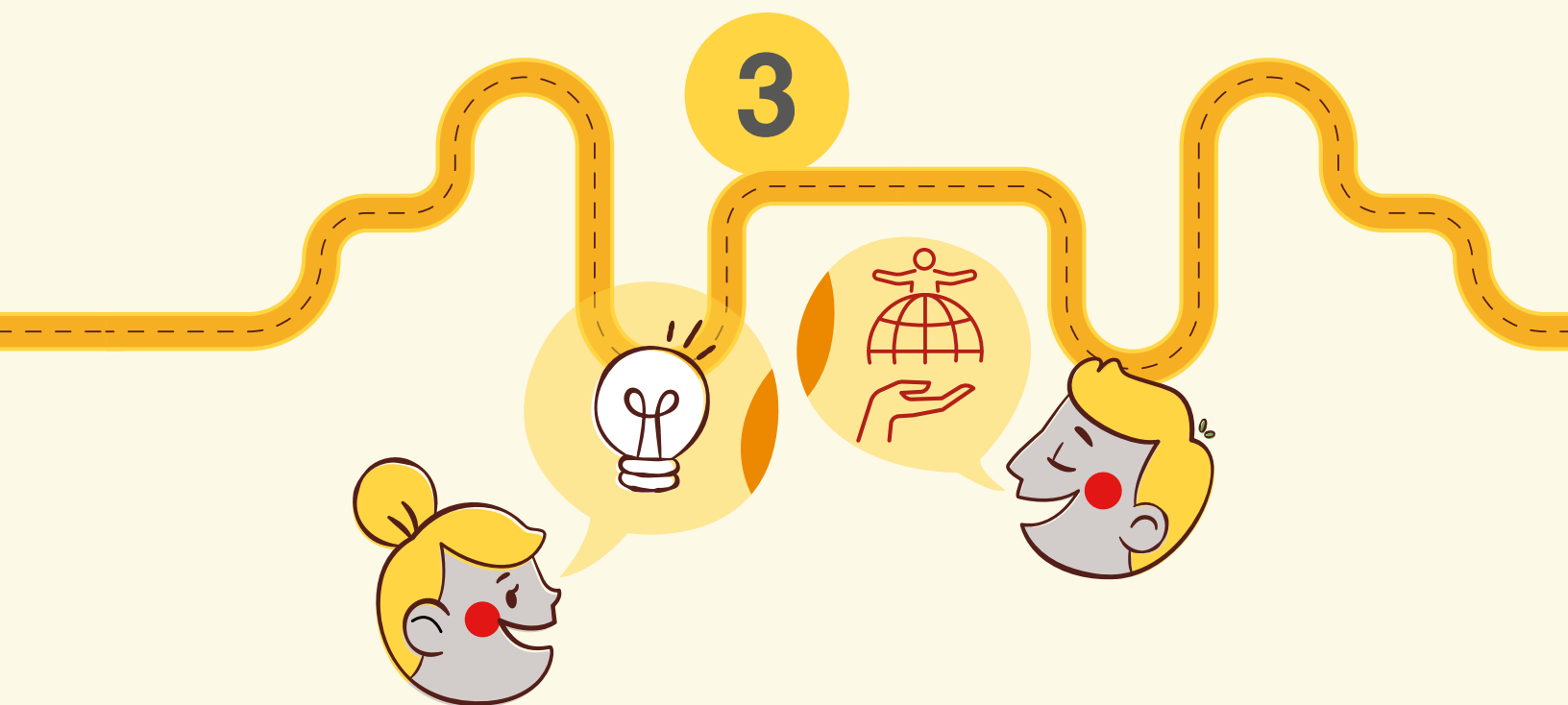
A notable obstacle to this kind of relationship is **hierarchical or top-down exchanges**. Usually, those who finance the projects are at the top of the hierarchy, taking on the role of evaluators and supervisors, while the organizations and communities are at the bottom assuming the role of implementers that are evaluated and directed. This dynamic makes relationships difficult, can break trust, hinder communication, create inflexible spaces, and therefore limit the common purpose.

Therefore, we believe that one of the key elements to achieve a meaningful, powerful and consistent relationship is to **work horizontally**. We are convinced that we need to go beyond the hierarchical dynamic in which one party has more power because it is the one who finances and evaluates the project, while the other party simply implements it. We must recognize that both parties lead and develop the work by contributing different aspects such as resources, knowledge and expertise, proposals and solutions, human capital, time, etc.



How to achieve it?

Rethinking and **re-imagining monitoring, evaluation and learning** processes is a critical step in building trust. As ECO, we propose that monitoring, evaluation and learning focus on beyond results, recognizing processes and cherishing both innovation and reflection. We envision processes that involve all stakeholders and that are co-created, weaving together different tools and methodologies that enable us to understand and identify the transformations and dynamics of the territories. We insist that **the purpose of evaluation should always be learning and recognizing the process beyond the results**.

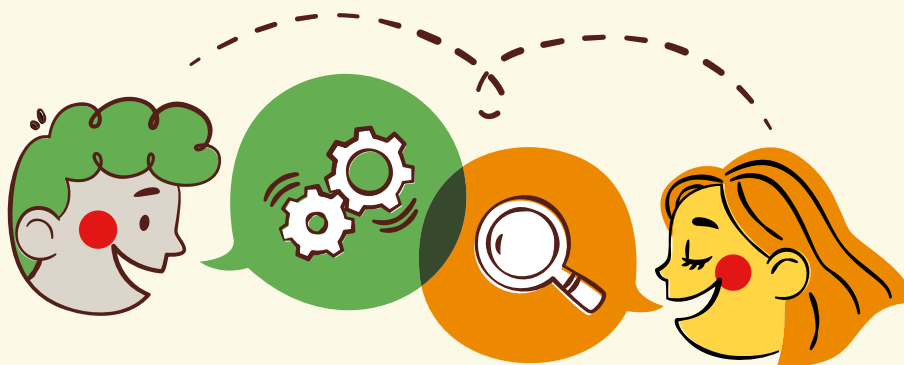


Talking makes people understand each other

As ECO, we resonate with the creation of **dialogue processes** for building sustainable partnerships. For this kind of communication, we must have the interest to learn and listen to truly understand and be willing to accept different perspectives and to allow emotions to emerge.

In order to achieve a fluid, bidirectional and constructive dialogue, we believe it is necessary to change the form and content of the **language**, starting by replacing terms such as “donors” and “implementers” with “partners” or “allies”. That is because we tend to think that funders are the only parties invested in the processes, when in fact implementers and communities also play an indispensable role in the development of initiatives and invest both tangible and intangible resources.

We believe that **relationships begin to change** when this kind of shift occurs, when we stop seeing funders as banks and practitioners as beneficiaries. This creates an opportunity to identify common purposes, share goals, learn together, and embark on iterative journeys.



How to achieve it?



- ◇ Establish **transparent conversations** between partners about processes, and identify challenges, unexpected outcomes, innovative ideas, time extensions, resources, and other topics. The key is to define a common purpose and establish clear agreements from the very beginning.
- ◇ Identify methods by which **communications**, reports, and interactions can be understood by all parties. For example, translating follow-up reports into English is often an unnecessary effort for organizations or people whose first language is Spanish, and it requires resources that can be used more efficiently. It is also important to value other types of local and community languages, such as the audiovisual and artistic, to nourish narrative text reports with meaning.



4

In sight, in mind³

We believe in the power of the local communities. That is why we are convinced that **alliances are built by the people and for the people**. There are three key elements for this:

A. 

A. Understanding local realities and the dynamics of the territories: To build true partnerships, it is necessary to be present in the territories on a long-term basis, to understand the context and its needs and to build genuine relationships. This allows us to **learn from our partners and to understand the communities' processes**.

3. Adaptation of the idiom “out of sight, out of mind”, which refers to the importance of seeing in order to understand. In Spanish we say “ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente”, which would be adapted to “ojos que ven, corazón que siente”.



B. Ongoing and genuine support: Our experience has taught us that trust requires ongoing work that fosters collaboration. The key to this is to build a **constant and quality accompaniment** on the part of the partners, which makes the process' implementation and the socialization of its progress more fluid. We believe that the process of accompaniment should be based on a proactive dialogue in which new ideas can be presented and experiences can be shared.

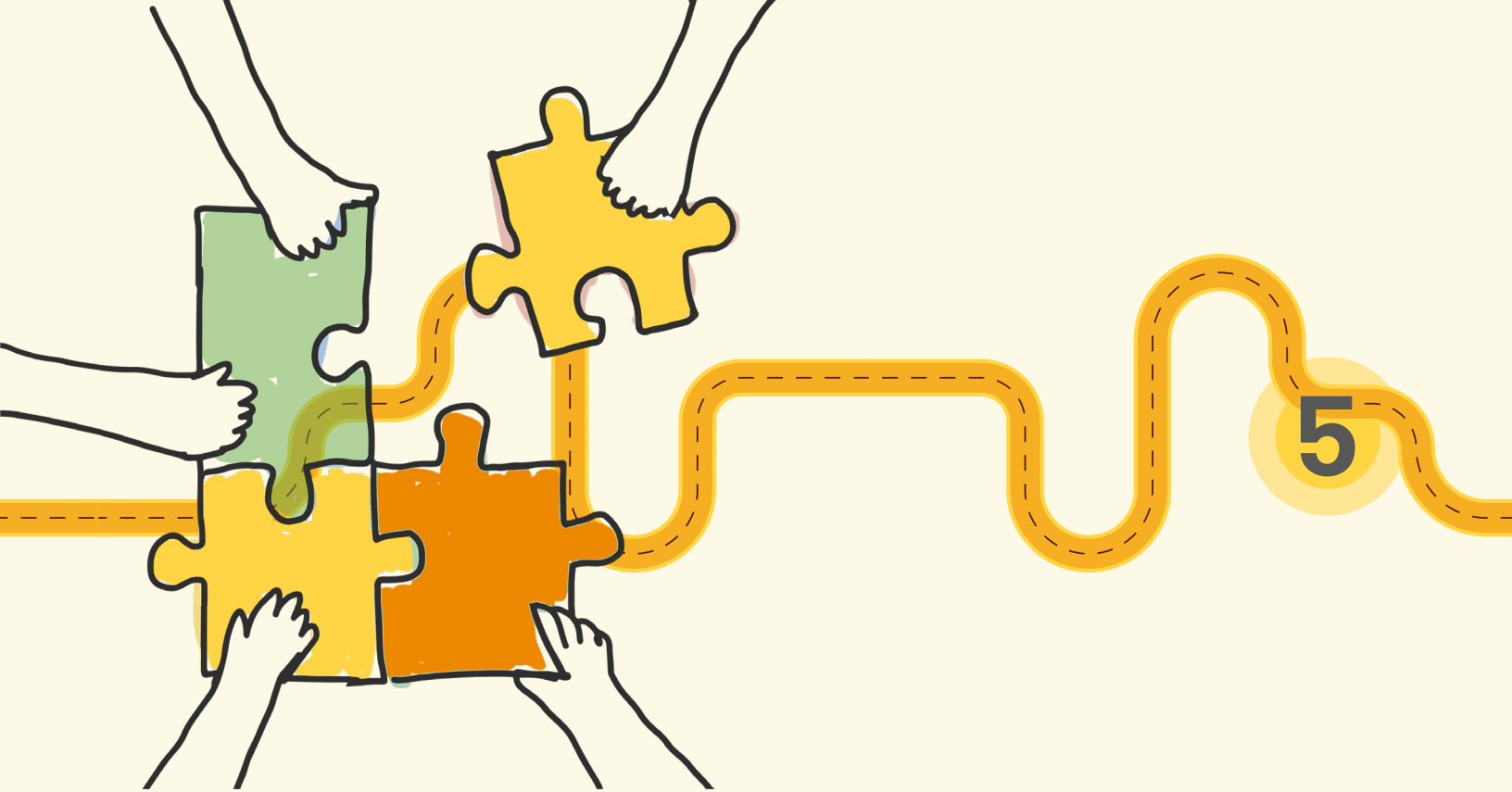


C. Resource management: We believe that funding should be directed not only to our projects, but also to **strengthening our organizations**. It is difficult to find funders who are willing to invest in organizations beyond their projects, and this can be discouraging because it would help ensure the sustainability of agendas that respond to the needs of the territories. We consider it essential that all partners begin to value both **tangible and intangible resources** as key elements for achieving the desired transformations. Finally, it is essential that we, as allies, understand territorial dynamics in order to **jointly develop appropriate and relevant resource management strategies**.



How to achieve it?

- ◇ We recommend **replacing the endless written reports** (which hardly anyone reads) with field visits, interviews, videos and other communicative pieces created by the people who participate in the process, which becomes an opportunity to learn and strengthen their skills.
- ◇ In order to work towards sustainability, it is essential to propose and implement **long-term processes** that have a greater impact on the communities' realities and contribute to strengthening their capabilities. To this end, we propose processes that last more than one year, with an emphasis on long-term processes (5 to 10 years).
- ◇ Currently, the logic of funding is based on dynamics that lead us to **compete for resources**. We advocate for a different reality, one that focuses on the creation of alliances in which funders, organizations, communities and individuals can collaborate instead of compete for resources.



Unity is strength

As ECO, we believe that for allies to build meaningful relationships, all parties must **trust each other's abilities and recognize opportunities for learning**. This is the basis for creating truly collaborative relationships that avoid instrumentalizing people and achieve real change.

We resonate with the idea that **strength and power lie in people**, in relationships, and in how we approach with curiosity. This entails challenges and complexities that we are happy to address.



How to achieve it?

- ◇ Sometimes communication is carried out through an intermediary, which can lengthen time periods and make it difficult to share information clearly. For this reason, we suggest that funders assume a role of **accompaniment**, know the processes well, and contribute to address the challenges immediately. Likewise, we recommend that organizations, projects, individuals or communities **be clear about the communication strategies** that meet their needs and expectations, so that communication is fluid and effective.
- ◇ Having an action framework that values lessons learned. Usually lessons learned are the last question to be included in the processes, and sometimes there is no time to create reflection processes. We suggest looking for innovative ways to harvest lessons, collect stories, and identify emerging levers for change.

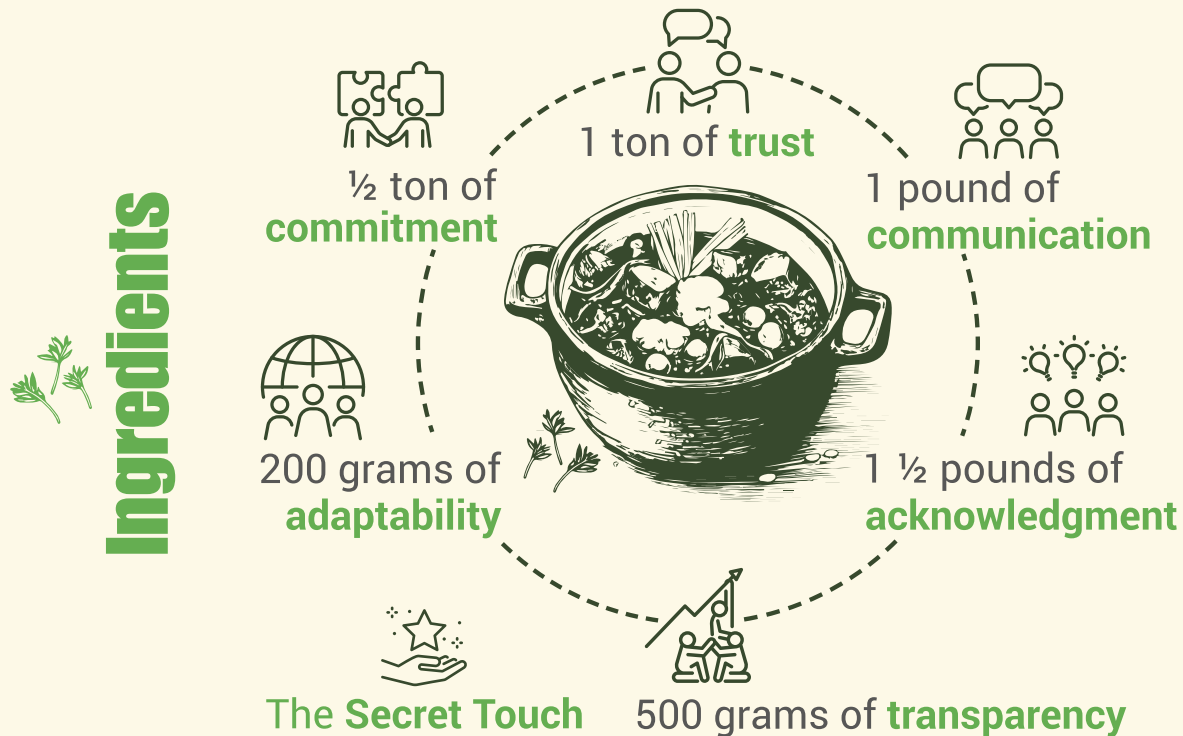
You can use this [link](#) to let us know what you think about what we have reflected on.



Recipe of the

Collaborative

SANCOCHO⁴



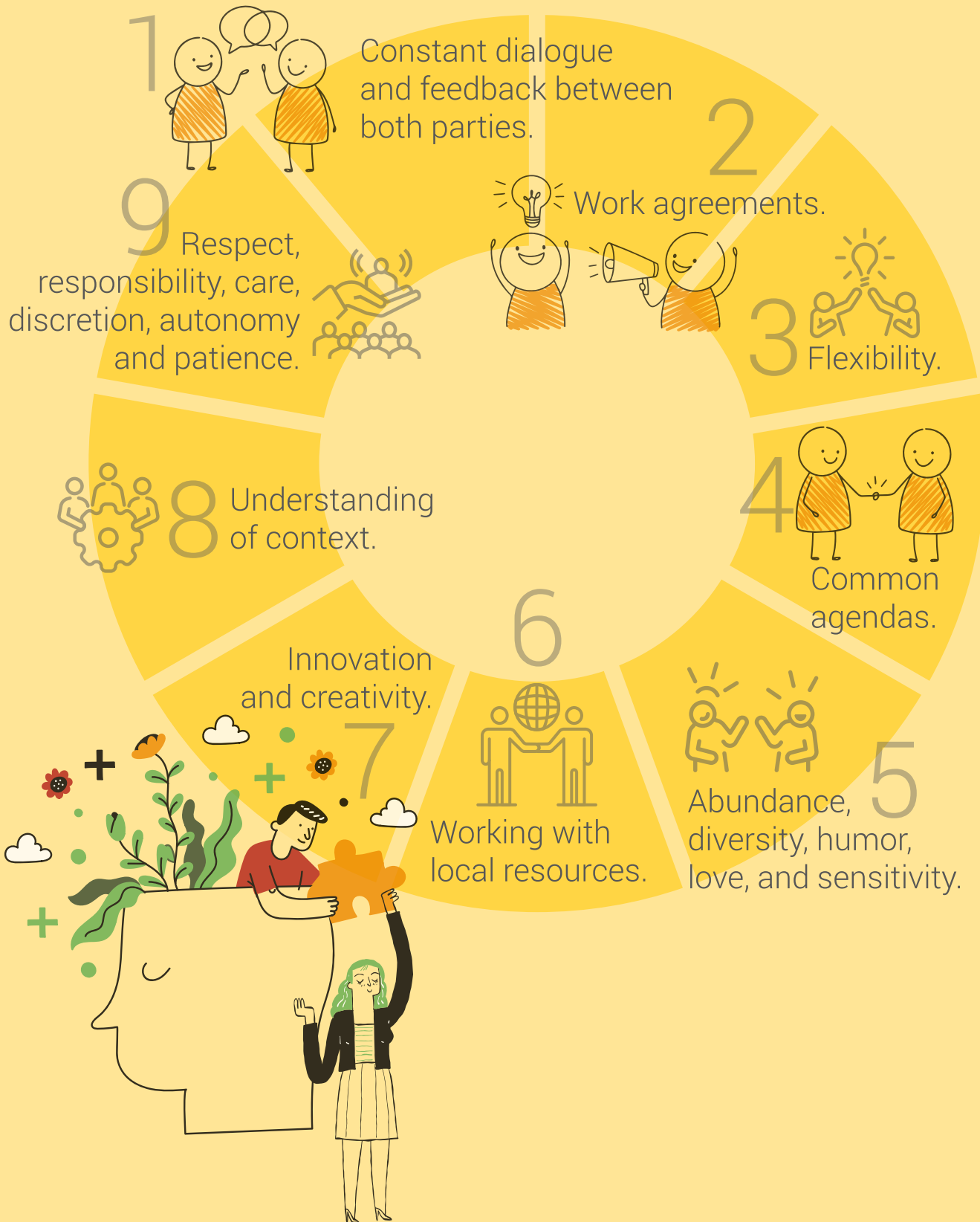
Getting down to business, we would like to share our recipe for our Collaborative Sancocho, an exquisite preparation that will hopefully be useful for building and maintaining meaningful, powerful and consistent relationships between funders, organizations, communities and individuals.

4. Colombian traditional soup that is prepared throughout the course of a day over an open fire and many conversations.



Do you want to take your recipe to the **next level?**

We recommend the following add-ons:



This recipe's ingredients are not a straitjacket but a guide for its preparation. Depending on the situation, more ingredients or new or different ingredients can be proposed, as long as they are nourishing for the experience and make us happy. However, the recipe is always best prepared using **local ingredients**, and if each person brings their own **secret touch**.





Step-by-step:

1. For a meaningful, powerful, and consistent relationship between allies, stir together trust, communication, and recognition over medium heat. This mixture must be stirred collectively, using a language that everyone understands so that everyone can participate horizontally. If you are up for it, during this stage you can add constant dialogue and feedback between both parties, working agreements and that key element that unites the organization with the financier.

2. Mix transparency with adaptability and commitment to create a **shared agenda** in a separate pot. At this point you can also add other ingredients, such as innovation and creativity.

3. Combine the two mixtures and let it sit - thinking long-term is vital to this recipe! We need time for everyone involved to contribute with their knowledge and experience. Remember that *slow food*⁵ preserves nutrients better and is more satisfying. Likewise, collaboration between allies becomes stronger as time passes, because they get to know each other better and establish balanced and long-lasting relationships.

4. Finally, add your Secret Touch. This recipe depends on the context and has as many variations and flavors as there are people and processes. Therefore, we suggest adding a good amount of context analysis, so that your preparation will please your guests.

5. "Slow food" is a concept opposed to fast food, a style of sustainable and high quality consumption. It is a movement that promotes the consumption of natural products, with local recipes, avoiding waste and enjoying real flavors (Hida, 2022). Retrieved from: <https://hida.es/>

Here are some

tips



on how to prepare the recipe:



It is essential that there is **compatibility** between the funder and the organizations, communities and individuals.



Ideally, there should be a **balance** between the funder's guidance and the autonomy and space of the organizations, communities and individuals.



Don't forget to add abundance, diversity, humor, love, and sensitivity throughout the process. Also include respect, responsibility, collaboration, care, prudence, autonomy and patience.



The dish should be served in **equal portions**, and it is key to consume it little by little and **preserve it properly to guarantee its quality**.



Remember that **collective learning and patience** are the basis for carrying out each step.

- ◇ If you liked our recipe, do not hesitate to share it with those who are interested, so that they can learn how to prepare it in their own way.



Let's cook! * Let's cook! * Let's cook! * Let's cook!



Call to Action
for **Shift** the **Power**

Shift the Power * Shift the Power * Shift the Power

Given the individual experiences that we have each had as well as our group reflections, today we jointly make this call to action:



We seek partnerships and allies who will join us in these long-term and deeply committed endeavors, understanding that change takes time and that it is therefore necessary to persevere, innovate, and maintain the stakes beyond annual initiatives.



That the routes to build peace and development in a country like Colombia are unknown in many contexts and are built on a daily basis within the framework of collaboration, respect and listening.



That the cultural consequences of the armed conflict and all its mutations in the history of our country have affected the social fabric and democratic practices of a multiethnic and multicultural nation that has to work daily to rebuild relationships of trust, transparency, social inclusion and dialogue, and, at times, to protect the very lives of people.



That the resources that repeatedly enter peacebuilding processes without working carefully with those most proximate can do more harm in the long term than the benefit they can bring in the short term.



That short-term investments make it difficult to commit to long-term needs and can undermine opportunities for constructive relationships.



Our diverse and plural experience confirms that working with allies and in partnerships with international actors (especially with those who contribute with financing) requires the definition of common and shared purposes whose point of arrival is the greater good of the communities and human dignity, and whose point of departure is trust, openness to discover and define together. And that along the way we should be driven by dialogue, transparency and the possibility of evaluating and building together.



This type of relationship requires perspectives that are committed, that look below the surface, that are bold to propose new paths to discover, are persistent to not give up in the midst of difficulties, are sincere in their value and recognition of the progress made, and are humble to speak of what needs to be changed and learned from our mistakes.



Therefore, we invite you to try our recipe and propose new ways of cooking authentic, transforming and meaningful alliances.



As evidenced throughout this document, we as ECO share key elements of Shift the Power's [Manifesto for Change](#). In particular, we want to highlight the relevance of creating systems for peacebuilding that address long-term solutions, recognize the power of communities and the local experiences, create alliances based on the capabilities of all parties, and recognize the value of knowledge, trust and language. All of this so that we can begin the transformations we believe we need in each of us.

Do you want to learn more about






These are the 17 organizations, project, and individuals that echo:



Website or social media

Name	Website or social media
Accountability Research Center, American University	https://accountabilityresearch.org/
Adapt Peacebuilding	https://adaptpeacebuilding.org/
Asociación Sembrando Semillas de Paz – Sembrando Paz	https://www.peaceinsight.org/es/organisations/sembrandopaz/?location=colombia&theme https://m.facebook.com/people/Sembrandopaz/100064683217647/
Comisión de la Verdad / Legado	www.comisiondelaverdad.co
Corporación Plataforma Diálogos Improbables	https://dialogoimprobable.org/
Corporación SEHPAZ	https://www.facebook.com/sehpazCorpo?mibextid=ZbWKwL @sehpaz_oficial →
Everyday Peace Indicators -EPI	https://www.everydaypeaceindicators.org/






Nombre 	Página 
Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó-FISCH	https://www.forointeretnico.com.co/
Fundación Compaz	https://fundacioncompaz.org/
Fundación Ideas para la Paz	https://ideaspaz.org/
Humanity United	https://humanityunited.org/
Instituto para las Transiciones Integrales – IFIT	https://ifit-transitions.org/
Iniciativa Barómetro del Insituto Kroc	https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/barometer?lang=es
TerritoriA. Territorios en Acción	https://territoriacolombia.org/
Proyecto Fotodíasporas	https://www.fotodiasporas.org/es/
Angela Báez-Silva	https://www.linkedin.com/in/angelamariabaez-silvaarias?utm_source=share&utm_campaign=share_via&utm_content=profile&utm_medium=android_app
María Paula Prada Ramírez	Twitter: @MariaPPradaR 

* Organizations, projects, and individuals in **green** sign this document.

Do you have any questions about our work?

Contact us:

	Tatiana Mosquera Angulo	
	tmosquera@ideaspaz.org	
	+573106881528	



How do we build

meaningful partnerships?

Reflections on financing * A collaborative proposal that echoes and contains a lot of flavor.

