

# Changing the story for billions of people

[People](#)



We can view human society as a macro-organization, as an identifier of serious problems and a continuous producer of change, but also as a generator of organizations that bring social change. Human communities can be a source of inspiration for structural reform processes, especially when issues of greatest gravity involving large masses are approached with initiative, creativity, leadership, and collaboration, and generate effective solutions, changes in mentality and social progress (Mair & Marty, 2006). Change processes in large human communities have similar characteristics, phases, drivers, resistors and resolutions as businesses or non-profit structures. Remarkable models of non-governmental initiatives, initially having geographically limited objectives, manage to generate global social movements and collective changes but also give birth to NGOs and social entrepreneurship (Yunus, 2009). Social entrepreneurship is the construction, evaluation, and pursuit of opportunities for transformative social change carried out by visionary dedicated individuals, promoting new ideas to address major problems (Bornstein, 2004, Roberts & Woods, 2005).

The World Toilet Organization (WTO) is a non-profit organization, founded in 2001 by Jack Sim and now grown to 235 member organizations in 58 countries. WTO is as a global network and service platform uniting NGOs, social enterprises, governments, academia, civil society and private sector, working towards eliminating the toilet taboo and delivering sustainable sanitation solutions worldwide, especially in underdeveloped countries (Inconvenient Questions, 2016). A vision of a single individual was transformed into a massive collective movement and produced admirable proportions of change. Using creativity, ingenuity, humor, guerrilla

marketing, storytelling and harnessing an intelligent relationship with media and authorities, Jack Sim managed to overcome taboos and annihilate the resistance to change specific to conservative and uneducated communities, and to determine governments and corporations to support large-scale sanitation programs with huge costs but also with extraordinary social benefits.

Sanitation coverage in developing countries (49%) is only half that of the developed world (98%), and in sub-Saharan Africa is only 36%. Nearly 1.5 billion people live in China and India without access to improved sanitation services, and the number of deaths attributable to poor sanitation is 1.6 million a year (Khatri et al, 2008). Over the next 30 years, most of the two-billion-plus person increase in global population is expected. 72% of the urban population of Africa now live in slums, and the proportion is 43% for Asia and the Pacific, 32% for Latin America, and 30% for the Middle East and Northern Africa (Cohen, 2006). Nearly 60% of infant mortality is linked to infectious diseases, most of them water-, sanitation-, and hygiene-related. Globally, diarrhea is the third largest cause of morbidity and the sixth largest cause of mortality. Latrine marketing and large-scale implementation of latrines are at least as important as, if not more important than, improvements in sanitation design (Montgomery & Elimelech, 2007).

### **Social Entrepreneurship as the vector of global change**

Social businesses like the WTO network resemble but do not overlap with the sociological concept of “social marketing” (Andreasen, 1994, 2003), which involves planned efforts to change human behavior in a socially beneficial manner. Social entrepreneurship generated by WTO (people locally

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producing and selling toilets) is a profitable and measurable result of the change in mentalities, culture, and social structures. Sustainable social affairs can be reproduced repeatedly, by multiplying the productive model (Yunus, 2009), while the essential distinction between businesses and social entrepreneurship lies in the value proposition: while usual businesses serve markets to create financial profit, social businesses aim for value in the form of transformational benefit that brings value to a large segment of society (Martin & Osberg, 2007). The higher priority is given to promoting social value and development, not capturing economic value (Mair & Marty, 2006). Prahalad (2010) believes that private businesses have an important role to play in reducing global poverty, by creating profitable businesses to serve the 5 billion people who are the “social pyramid base”, a poor, invisible and yet untouched market. The vision is to create millions of small entrepreneurs, forming a new global market and generating a new cycle of trade and prosperity in the world economy.

People become aware of the injustice of sharing and accessing resources on Earth, and a new way of decently living together is mandatory (Branson, 2011). Transforming systems of power is the key to a sustainable future in which all people can live in dignity and fulfillment. Edwards & Sen (2000) identify a change in power relations at the social level: a shift from using power over others to advance own selfish interests to using power to facilitate the self-development of all. Yunus (2009) writes that traditional businesses pose the risk that, by maximizing the profits of the holders, will cancel out any benefit to customers and partners. Social affairs, on the other hand, aim at achieving social goals and supporting peers, generating current

revenues and profit only to cover their costs, but are only for those able to give personal profit and seek the well-being of others (Yunus, 2010). Dees (2017) notes that social entrepreneurship combines the passion of a social mission with an image of business-like discipline, efficiency, innovation, and determination. Social entrepreneurship repairs situations where governments are inefficient, rely heavily on creativity and collaboration and need authorities support to develop when they prove to be socially beneficial and viable (Yunus, 2009).

### **A generous vision, the main driver of change**

The major factors that constitute core strategic change for structured groups of people are vision, mission, and values (Hemingway & MacLagan, 2004, CastellFi & Lozano, 2009). The articulation of a fundamental vision is vital in any change process (Appelbaum et al, 1998, Bornstein, 2004). The vision would be successful if it is simple, clear, compelling, easy to be communicated in a basic language, ambitious but realistic, meaningful, credible, and expressing a desirable and attainable future, based on common values, hopes and ideals (Dess & Picken, 2000, Cole et al, 2006, Yukl, 2013). WTO s vision is to create a healthier and cleaner habitat for billions of people, and its mission is to provide free durable access to clean toilets for every person on Earth. The big challenge is to break taboos, change mindsets and habits and reverse some cultural clichΓ©s in very conservative communities, and to create the desire of using toilets instead of squatting in the open air. But for uneducated and conservative communities, simply communicating a generous and altruistic vision is not effective and convincing, and creativity, humor, storytelling and friendly approach are

mandatory to present the vision in a more attractive manner (Grameen Creative Lab, 2013, TRTWorld, 2017).

The role of the leader in articulating and convincingly communicating the vision is essential, he embodies a sense of mission that manages to inspire everybody around, expressing a profound purpose, a genuine sense of existence (Sinek, 2009). Leaders set the emotional standard of the group, great leadership works through emotions, and if leaders drive emotions positively, they can bring out everyone's best (Goleman et al, 2002). Tjan (2017) affirms that good people inspire others by the values they believe in and by the qualities they have. Admirable, charismatic, naturally credible and persuasive leaders are those who put people first, showing kindness, empathy, collaboration, support, solidarity, generosity and altruism (Wang et al, 2005, Yang et al, 2011). A social movement like WTO tells a new story, and servant leadership with zero coercive compliance plays a key role. Core practices include motivating commitment, risk-taking, shared values articulated as public narrative, inclusive and continual heuristic processes, and accountability for measurable outcomes (Ganz, 2010).

How a person reacts to change depends on the person's confidence about coping with change successfully, on prior experience with change, on self-confidence, risk tolerance, and openness to new experiences (Erwin & Garman, 2010). Resistance to change is natural and inevitable and can be identified at the individual, but at the group level as well (Moran & Brightman, 2000, Bovey & Hede, 2001, Oreg, 2003). Change initiators should listen carefully to the recipients, understand reasons for opposition and accommodate the proposal (Ford et al, 2008). People choose their behaviors

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based on what they think will happen to them as a result, and the thoughts that most profoundly affect behavior are composed of mini-maps of cause and effect, that need to be changed. Resistance to change appears when people think that change is not necessary, feasible or cost-effective, causes personal losses, is inconsistent with existing values, leaders are untrusted, or real benefits are not foreseen (Grenny et al, 2013, Yukl, 2013).

Senge et al (1999) mention the challenges of a change process: initial commitment is almost always limited to a handful of people, so they have to start small and grow steadily, while lack of strategy and a detailed plan can be solved by strongly focusing on the intended results. Grenny et al (2013) suggest that leaders providing a personal example and narrating own experience are a convincing map changer. In order to implement a major change, essential steps are (Kotter 1995, 1996, 2007, Buchanan & Huczynski, 2010, Yukl, 2013), creating a sense of urgency, communicating clear vision of the benefits to be gained (health, sanitation, happiness), identifying supporters and building a coalition for change, annihilating opponents or resistance (ultraconservative culture, lack of resources), educating competences for local agents of change, empowering appropriate mini-leaders to continue the project, and marking the moments of small wins on the implementation road.

Education through communication is the most effective tactic when resistance is based on ignorance or lack of information (Kotter, 1996), especially in conservative communities. Once convinced of the benefits of having a toilet, people often become agents of change. For WTO s projects, education is not enough, facilitation, support and forming positive emotions

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are also needed, positioning the change in people's minds as a new and favorable situation and providing them a superior status (Bovey & Hede, 2001, Yukl, 2013). Change implementation for WTO was the object of a very creative and ambitious strategy: the toilet is repositioned as space of happiness and welfare, object of desire and status declaration: owners are proud, just like owning a Ferrari or a Louis Vuitton handbag. (Social Edge, 2008, World Toilet Organization, 2018).

Breaking taboos about sanitation brought success in convincing millions to change behaviors, gained the attention of the top global media and brought support from companies and governments. Through direct discussions and humor, by motivating early adopters and transforming them in models and endorsers, by providing a personal model of generosity, altruism, and simplicity, Jack Sim has created the first nucleus of adepts and proved small successes, which, as in a Lean process, were then replicated and multiplied. This resulted in a powerful global reach: in 2014, the Indian government and WTO started construction of 110 million toilets, China launched in 2016 a program to build or renovate a total of 100, 000 toilets, in 2013 The UN officially adopted 19 November as World Toilet Day, and each year the World Toilet Summit brings together over 750 delegates from 11 countries (Official WTD, 2012, TEDx Talks, 2015).