

RE-IMAGINING INGO

INCEPTION WORKSHOP

A DISCOVERY JOURNEY OF THE RINGO SYSTEM
MAY 2021



INTRODUCTION

On 8 September 2020, the Reimagining INGOs (RINGO) project was launched to facilitate a system-change process to transform global civil society in response to the present-day challenges within the sector. The RINGO Social Lab has been designed to create the conditions to reimagine and co-create a desirable and plausible future for INGOs. It involves three main segments; discovering, defining, developing and delivering.

On 4 March 2021, RINGO made public its foundational research which captures voices and views from the global south about their perspectives of a reimagined INGO sector. Subsequently, participants were selected from the global civil society ecosystem to join a community in designing and reimagining the sector.

About 50 participants from both the global north and south with representation from diverse organisations, gender, race and ethnicity have committed to collaborate to redesign and transform the INGOs system. The diversity of the participants facilitated intersectoral thinking in the design process. Between March and April 2021, ten closed group discussions (onboarding sessions) were organised for participants to articulate their perceptions, experiences and views.

Following the onboarding sessions, RINGO, in collaboration with Reos Partners, organised an inception workshop from 11 to 12 May 2021. The inception workshop is the first stage in the 'discovering' phase of the process, as presented in Figure 1.

Continuous inclusion of insights from other initiatives and outreach to communicate from the process

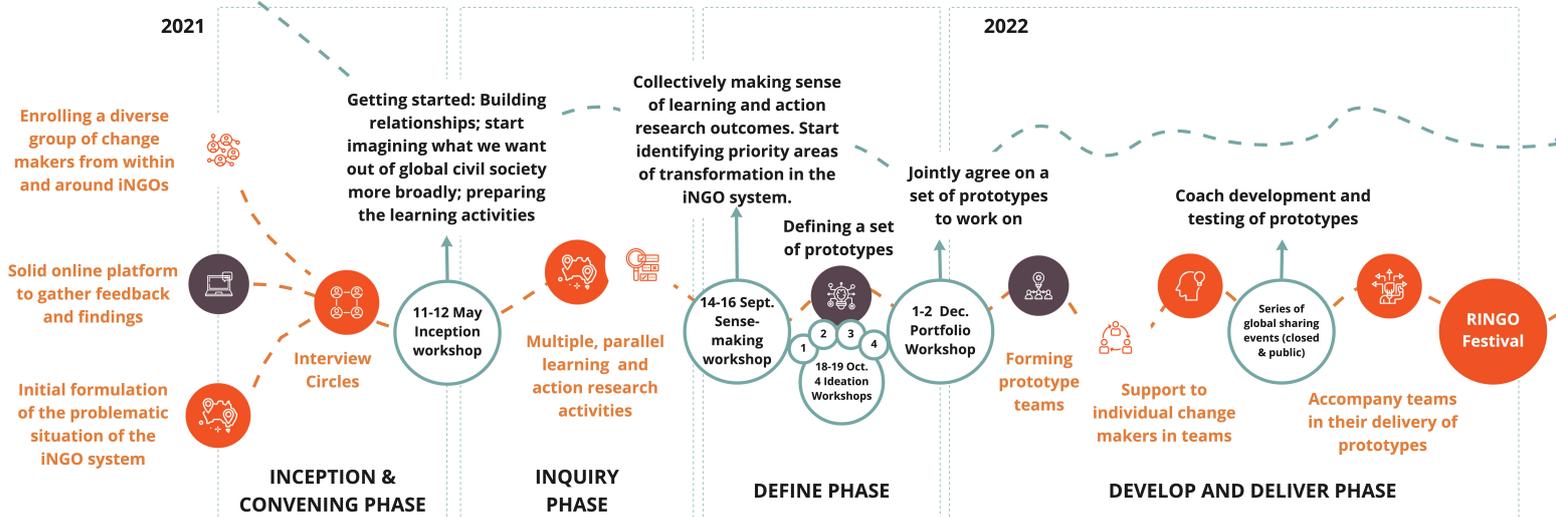


Figure 1 RINGO social lab process

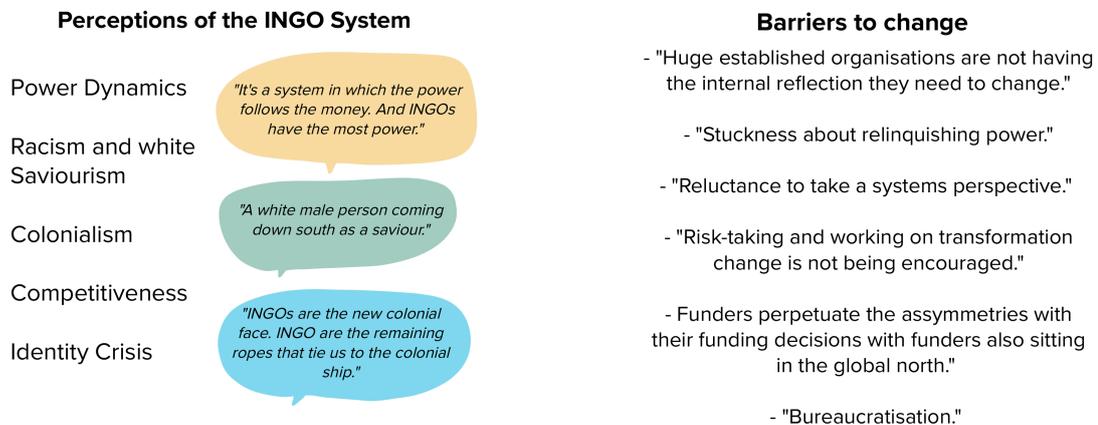
The workshop was organised to:

- Frame the RINGO social lab and the project,
- Design the best way of working together,
- Get started on inquiry, and
- Form inquiry clusters.

This report provides an overview of what occurred during the two days inception workshop. In addition to the overall introduction and conclusion, this report captures "why the inception workshop was organised", "how the inquiry process started", and "the way forward."

WHY THE INCEPTION WORKSHOP

The onboarding sessions reinforced original analysis and research of why the INGO system is perceived to be fragmented. Participants raised issues about neo-colonialism, power dynamics, racism, white saviourism, unhealthy competition, and other issues within the INGOs system that contribute to its fragmented nature. Participants also expressed the following barriers to change within INGOs. Among others, they expressed the following sentiments.



Nonetheless, the participants identified some opportunities for change the RINGO process can leverage on;

- Safe Space: "RINGO provides a safe place to get deeper and address the identity crisis."
- Courage to Change the System: "The opportunity to address the issues from a systemic perspective."
- Opportunities for Cross-Sector Collaboration: "The power of people thinking together – there is some of this, but it's really not easy." "Change can only come from new forms of cooperation."

The inception workshop was created and designed to serve as the beginning of a discovery and inquiry process for the RINGO project based on the feedback from the onboarding sessions and perspectives captured from the global south civil society actors from the survey report. The inception workshop was the start of the inquiry phase from which strategic clusters were formed to begin a journey of mapping out what we need to know to best reimagine and innovate the INGO sector.

HOW THE INQUIRY PROCESS STARTED?

At the beginning of the process, participants were introduced to the logic of the workshop's focus on discovery and inquiry as a foundation for the rest of the RINGO process. Themes emanating from the global south research and the onboarding session were presented to the participants. (see the full list in part 2) This paved the way for the first stage of inquiry-based on the iceberg model as the analytical tool.

Based on feedback from the iceberg process, eight themes were created from the strategic inquiry agenda (see the full list in part 3). Inquiry clusters were formed around each theme as the beginning of a three-month inquiry journey.

This session provides details of how the inquiry process was organised.

PART 1: FRAMING THE RINGO SOCIAL LAB

Participants were introduced to three key features in framing the RINGO Social Lab process.

- To reimagine involves innovation.
- Innovation creates the conditions to work together. It requires using each other's experience and leverages to experiment and test, on-site – in real spaces. To create a collective space for innovation, the lab will,

- Build on participant skills: Skills like listening & dialogue, and empathy for reimagining and innovating needed to build and sharpen.
- Create space to innovate effectively and impactfully: The lab will create the space participant need to know, understand and inquire into.

The innovation process will evolve over time throughout the different phases of the lab.

- To innovate meaningfully needs inquiry.

The inquiry involves finding/ identifying/ putting our finger on our knowledge and understanding about – the knowns, the less knowns, the unknowns, and the differently known – that is - the divergences in the way we know and what we know. The inception workshop focused on getting participants started on creating an Inquiry Agenda. That is - How do we map out what we need to know?

- The INGO is the unit of inquiry.

The INGO sector is the unit of inquiry in this system change process. INGOs are key players within the global civil society ecosystem that has a lot of influence to facilitate transformational change. Therefore, INGOs were selected as the starting point to reimagine what is needed to reform the global civil society ecosystem.

PART 2: INTRODUCTION OF THEMES FROM RESEARCH AND ONBOARDING CALLS

The following five broad themes shown in Figure 2, distilled from conceptual evidence gathering, global south perception survey and onboarding process, were presented to the participants. Each theme was just one lens to see different aspects of the whole system.



Figure 2: 5 Themes from the field

Participants were grouped under the five themes to analyze to understand what needs to be done using the Iceberg model as an analysis tool. The model is a common model in the systems thinking space, to stimulate seeing, thinking, and insight, moving through the different levels.¹ Under each theme, participant explored the following features of the iceberg model shown in Figure 3.

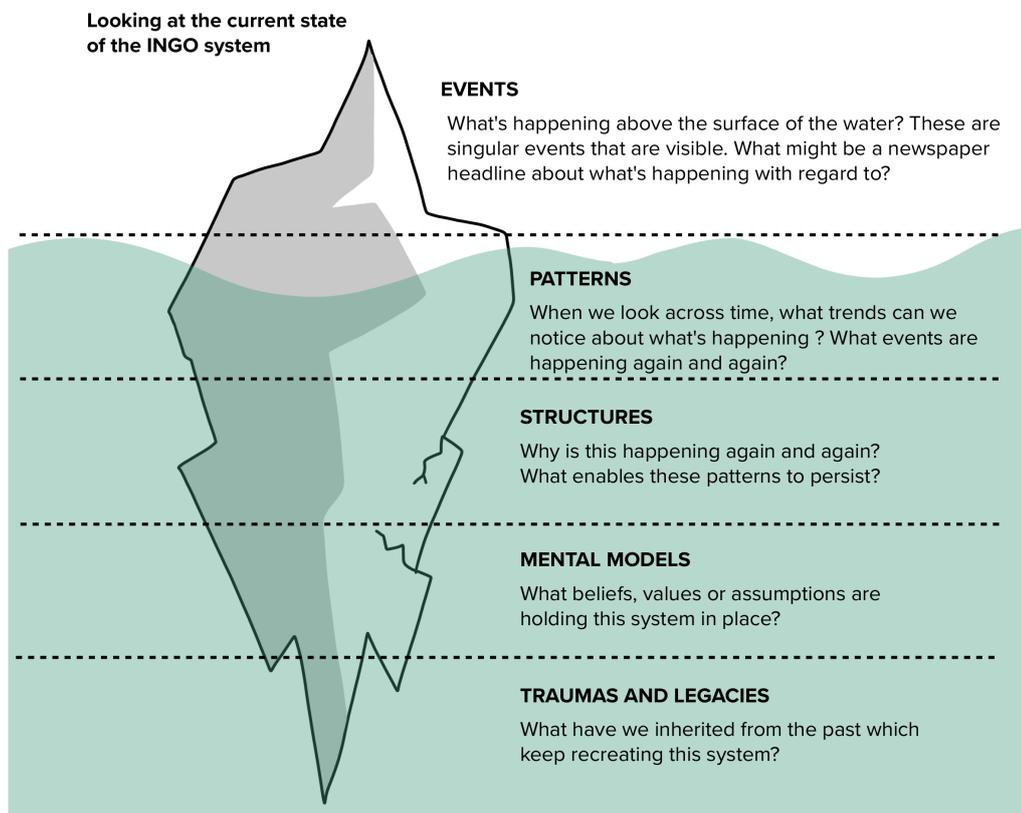


Figure 3: Features of the Iceberg Model

In addition, participants identified from each Iceberg the overall message, what is contested or surprising, and what is missing. Full details from the sessions can be found here.

PART 3: EVOLUTION OF STRATEGIC INQUIRY AGENDA FROM THE ICEBERG

At the end of the first day, the iceberg exercise created a lot of energy and mixed feelings among participants at the workshop. The iceberg exercise created room for participants to be thoughtful and reflective on the five themes. Others, on the other hand, were curious, intrigued, stimulated and energised and confused.

The following eight strategic agendas emerged from participants' detailed analysis based on the Iceberg tool for the five broad themes. These were identified as critical areas that will inform areas in which the INGO system needs to be reimaged.

- Structural Racism
- Patriarchy and Feminist leadership
- Resource Flows
- Incentives
- Solidarity and Collaboration
- Governance and Accountability
- INGO Impact
- Government role

The eight themes from the iceberg analysis were used to set up eight inquiry agenda to be further explored. This gave room for participants to begin the strategic phase of the inquiry

¹ Richard Karash, 'How to see structure', <https://thesystemsthinker.com/how-to-see-structure/>

process. In addition, two guiding questions were formed under each theme to facilitate the discovery journey of the process.

PART 4: CREATION OF INQUIRY CLUSTERS

After the identification of the inquiry agenda, eight clusters were formed representing each theme. The clusters were small groups of participants created to work together on a shared line of inquiry over the coming months until the next workshop in September 2021. Participants voluntarily chose their cluster of preference. The cluster formation ensures that each theme will be further explored and interrogated by a knowledgeable, skilled and diverse group.

At the workshop, the inquiry clusters started their discovering journey in their respective groups. After about an hour session of connecting, defining and identifying areas of further questioning in each cluster, participants came out more energised and enthused to continue the inquiry journey.

4

WHAT'S NEXT?

The inquiry process at the inception workshop was a critical and most important part of reimagining the INGOs system. The clusters formed based on the eight strategic agenda will continue their discovery journey after the inception workshop for the next three months until the next workshop in September 2021.

The final expected product of each cluster ahead of the next workshop will undergo a synthesis process. The hosting team will revise the synthesised version before the next workshop. This version will be presented at the next workshop to identify leverage points for transformational change.

Between June and December, RINGO will be implementing the following activities:

- June to August 2021: Cluster will be working in groups.
- September 2021: RINGO and Reos will organise a sense-making workshop.
- 10 to 12 October 2021: Sub teams working sessions.
- 1 to 2 December 2021: Two half-day sessions.

5

CONCLUSION

The first inception workshop provided an opportunity for participants to understand the reimagining process and begin the discovering journey. Reflections and feedback from the participants at the workshop highlighted an anticipated shared hope and readiness to commit to the objectives of the process. It is envisaged that, by the end of this first inquiry journey, key issues emanating from the clusters can feed into the beginning of the designing phase to facilitate systems change and transformation.