RE-IMAGINING INGO

PLANTING WORKSHOP: SOWING THE SEEDS OF TRANSFORMATION

MARCH 2022

Rights CoLAB

ReosPartners
ABOUT THE RINGO PROJECT

The RINGO Project is a systems change initiative that seeks to transform global civil society to respond to today’s challenges. RINGO is the first globally-coordinated cross-sectoral effort to revolutionise the sector by interrogating the purpose, structures, power and positioning of INGOs. The RINGO Social Lab has been designed to create the conditions to reimagine and co-create a desirable and plausible future for INGOs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the RINGO Planting Workshop, the start of our final ‘develop and delivery’ phase in the RINGO journey.

During this workshop, the Social Lab endorsed an initial portfolio of seven prototypes. With coaching from the RINGO core team and Reos Partners, these prototypes will move forward to be tested in practice. Together, the prototypes address areas of opportunity in our four quadrants of transformation:

1. Accountability, Impact and Measurement;
2. Leadership and Governance;
3. Solidarity and Partnership; and
INTRODUCTION

THE RINGO JOURNEY SO FAR

In March 2021, the RINGO Project made public its foundational research which captures voices and views from global south civil society groups to help us identify, understand and inform what is needed to better respond to the challenges within the global sector.

Soon after, and in partnership with systems change experts Reos Partners, we convened a unique ‘RINGO Social Lab’ of 55 global innovators who represent ‘the system’ of INGOs (including southern partners, funders and INGO leaders). Together, the Lab members participated in an Inception Workshop in May 2021, to reimagine how the global civil society ecosystem should operate and identify critical areas of inquiry. The Lab split into strategic clusters to embark on a shared line of inquiry: to look at what is happening in the system, why it hasn’t shifted (‘stuckness’) and areas of possibility. The synthesis of their findings informed the Sense-making Workshop in September 2021.

This led RINGO to organise ideation sprints and develop the “How Might We” questions. After reviewing the outcomes of the ideation sprints, the Lab were then invited to take forward ideas they felt passionate about and develop them into prototypes. These Idea Carriers received a coaching session to help refine their ideas before presenting them at the Portfolio Prototype Workshop in December 2021. This workshop marked a significant stage of the change process, translating the talking (inception and inquiry during the discovery phase) into doing (creating ideas and prototypes). Members of the Lab joined the Idea Carriers to form prototyping teams, along with strategic allies from the sector. These teams received further coaching in January and February 2022, to help strengthen their ideas and put together prototype proposals which were reviewed by the RINGO Selection Committee.

All these processes enabled RINGO to understand how the project can contribute to systems change and establish areas of opportunity in the four quadrants of transformation: Solidarity and Partnerships; Leadership and Governance; Accountability, Impact and Measurement; and Resource Flows. The Committee put together a portfolio of seven prototypes which collectively address these quadrants. At the Planting Workshop, this portfolio was presented to the Lab for their endorsement.

THE PLANTING WORKSHOP

The Planting Workshop was named as such as it marks the stage in which we sow seeds (the ideas) that we have nurtured in order to produce the fruit that this sector desperately needs to transform its structure, relationships and ways of working. The workshop was held on 2nd March 2022, with participation from the RINGO Social Lab and the RINGO Advisory Board. We welcomed several new members to the Lab who are part of the prototyping teams. The specific purpose of the Planting Workshop was to present the initial portfolio of ideas for prototyping for endorsement in order to move with conviction into the prototyping phase. The overall aim was to help the Lab feel energised about prototyping, clear and confident about their role in this next phase and strongly connected to the collective purpose for transformative change.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The ambition for the Planting Workshop was to achieve:
- Endorsement of an initial portfolio of ideas that collectively reimagine INGOs.
- A set of prototyping teams ready to move into the prototyping phase.
- A set of agreed principles that will serve as a guiding light for the prototyping teams.
- A strong sense of commitment to the next phase of the RINGO Project.

APPROACH – THE PLANTING WORKSHOP AT A GLANCE

The workshop was organised virtually and ran for a period of four hours. The RINGO Social Lab and Advisory Board were taken through five main stages:
1. **Learning by Doing**: Reos Partners led participants through creative and experimental exercises to demonstrate that prototyping requires us to cultivate a mindset of learning by doing.
2. **Sharing the Portfolio of Prototypes**: The recommended portfolio of prototypes was shared and each Idea Carrier (or a representative) gave a short synopsis of their idea, along with an appeal for any additional skills or experience they might still need in their prototyping team. RINGO also proposed a set of principles as a guiding framework for the prototyping process.
3. **Endorsement of the Portfolio:** The Lab was invited to give feedback and voice any reservations about the recommended portfolio of prototypes, and gave their final endorsement for the prototypes to progress to the next stage of the RINGO process.

4. **Forming teams:** Teams were formed around each prototype. The team members established their roles and agreed on next steps.

5. **Influencing:** RINGO led a discussion on how we can be strategic to optimise RINGO’s influence on the system over the next year, and beyond.

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**LEARNING BY DOING**

At the beginning of the Planting Workshop, Reos led the participants through an experiential exercise to help develop the creative muscle, flexibility and fitness needed for prototyping. The activity provided a reminder that most new ideas are a smart and innovative combination of existing ideas.

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**PROTOTYPING REQUIRES US TO CULTIVATE A MINDSET OF LEARNING BY DOING**

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**SHARING THE PORTFOLIO OF PROTOTYPES**

**SELECTION PROCESS**

In January and February 2022, the RINGO core team and Reos Partners provided coaching sessions to the Idea Carriers and the teams of the sixteen prototyping ideas presented at the RINGO Portfolio Workshop. These sessions aimed to help refine and strengthen the ideas to improve their readiness for prototyping. The teams were invited to submit proposals of their ideas.

The RINGO Selection Committee was formed, made up of representatives from the RINGO core team, Reos Partners, the RINGO Social Lab and the RINGO Advisory Board. The Committee met at the end of February 2022, to assess the proposals and decide on a balanced portfolio of prototypes.

**SELECTION CRITERIA**

Each proposal was assessed using the following criteria:
• Relevant? Does it address some of the structural stucknesses identified in the inquiry process? This includes addressing structural racism, patriarchy and colonial legacies.
• Transformative? Does it have the potential to help change the system?
• Right for RINGO? Is this idea relevant to INGO transformation? Does the Lab team have the necessary leverage to progress and test the idea? Can the RINGO / Reos core team support it with coaching?
• Anchored? Is it testable? Either in a specific location or with a specified group of users?
• Energising? Is there a solid team in place? Are there at least 2 or 3 RINGO Lab participants who want to take this forward? Or if not, is there another team of external stakeholders in place with Lab support?
• Tangible? Does it lend itself to creating material prototypes / models?
• Clarity? Does it have a clearly stated proposition as a starting point?

The proposals were also reviewed with the intention that each area of opportunity for transformation was being addressed by at least one prototype. The RINGO Selection Committee agreed to recommend seven prototypes to move forward to the testing stage at this time. The Committee also agreed to consider adding a further two prototypes to the portfolio at a second selection round in eight weeks. Proposals that were not selected and ideas that were not developed enough in time for this round will be given the opportunity to (re)submit proposals.

RINGO is also exploring how to support these ideas that were not recommended in a different form. This could include inviting other organisations and centres for innovations to take these ideas forward. Some ideas that were proposed during the ideation phase are already established to continue outside of the Lab. It was agreed in discussion with these that they have sufficient resources without RINGO hands-on facilitation.

THE RECOMMENDED PORTFOLIO

During the Planting Workshop, the portfolio was presented to the Lab for their endorsement. These are summarised, below.

SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

A NEW APPROACH TO RISK SHARING AND COMPLIANCE MANAGEMENT

Responds to:
• How Might We organise risk sharing and compliance management differently within international development and humanitarian actions in ways that are more effective, trust-based, empowering, and equitable?
• How Might We co-create partnerships of genuine solidarity between international actors and local civil society, where risk is shared and continuously navigated and negotiated by all stakeholders, including funders?

Idea:
This prototype tests whether well designed and facilitated ‘brave’ encounters in a specific context(s) between in-country CSOs, present in-country INGOs and donors can crack open the current system of risk and compliance management, looking at:
1. The incentive system: what is gained for whom, and what is lost for whom from the current system of risk and compliance management, and
2. What immediate or future improvements could be designed so that the system is less transactional and reflects proportionately local needs and risks, alongside donor needs for accountability – and also to support meaningful impact.

The prototype seeks to reimagine the approach to risk-sharing and compliance by working in a specific in-country CSOs, INGO/donor loops, in at least one context to:
• pick out and work on specific parts of the relevant value chain in workshop/brave conversation’ settings, separating out the different types of risks and compliance, and surfacing issues of power and control;
• focus on the middle management layer (which often drives systems to change, is applying own rules in real-time);
• interrogate what risk and compliance requirements are real or imagined, where possibly a lack of imagination, inertia or force of habit is holding us back;
• support people to experience conversations that bring a diversity of thought and look beyond the (Western) managerial approach to managing risks and accountabilities, which is based on capitalist and patriarchal ideologies and tends to ignore the social/cultural.

Based on this, the team seeks to identify different ways to share risks and organise compliance requirements through the entire value chain.
MULTI STAKEHOLDER APPROACH TO CLIMATE JUSTICE TRANSITION:

Responds to:
- How Might We disrupt colonial/traditional perceptions of capacity, knowledge and expertise, rather than perpetuating the narrative of the North doing capacity building ‘to’ southern civil society?
- How Might We actively influence INGOs (internally and externally) to reframe their purpose courageously, embed solidarity and collective civil society power, and restore power to local CSOs?
- How Might We incentivise INGOs to step out of (inappropriate) leadership roles and enable Global South CSOs to enter those roles to enable equitable partnerships?

Idea:
This prototype seeks to understand the most effective process of bringing grassroots organisations to engage from a position of strength and power vis a vis influencing plans and policy reforms needed within a ‘Just Transition’ framework. It will test and develop a more effective partnership model with INGOs (peacebuilding and environment, grassroots organisations and other actors, including the private sector, to help frame the process and purpose of INGOs, where local organisations take the lead in large-scale climate solutions, supported by INGOs. Decisions around climate investment from multilateral banks following COP 26 will be led by local grassroots organisations rather than imposed. We will learn how to negotiate challenges around economics, conflict and the environment.

In the Philippines, there is a risk that climate-friendly solutions could exacerbate conflict dynamics in volatile areas in Mindanao and the Bangsamoro, where most of the climate-affecting investments are to be located. Alert Philippines has previously established a “multi stakeholder group for energy concerns” model in the peacebuilding and environment sectors, alongside the country’s biggest energy producer and distributor, i.e., Aboitiz Power Philippines. The prototype can draw from the experience of this multi stakeholder dialogue process to test what aspects of the engagement model are suited to build a solidaristic multi stakeholder approach to climate justice transition rooted in local, grassroots power.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE
FOR AND BY THE PEOPLE: AN ALTERNATIVE SOLIDARITY MODEL

Responds to:
- How Might We reimagine a new approach and organisational model for international civil society solidarity and action?
- How Might We enable and mainstream a justice and solidarity-based approach that changes the way INGOs think/measure their success and shifting power to local activists and CSOs?

Idea:
This prototype seeks to create disruption and propose a new (adaptable) online/offline solidarity platform model building on indigenous systems and processes. This platform will be owned and driven by local activists. It will turn the current ‘call for proposal’ models on its head by asking donors/INGOs/supporters to respond to ‘reverse calls for proposals’, which lay out the kind of support identified by members of that platform. This platform will give them a common coordination space and voice in articulating their outside needs for support and oblige outsiders to be(come) demand-driven/respond to the realities on the ground.

This platform will be tested in the context of Swaziland* and seeks to set up a demand driven alternative to projectized, and institutionalised ‘solidarity spaces’ dominated and ‘owned’ by INGOs (such as Crisis Action), create space for civic action in an environment where civic space is closed, and secure outside support on the ‘terms’ and based on the needs of local actors (activists, movements and organisations). The prototype challenges INGOs in their role and behaviours towards local actors through articulating a strong and coordinated “demand-side” in the development /international solidarity chain.

*Democracy supporters and opposition groups in Civil Society continue to use the name Swaziland as opposed to Eswatini.
Idea:
The past few years have seen exponential growth in the number of discussions among INGOs, think tanks and funders around how to ‘Decolonise’ the sector. However, the surge in interest has not been met with a corresponding increase in the supply of advisors who can support such processes. This prototype aims to establish a knowledge advisory service or centre made up of activists and advisors from the Global South who would be willing and able to offer their services to stakeholders in the Global North to ‘Decolonise’ their practice and thinking. There will also be a focus on building the expertise and access to the knowledge around the decolonising process, perhaps through the creation of a knowledge centre based in the Global South. There is significant momentum for change within the system right now, which could dissipate if the demand for support is not met with a corresponding supply in services. Moreover, there is a risk that those in the Global South will not guide the decolonising process.

ACCOUNTABILITY, IMPACT AND MEASUREMENT

THE PLEDGE FOR CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

Responds to:
- How Might We design a system that also holds INGOs and donors accountable to the local/national CSOs they support or partner with?

Idea:
The Pledge for Change convenes key INGOs’ CEOs to develop principles and public pledges to decolonise their INGOs and influence the wider aid system. The coalition includes Oxfam, Care, MSF, Save the Children, Plan, Christian Aid and Mercy Corps. The pledges focus on leadership, equitable partnerships and decolonised communications and will be rolled out in June 2022. This prototype is to develop a Southern-led accountability mechanism that shifts the accountability equation and redresses power imbalances in the sector. The progress and success of the model must be defined by accountability led by actors in the Global South. The accountability mechanism for PFC will aim to meet the following criteria:

- Informed by cumulative experience and good practices in collective accountability
- Informed by models of accountability originated and tested in the GS
- Co-designed with GS activists, practitioners and local partners of INGOs
- Housed and managed by a Southern entity
- Possibly include both third-party and peer-to-peer learning and accountability
- Fit for purpose for a coalition that seeks to grow with new signatories

Whilst focussed on the Pledge for Change, this will have broader applicability to demonstrate creative, bottom-up accountability mechanisms and processes.

RESOURCE FLOWS

UNTYING AID TO NORTHERN CSOS

Responds to:
- How Might We decrease the imbalance in civil society funding to assure that a larger share of funding goes to global south CSOs?

Idea:
This prototype involves a high-level policy and advocacy campaign towards donors that contribute to the structural imbalance of CSO funding. According to an OECD study in 2020, 93% of all CSO funding goes to northern CSOs or INGOs, with only 7% going to the Global South. One main cause of this skewed distribution is that many donor countries still have tied or earmarked aid to their domestic CSOs, despite the OECD recommendation on untying aid from 2001. For Global South/local CSOs to access a larger share of funding and strengthen their ownership and power, tied aid needs to stop.

The campaign targets these donors and the forums where they meet (OECD-DAC etc.) to raise the awkwardness of tied aid to domestic CSOs, creating awareness that this is a reflection of structural racism. The aim is to pressure OECD-DAC and the bilateral donors themselves to stop the practice of tying or earmarking aid to their domestic CSOs. The idea seeks to redress bilateral donors’ policies, which set the standards for the entire architecture of the development cooperation sector. It challenges bilateral donors’ underlying structural racism/inbuilt power imbalances. If the campaign is successful and aid to civil society stops being tied to bilateral donors’ domestic CSOs, it would gradually and strongly increase local ownership and power in global civil society.
PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING LEARNING PLATFORM

Responds to:
- How Might We ensure that those most directly affected are in the driver’s seat of INGO policy and practice (e.g. driving agendas) and are not instrumentalised in the interests of perpetuating top-down models of charity?

Idea:
This prototype explores how demand meets supply when it comes to understanding how Global South and North actors can develop alternative mutually beneficial and equitable models of collaboration. This prototype will test a range of participatory grant-making approaches that seek to:
- Disrupt existing hierarchies of power by putting local actors and communities in the driver’s seat - making decisions and leading the agenda, resource allocation and process of engagement
- Enable INGOs to transfer resources without perpetuating problematic power dynamics and for the INGO to become a resource to the community, to be drawn on at their initiative
- Prototype a practical alternative model for INGOs that can be scaled and replicated and challenge existing top-down models of charity

This idea will be tested in Kenya, Ghana and potentially India. In bringing these three PGM experiments together, the prototype seeks to answer a shared set of learning questions that look at how power can be shifted and new models developed that reimagine the role of the INGO. The output will be a body of learning involving CSOs, INGOs, donors in different geographies that resonates with the INGO sector and the wider funding ecosystem that influences systemic change.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Following the presentations of the recommended prototypes, RINGO proposed a set of principles which could provide a guiding framework to the prototyping process.

Over the past months, there have been discussions in the Lab around the need (or desire) to have a clear and agreed ‘vision’ that will guide the work of the prototype teams. As a good reflection of the diversity of the Lab, there were varying opinions: from those who would like to dedicate time to agree on a vision before moving forward; to those who would prefer to get on with the prototypes and allow such a vision to emerge along the way. However, a common ground was found to propose a set of ‘guiding principles’ to accompany the prototypes.

The principles were informed by both internal voices (e.g. Lab and Ringo-Reos team) and external/sector voices (e.g. Women of Colour Group of the Gender & Development Network). They are designed to guide the prototypes and give coherence across the prototypes. They are the principles by which to hold ourselves and the prototypes accountable, and keep the work true to the ambition of being transformational.

The proposed set of principles:
- Antiracism
- Decolonising Aid
- Equitable Partnerships
- Inclusive Communications and Language
- Intersectional Feminism
- Power Shift

The Lab was invited to consider: Are these the best principles to guide the level of transformation that we need? Will they help us break the usual patterns? Will they help us avoid recreating the system we want to change?

There was a general consensus on the adoption of these principles as a guiding framework for the prototype process. RINGO will annotate each principle with a description to ensure collective understanding, and revert to the Lab at a later date for endorsement.

ENDORSEMENT OF THE PORTFOLIO

The purpose of this process was for the RINGO Social Lab to endorse the recommended portfolio of prototypes to move forward to the testing stage.

A general spirit of agreement was sought from the Lab, with an understanding that we may not reach full consensus and assuming that there will be some reservations and some small
corrections that need to be made. A gradient was used to gauge different levels of endorsement of the ideas. The ratings include:

- Wholehearted agreement
- Support with minor reservations
- More discussion needed
- Abstain
- Don’t like but will support
- Serious disagreement

The Lab voted using the Mentimeter tool. Figure 1 below shows the results.

![Figure 1: Results of the poll](image)

There was a broad consensus that the portfolio should be endorsed, however, minor reservations were raised by the Lab:

![Figure 2: Minor reservations raised by the lab members](image)
The RINGO team took time to address the minor concerns raised by the Lab. With regards to the major concern, RINGO analysed the Global South to Global North ratio of participants across all of the prototyping teams, as shown in the below figure 4. The Lab was satisfied with these responses and agreed to endorse the portfolio.

**Figure 3: Serious concern raised by a lab member**

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**Figure 4: Global North to South ratio of participants in RINGO prototyping teams**

**HOW PROTOTYPING WILL WORK**

**RESOURCES**

During the Planting Workshop, Reos introduced the resources that have been created to support the prototype teams:

1. **TIMELINE**: a live document that adapts and evolves with every update
2. **Prototyping GUIDEBOOK**: useful and practical information about the phases to come
3. **Prototyping PLANNER**: a guiding compass and includes suggested paths for moving forward
4. **COACHING** support: each team will have a content coach and a process coach

**TIMELINE**

The **prototyping timeline** is a live document that adapts and evolves with every update. The timeline shows the journey that the prototyping teams will take from March until September 2022. Prototyping happens through a series of experiential learning cycles:

- Experimentation (building and getting feedback);
- Reflection (on the feedback and the testing);
- Conceptualisation (integrating the feedback into an updated version); and
• Experimentation again!

With each feedback cycle, the prototype becomes more innovative, transformative, impressive, unique, context specific, user centred and user friendly.

Throughout the prototyping process, each team will have four Coaching Clinics in which they will receive feedback from their allocated process and content coaches.

In addition, Reos will schedule Creative Gym classes to challenge and help build the creative muscles needed to stay mentally fit during the prototyping phase.

This timeline is building up towards the RINGO Learning Festival in September 2022, where the Lab will have the opportunity to present the story of their prototypes.

**PROTOTYPING GUIDEBOOK**

Created by Reos, the prototyping guidebook is a resource to guide the Lab’s thinking as they strengthen their ideas. Within the guidebook there is an overview of all things prototype, including definitions, process, examples, support for planning and a timeline for the next stages of the RINGO project.

**PLANNER**

The planner will help the Idea Carriers align with their team and communicate with their coaches in an organised way. The planner divides the process into steps to help plan and have visibility on what is important to discuss at each moment. It is meant to be populated by the prototyping teams and constantly updated as the process progresses. There are four steps outlined in the planner:

- FRAME: what is the scope of your prototype
- BUILD: how to build the prototype
- TEST: who will test the prototype, and how and where will this happen
- ACT: what to do next

**COACHES**

Each team will work with two coaches - a content coach from RINGO and a process coach from Reos. The coaches were matched with the prototypes based on content and process expertise and previous exposure to the idea.

**FORMING PROTOTYPING TEAMS**

During this section of the Planting Workshop, the Lab split off into prototyping teams, with new members joining the existing teams. In each team, participants reflected on the following:

- What role can I offer to take on the team? Idea Carrier, Team Member, Critical Friend, Host
- What can this prototyping team rely on me for over the next six months?
- What constraints can I see in the next six months?
- What language differences or time zone do we need to work out?
- What is your first date to meet with the coaches?
- Open discussion about each person’s contribution outcomes, including: What else will we need to succeed with this prototype?

**HOSTS**

Organisational hosts are being identified for each of the prototypes. They will support the teams with coordination, admin, influencing and participation where required, including managing any grants. These will be announced later in March 2022.

**INFLUENCING THE SYSTEM**

RINGO led a discussion on how we can be strategic to optimise RINGO’s influence on the system over the next year, and beyond. Recognising that RINGO is located within a complex existing system, with established power centres, resourcing flows, narratives etc, we need to proactively build towards the impact that we want RINGO to have. We need to influence the system, so that the learnings from our prototypes are taken up, so that reimagined ways of doing things stick, so that behaviours and cultures shift, so that resources follow to new and better practice - and reinforce and incentivise new ways of doing things. Several ideas were presented:

- Develop an intentional and strategic approach for RINGO influencing
- Communicate our emerging insights and learning
- Be confident in our insights and learning, and all take ownership of them
- Work with key players more closely
• Think about emerging leaders, non-formal leaders and influencers within the system
• Don’t start too late! We need to be influencing now

The Lab were invited to help in the following ways:

• Share ideas and engage with the Influencing Strategy
• Think about who we should be seeking to influence
• Connect key players to RINGO
• Write, speak, challenge, echo... to add energy and diversity of voices to RINGO’s communications and add to visibility in the system

Following feedback from the Lab, RINGO agreed to develop scripts that the Lab can use to make their own presentations on the RINGO Project.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

By the end of the Planting Workshop, the RINGO Social Lab had agreed to endorse an initial portfolio of prototypes that collectively reimagine INGOs, approved a set of principles as a guiding framework for the prototyping process, formed teams around each prototype and established a strong sense of commitment to the next phase. The workshop ended on a high note with the Lab feeling energised to start prototyping.

The following activities will be implemented in the next stage of the process:

• **March – April 2022:** Finalising teams and coaches; creative gym class; confirming hosts, budget and fundraising; setting up the prototyping phase using planner; and coaching clinic 1.

• **April – May 2022:** Coaching clinic 2; building the first version of prototypes; testing and analysing feedback and integrating feedback. Opportunity for two additional prototypes to join the portfolio.

• **May – Jun 2022:** Coaching clinic 3, testing and analysing feedback; integrating feedback; and reviewing the process as part of RINGO’s monitoring and evaluation work.

• **Jun- Sept 2022:** Coaching clinic 4; cross-team feedback sessions; prototyping cycle; preparing to share stories from the prototypes.

• **19 – 22 Sept 2022:** Online Learning Festival to share experiences and present stories from the prototypes. (TBC)

• **Dec 2022:** Embedding the prototyping with different stakeholders and testing embedding approach

• **Jan - Mar 2023:** Phase out stage for RINGO.