

# THE CONSTELLATION- MEMBERSHIP STATEMENT



All human communities have the inner strength to envision their own future, to act to realise it, to share what they learn with others, and to develop their solidarity. ***The Constellation dreams of a world where communities take action based on their strengths to realise their dream.***

Our discovery of this human capacity began with HIV. For two decades, large scale progress on this global epidemic was limited to northern Thailand, Uganda and Brazil. In these three countries we discovered that people had begun to address this issue publicly and to recognise that it was theirs to deal with. They took ownership of their

response to HIV. This was the basis of a local response that reduced the impact of the epidemic. It also led to the foundation of the Constellation for AIDS Competence in 2004.

Communities around the world were quick to see that this idea did not apply just to HIV. They began to apply it to other challenges. At the time of writing, communities have used the approach on more than 40 issues in more than 60 countries. For example, neighbourhoods tackle the issue of living in peace, the elderly and youth work hand in hand, migrants work towards their integration, women and men discuss sexuality, people using drugs and caregivers envisage life without addictions.

We now call this approach Community Life Competence.

-----

Our experience has taught us that communities can and do respond to the challenges that they face when they take ownership of those challenges. Communities change themselves: we do not change communities. The change they own is sustainable change.

It is not enough to engage with communities about programmes for them.

It is not enough to consult with communities about programmes for them.

In the Constellation, we seek to accompany the community as it takes the path to ownership of its challenge. We call this path *local response* and we call the methodology that they use the *Community Life Competence Process* (CLCP). Facilitators accompany the community as it applies CLCP with a mindset that we characterise with the acronym *SALT*.

**SALT stands for Stimulate-Support, Appreciate, Listen-Learn-Link, and Transfer-Trust-Team**

-----

SALT guides our actions as facilitators and members of communities. As we strive for community ownership, we consistently ask ourselves:

“What can I do to make the community feel Supported?”

“What can I do so that the community Appreciates its own strengths?”

“What can I do so that the community Learns from its actions?”

“What can I do to Transfer what I have learned from this community into my own context?”

Our facilitators work in Teams, as our belief in collective intelligence is a practice within our community of practitioners.

We transfer the SALT mindset to the groups we work with. We stimulate a candid community conversation in a non-

**The Constellation**

connecting local responses around the world



hierarchical setting where members share and learn together. Every occasion becomes an opportunity to connect, to learn from collective intelligence, and to grow.

We create occasions for communities to share and to learn in order to stimulate community-to-community transfer. This transfer then takes on a life of its own and spreads.

We have found that our approach opens a safe space for authentic “human-to-human” conversation. This conversation makes it easier for people to connect from the heart, to explore their differences and commonalities, and to find and express their individual voices. We have learned that these ways of thinking, being and working surface talents that help us grow to our full potential as individuals and as a group. When this posture has become natural for a community, we notice that a sense of belonging grows and that this leads to increased individual responsibility, collective ownership and sustainability of community actions.

We live in a world where there is no shortage of challenges, whether individual, local or national. These challenges affect us all. If we can realise our capacity to be actors in our own lives, we can also activate our collective responsibility to co-create our world.

Perhaps the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be distinguished by the recognition that the daily actions of billions of individuals are transforming our world. While one part of our response may come from globally coordinated action, another part will come through the decisions and actions of those same billions of humans.

***Is it possible to imagine that this would lead to a world where individuals and communities recognise and respect their common humanity, and live out their full potential to contribute to society as a whole?***



Botswana 2015  
Photo: Ricardo Walters



Belgium 2014  
Photo: Jan Somers

**The Constellation**

connecting local responses around the world

