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The Significance of Structural Innovation for Value Alignment and Social Innovation in Faith-Based Organizations:

Reinventing Organizations to Dismantle Power Asymmetries

Abstract:

The growing literature on innovation in nonprofit and faith-based organizations (FBO) has focused more on what fosters innovation than what happens after the innovation has been introduced. This research explores the significance of structural innovations for equality in two global FBOs engaged in international missions and diaconia. These innovations were motivated by their values and consisted of reinventing Western FBOs as global coalitions where former partners in the Global South became full members with an equal voice and vote. This collective case study draws on analyses from interviews, observations, participatory reflection in focus groups, and document studies to show how these value-driven structural innovations that aimed at dismantling power asymmetries have initiated value-related outcomes such as identity processes and practices, thus aligning with the organizations' ultimate goals and values. They also enhanced learning and innovative capabilities, leading to other types of social innovations and enhanced performance. This study highlights the significance of value-driven structural innovation for FBOs in making a social impact according to their values and for their long-term organizational survival. Based on our findings, we discuss practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

"I think it is the best thing that happened. It allows each
organization to flourish within their own country (…). If we have
the responsibility (…) you are doing the best to advance the
movement. And besides this, it allows members in the alliance to
collaborate in creative ways." (Director of a small national
organization in a global alliance)

1.   Introduction

Intraorganizational attention is considered a key driver for innovation (Eurich &
Langer, 2016) and necessary to increase the quality of existing institutions (Wyller,
2016). Recent research on social innovation and efforts toward a more sustainable
global society emphasize the inner qualities of organizations by giving attention
"from the inside out" (Nilsson & Paddock, 2014). For instance, the worldwide
Inner Development Goals (IDG) initiative arose from a concern about a blind spot
regarding better addressing global challenges. Inner qualities in organizational life,
such as being, thinking, relating, collaborating, and acting, are considered essential
for developing a more sustainable world (IDG, 2021).

In line with these perspectives, the current study draws attention to the inner
qualities and experiences of two global FBOs by exploring what happened when
structural innovation for equality was introduced. The innovations were a response
to an ongoing demographic shift in World Christianity from the Global North
to the Global South, which changes the field in which the two case organizations
operate (Zurlo et al., 2020). However, power in many international FBOs and their
partnerships remains concentrated in the Global North (Jørgensen & Larsen, 2014).
It seems difficult to break these inherent patterns, and the practice field has called
for more innovation to find new ways of partnering (Digni, 2021).

Structural innovation refers to the inventing or reinventing of formal orga-
nizational structures. In the study cases, the structural innovations consisted of
reinventing Western FBOs as global coalitions, where former partners in the Global
South became full members with an equal voice and vote in all decisions, including
matters of policy, strategy, and budget. Because the innovations were driven by
organizational values to dismantle power asymmetries and achieve mutual col-
laboration, they qualify as social innovations. We investigate the significance of
such innovations, since evidence of the links between organizational innovation,
such as structural innovation, and desired outcomes remains weak (Khosravi et
al., 2019).

Previous studies investigating the outcomes of organizational innovation focused
mainly on financial performance (do Adro et al., 2022; Jaskyte, 2020; Reficco et
al., 2021). A recent review found that few studies examined how organizational

innovation affects other outcomes, such as dynamic capabilities or different types of innovation (Khosravi et al., 2019). Further, most existing research on the effect or consequences of organizational innovation was conducted in the for-profit sector. Although studies from the nonprofit sector have investigated outcomes of organizational innovation, most focused on antecedents of innovation and not its outcome (Jaskyte, 2020) – and even fewer address FBOs. Hence, we need more research on the outcomes of organizational innovation and its consequences on organizational practices and performance to explore and develop knowledge of innovation in the nonprofit sector (do Adro & Fernandes, 2022), especially FBOs. This study, therefore, empirically investigates instead of investigated the outcomes of structural innovation. More specifically, its guiding research question is: What is the significance of structural innovation for equality in global FBOs?

This study uses the term "equality" to emphasize efforts to dismantle power asymmetries and establish mutual collaboration in global relations. This collective case study investigates two global FBOs, Muungano and Serikat (aliases), which have invented and implemented new organizational structures and processes that align organizational practice with foundational values. These innovations were significantly new to the organizations and their field and thus qualify as innovations (OECD & Eurostat, 2018). This article zooms in on the significance of radical structural innovation for organizational practice and performance in FBOs, thus contributing to the research on the outcomes of organizational innovation and hence to the field of research on innovation in the nonprofit sector generally.

2. Theoretical Concepts and Previous Research

After presenting the relevant theoretical concepts, we give an overview of previous research on the significance of organizational innovation.

2.1 Social Innovation and Structural Innovation

The concept of social innovation describes new ideas that meet social needs while creating new social relationships or collaborations (Schröer, 2016), and can be categorized according to what is being innovated, by whom, for whom, and the degree of novelty (Cnaan & Vinokur-Kaplan, 2014). Social innovations manifest in changes of attitudes, behavior, or perceptions, resulting in new social practices, including the creation of new institutions and new social systems (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). They can take different forms – ideas, products, practices, models, systems, rules, and regulations – and new organizational forms and changes in social relations,

focusing on rebalancing power disparities (Nicholls et al., 2015). Or they explicitly refer to an ethical position of social justice (Moulaert et al., 2013). Social innovation processes must be social both in their ends and in their means (Murray et al., 2010), underlining the significance of distributed reflexive agency in the social innovation movement: "The most profound social innovations are not solutions to discrete problems. They are disruptions to fundamental social practices and relationships – the regulative, normative, and cultural structures that inscribe systems" (Nilsson, 2019, 284). Such innovations are central in recent social innovation studies (e. g. Howaldt et al,. 2019) having a systemic impact that moves beyond fixing concrete social problems to enhance the innovative capacity of organizations and rebalance power disparities (Nicholls et al., 2015), thus framing structural innovation as social innovation.

Structural innovation means the inventing or reinventing of formal organizational structures. It is a specific type of nontechnological innovation described as part of intersecting concepts such as organizational (Jaskyte, 2020), management (Birkinshaw et al., 2008), administrative (Damanpour et al., 2009), or process-based innovation (Shier & Handy, 2015).

Organizational innovations seek to improve the effectiveness of internal organizational processes, whereas product or service innovations serve external stakeholders (Jaskyte, 2020). Organizational innovation occurs when an organization brings in or implements methods in practices, the workplace, and external relationships that are new to it (OECD & Communities: 2005). Innovation outcomes are the expected and unexpected effects of innovations that can be investigated through – inter alia – qualitative inquiries (OECD & Eurostat, 2018).

Nontechnical innovations, such as structural innovations, have been less researched than product innovation, despite growing evidence of their importance for the performance, progress, and even innovative capacity of organizations (Jaskyte, 2020; Khosravi et al., 2019; Volberda et al., 2013). Our study contributes to this research field.

2.2 Previous Research

Although few studies have investigated the outcome of innovation in FBOs, some have been conducted within nonprofit organizations (NPOs). The summary in Table 1 shows our current knowledge of the significance of organizational innovation.

Table 1 Overview of research on the outcomes of innovation in NPOs

Outcome in focus	Author & year	Core content & concepts	Key findings
General and financial performance	Anwar et al., 2020	Innovation and organizational performance	Process innovation and organization innovation significantly positively influence the performance of NPOs. Product and marketing innovation insignificantly influence performance.
	do Adro et al., 2022	Innovation management models and organizational performance	Five innovation management factors interrelated with learning, strategy, organization, processes, and networks positively impact the performance of NPOs.
	do Adro et al., 2021	Social entrepreneurship orientation Organizational performance	Innovation, proactivity, and the assumption of risk-return positively impact the (financial) performance of NPOs.
	Jaskyte, 2020	Innovations and financial performance	Organizational innovation significantly predicts total assets, total revenues, and long-term financial capacity. Technological innovation did not significantly predict financial performance.
	McDonald et al., 2021	NPO business model innovation. Environmental threats	Successful business models enable the organization to capitalize on innovations, gain or maintain positions of competitive advantage, and generate sufficient revenue to earn a profit or sustain the organization.
	Reficco et al., 2021	Social enterprise Business-model innovation	Business-model innovation transformed a traditional, donation-based NPO into a dynamic, sales-driven social enterprise.
	Zhang et al., 2022	Social capital, social innovations, and organizational performance	Social and organizational innovations positively affect organizational performance.
	Damanpour et al., 2009	Adoption of innovation Service organizations	Adopting innovations of different types may have more positive consequences than continually focusing on one type.
Different outcomes of organizational innovation	Khosravi et al., 2019	Management innovation	Management innovation positively affects organizational renewal and performance through performance outcomes, innovation outcomes, and capabilities outcomes.

Outcome in focus	Author & year	Core content & concepts	Key findings
Capabilities and performance outcomes	Finley et al., 2011	Strategic restructuring, program realignment, and performance	Strategic restructuring and program realignment lead to organizational learning, cultural shift, and process improvement that improved organizational performance and financial sustainability.
	Hernandez-Perlines & Araya-Castillo, 2020	Servant leadership, innovative capacity, and performance	Servant leadership positively influences NPOs' innovative capacity; innovative capacity positively influences NPOs' performance.
	Bernal-Torres et al., 2021	Organizational and social innovation Performance.	NPOs have been innovating to tackle the social problems implicated in their institutional mission. Innovations improve adaption to the environment, the management of social interventions, and performance.
	Choi, 2016	Internal marketing, customer orientation, and innovation Performance	Internal marketing strategy facilitates customer-oriented and innovative behaviors among NPOs and contributes to long-term survival and success.
Capabilities	Eurich & Langer, 2016	Framework conditions stimulating social innovation Innovation management	Developments from enterprise innovation to system and structure innovation may be identified as key drivers for innovation.
Innovation outcomes	Boyd, 2010	Organizational development as facilitator of social change	Public and NPOs can deliver better social outcomes by systematically engaging in organizational development interventions
	Evans et al., 2011	Community change through organizational development	Most organizational changes witnessed are "small wins" that can potentially create the organizational conditions necessary for real transformation in how they practice in the community.
Values outcomes	Elbers & Schulpen, 2015	Organizational innovation Reinventing an international development NPO	The NPO reinvented itself to secure its relevance and survival in a rapidly changing environment. The importance of consistency from analysis to solution to ensure support for the transformation represents a legitimate rationale for change. The organizational transformation involved navigating innovation and tradition.
	Hyde, 2012	A rationale for change Multicultural development in NPOs	The importance of providing a rationale for change. Connecting the change effort to the vision and purpose to inspire participation.

Outcome in focus	Author & year	Core content & concepts	Key findings
	Hyde, 2003	Multicultural organizational development Diversity of staff	The final goal of transforming organizational culture and fundamentally altering the agency beyond staff and program interventions failed.
	Patrikios, 2020	Ideological traditionalism and organizational innovation Religious organizations	The organization's durability implies that the combination of antithetical "soft" transformation (ideological and discursive adjustments) and "hard" restructuring (organizational decision-making processes and administrative forms) changes may be a viable strategy for long-term survival.

The studies in table 1 identify different innovation outcomes, and most focus on performance outcomes. Process innovation and organizational innovation, including business model innovation, have a significant positive influence on financial and overall performance (do Adro et al., 2022; Reficco et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022), while technological, product, and marketing innovation do not (Anwar et al., 2020; Jaskyte, 2020). Some studies report how restructuring and organizational innovations led to improved organizational performance, financial sustainability, and enhanced innovative capacity in NPOs (Bernal-Torres et al., 2021; Choi, 2016; Elbers & Schulpen, 2015; Finley et al., 2011). Innovation management and servant leadership positively influenced innovative capacity in NPOs (Eurich & Langer, 2016; Hernandez-Perlines & Araya-Castillo, 2020).

The review above reveals that internal organizational development and innovation facilitate social change from the inside out (Boyd, 2011; Evans et al., 2011). Management innovation in the non-profit sector has positively affected organizational renewal and performance through performance outcomes, innovation outcomes, and capabilities outcomes (Khosravi et al., 2019). Moreover, outcomes related to organizational values contribute to long-term survival (Elbers & Schulpen, 2015; Patrikios, 2020).

These studies show how organizational innovation in NPOs implies navigating innovation and tradition while pursuing a vision that translates into a clear purpose and a rationale for change (Hyde, 2012). Many studies documented the positive effects of organizational innovation on NPOs and their performance (Bernal-Torres et al., 2021; do Adro et al., 2022, 2021; Jaskyte, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022), whereas others painted a more ambiguous picture (Hyde, 2003, 2012; Jaskyte, 2020). This disparity highlights the need for more research on the outcomes of organizational innovation in NPOs. There is even less research on the outcomes of structural innovation in FBOs, and this study contributes with insights on what significance

structural innovations have for organizational identity, practice, capabilities, and performance.

3. Method and Research Context

3.1 Collective Case Study

We investigated the outcomes of structural innovation for equality through a collective, multiple case study (Chmiliar, 2010; Stake: 2003) of two global Christian FBOs that have conducted radical structural innovations for equality, strategically selected based on this criterion. We aimed to understand the significance of structural innovations. Hence, we explored the outcomes of structural innovations in different contexts, as one case illuminated the interpretation of this phenomenon in the other (Haldar & Wærdahl, 2009), providing a more in-depth understanding than a single case study could provide (Chmiliar, 2010).

3.2 Data Collection

We used interviews, observation, document analysis, and critical group reflections as data sources. We sought stronger validity by triangulating qualitative data-gathering methods from March 2021 until September 2022. The first author conducted 25 semistructured interviews digitally during the Corona pandemic. The participants had different roles in the organizations and came from 16 countries on five continents, providing rich and varied material (see the Appendix for an overview of interviews). We anonymized both the organizations and the informants.

To move beyond the perceptions of the informants as a single data source, the first author did a document analysis of several hundred pages and conducted 53 hours of digital participatory observations, attending online meetings and courses. The material from the other data sources resonated with the interviews.

Further, the first author did a 20-hour consultative process of critical reflection on values and organizational practices over a period of 4 months in one of the organizations, as described in Eriksen and Struminska-Kutra (2022). This collaborative research design provided us with insights into the work conducted while facilitating the ongoing effort of organizational and social innovation in that organization (Hampel et al., 2017). The approach and research process are visualized in Figure 1.
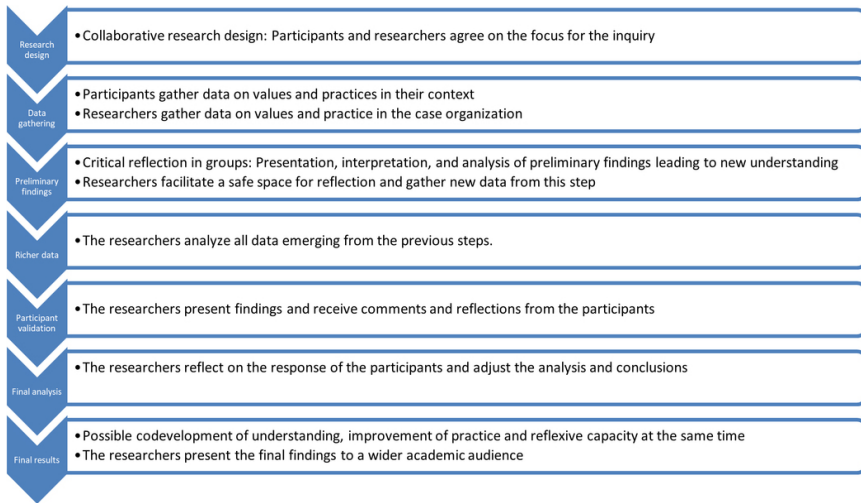
Figure 1   Collaborative research process.

3.3   Data Analysis

The different methods of data gathering yielded empirical material consisting of several hundred pages of documents, transcribed interviews, and field notes for analysis. The first author initially coded the material, identifying those parts relevant to the scope of this study. Then, both authors independently noted interesting and important aspects in the transcripts and developed the initial data coding. We performed thematic analyses and systematic coding of data (Braun & Clarke: 2006) using NVivo. After the initial and independent coding, the two authors discussed and refined the preliminary coding and categories in three analysis workshops, emphasizing identifying and capturing different aspects of outcomes of the structural innovations. In line with Locke, Feldman, and Golden-Biddle (2016), we treated coding as the starting point rather than the endpoint and derived the questions from the coding process. Questions such as "How does a new structure actually facilitate learning and innovative capacity?" and "What tensions exist between the internal organizational dynamics and their social aims?" were derived from the first phase of coding.

In the next phase, we further developed our coding and joint categories, discussing first-order concepts (coding) and second-order themes (categories) to end up with four aggregated dimensions (third-order concepts). We also used theories and literature on organizational innovation outcomes to understand the empirical material, going back and forth between empirical data and theoretical framework, backtracking and checking the material, until we were satisfied with our justifica-

tion of the informants' experiences (Rinehart, 2021). These processes of oscillating between data and the literature signal the use of an abductive approach (Bryman, 2012).

3.4   Participant Validation

To strengthen the validity of our findings, the first author presented preliminary findings to the participants (Lindheim 2022), whose reflections and responses enabled additional analysis. We also presented the preliminary findings to other practitioners, both to evaluate their relevance for the practice field and to make an impact, as called for by Hampel et al. (2017). Follow-up interviews further explored issues before the final analysis, contributing to building a robust analysis that facilitates the transferability of our findings.

3.5   Ethical Considerations and Methodological Limitations

The Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) approved this research. The participants were informed of the aim of the study, the intended use of the data and the confidentiality of information and were told that participation was voluntary. A critical reflection of this study concerns how the Corona pandemic forced us to gather most data digitally, in which nonverbal communication was limited compared to physical meetings. A further limitation is that the interviews were conducted in English, although this was not the informants' mother tongue. However, all informants were accustomed to speaking English and interacting digitally. To avoid misinterpretations, we conducted participant validation meetings; the response confirmed that our perceptions were in line with the understanding of the informants. The first author, who did the data-gathering, had previous knowledge of the field and to similar types of organizations being investigated, but had no formal role or relationships to any of the case organizations. This previous knowledge of the field was helpful in understanding the context. The second author had some knowledge of the field and context but was not involved in the actual data gathering of the individual interviews.

   In such a collaborative research process, some challenges must be navigated regarding the time it requires from informants, power asymmetries, and the possibility of losing the researchers' critical distance (Eriksen & Strumińska-Kutra 2022). Concerning the time spent, the informants expressed that participating was relevant and beneficial for them, as illustrated in this quote from one of the global leaders in Muungano, summarizing their takeaways from the consultative process:

What emerged a few times over the course of these days was the importance of values, and that I wondered whether it would be worth revisiting our values. I mean, we have core values in writing, but there are also values that actually practically shape what we do. Revisit those values and think about them from the point of view of collaboration. And we ask ourselves, what would values be that would truly help us? For example, one thing that came to mind would be to say something like "money shouldn't be the driver for collaboration." And then commit to holding ourselves accountable to actually living those values and learning what they mean.

Regarding the elusive and ever-present power dynamics in human interaction, it is reasonable to assume that the power inherent in the researcher role was somewhat balanced out as most of the informants held leadership roles in their respective organizations. As for critical distance in analysis, bringing in a second author contributed to upholding the researchers' critical distance. We believe we navigated the challenges related to collaboration research.

3.6   Research Context

The FBO Muungano was previously structured as a centralized, hierarchical, Western-led organization with a head office in the Global North directing a variety of country offices, partners, and affiliates. In this international structure, only some founding organizations had voting rights; most others, namely, younger organizations from Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America, had no vote. In the new bylaws, Muungano reinvented itself as a polyphonic and polycentric global alliance of locally embedded, self-governing organizations with equal voices and votes, united by common values, visions, and community relationships.

Serikat transformed itself from a classic set-up, with European FBOs forming and supporting partners in Africa and Asia, to a communion of churches where former receiving partners became full members and owners of the organization. They intentionally aspired to become a communion in which members grew together in worshipping, learning, serving, communion, and striving for justice in a world torn apart. This structural innovation included a new constitution providing all members with equal voice and vote, and giving African and Asian members the majority in both the General Assembly and the international council, which decides on all key issues such as policy, strategy, and budget, even if the financial resources still primarily come from Europe.

4. Findings

Findings show four different outcome dimensions of value-driven structural innovations in global FBOs, based on data analysis. Figure 2 shows how the aggregated outcome dimensions that emerged from the data structure of first-order concepts and second-order themes. Together, they portray the significance of the structural innovation for equality in the two FBOs.

4.1 Value Alignment

The value-driven structural innovations aiming at dismantling power asymmetries enabled organizations to practice their value of equality and led to new forms of power distribution. This is illustrated by increased diversity among staff and deciding bodies, a strengthened feeling of equality among members, a shift in mindsets, and a new organizational identity described below. However, remnants of the old mindset of givers and receivers and the power asymmetries related to colonial history and global financial inequalities clearly lingered in organizational practice and relationships, even if the formal structure provides an equal voice and vote to all.

Structural innovation in Muungano established a single membership category, providing each organization with the same formal vote, which clearly signifies the formal sanction of equality among the members. Despite differences in size, financial resources, organizational capacity, and history within the movement, all members received equal voice and participation.

The structural innovation in Muungano renewed the organizational identity by leveling the playing field for equal participation and exchange among all member organizations, whether new small ones in West Africa and South-East Asia or large ones in North America. The National Director in one organization in Latin America expressed the new situation thus: "People in the alliance give voice to everyone. We feel equal because we have the right to give our opinion, and we are heard. People listen to us, and that is a good experience."

The informants underline that the new structure enables them to live out their organizational values in practice and work in alignment with their ultimate values, which, in both FBOs, are conceptualized as God's purposes. As a member of Muungano's global leadership team states: "The innovation isn't just to keep going. It's to try and, in some way, keep up with God (…). It's this whole idea of aligning ourselves with God's purposes."

Faith and spirituality are also central to organizational identity and practice in Serikat. Members acknowledge that working and living together facilitates learning together in ways that require a willingness to be transformed and renewed while partaking in God's mission in ways that change their lives and work. The structural

FIRST ORDER CONCEPTS

- Diversity in staff
- Leaders and boards represent global church

- Equal rights, participation, and exchange
- From partners to members
- Polyphony and polycentrism
- New structure providing equal voice and vote

- New structure providing equal voice and vote
- Align with Gods purpose

- Developed identity and ownership
- Personal identity

- Contributor not only receiver
- From task to relationships
- Realize local contributions

- Givers - receivers
- Some feel they lost in this process

- Deeper conversations regarding funding and reporting
- Develop statements and terminology together
- Disturbance, reflection, and deep learning
- We are learning in this journey how to do things better

- Serendipitous actions
- Learning in unintended ways

- Innovating for equality must be implemented in all aspects of organizational practice
- It takes time to implement the innovations for equality

- Administrative routines
- Budget
- New models of local funding
- Reframing how to measure progress

- Mutual partnership
- South - South partnership
- Supporting each other and collaborating

- Leaders as reflective practitioners
- From directing to empowering
- Some miss more operational support

- New way of conducting conferences
- New way of performing key task
- New way of working
- New ways of sending people
- Streams of participations

- Numbers of project increased

- Increased financial contributions from African and Asian members

SECOND ORDER THEMES

Increased diversity

Equality

Aligned with values and God's purposes

New organizational identity

Shift in mindset

Remnants of old thinking and practices

Learning and innovative capability

Serendipitous actions, unintended learning, and consequences

Gradual outliving of the innovation that is implemented

Administrative innovations

New ways of collaborating

Management innovation

Organizational innovation

Increased goal achievement

Financial contributions

AGGREGATED DIMENSIONS

Value alignment

Enhanced capabilities for learning and innovating
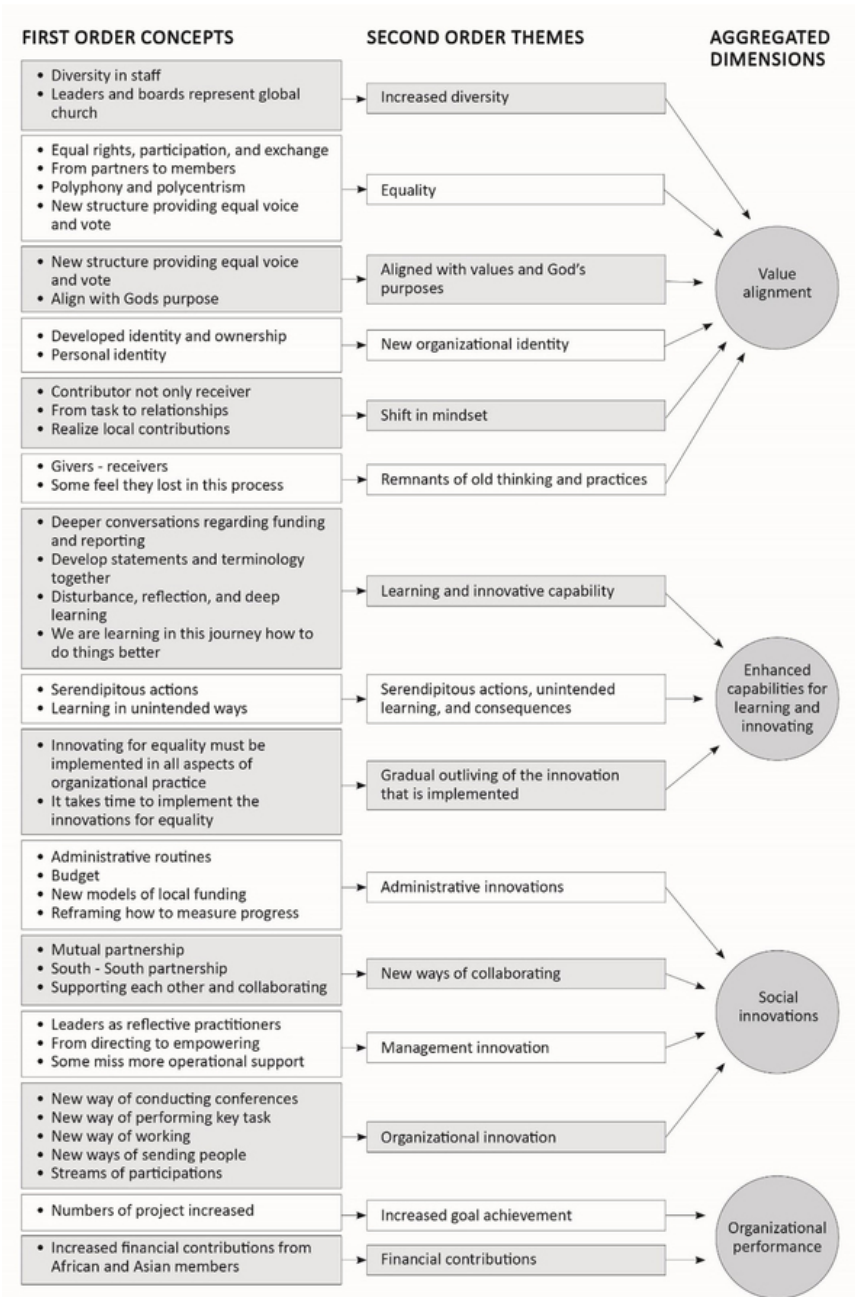
Social innovations

Organizational performance

Figure 2 Data structure from the analysis of the significance of structural innovations for equality in two global FBOs.

innovation helped them align their organizational practice with their foundational values.

A shift in mindset has been expressed and enhanced by the structural innovation providing equal voice and vote for all members in both organizations. The National Director in one of Muungano's African member organizations expresses this shift thus:

> Things have changed. We have the confidence, we have mutual respect. It's highly decentralized, but it used to be centralized. So it is us who are making the alliance, is not one part from the Global North telling us what to do. So, I fully feel very comfortable with the status and the seat that we have. We are the contributors. So, it was like, you know, we were like the receivers.

An Asian leader in Serikat describes the shift in these terms:

> The relation is the North is always in the center, and the South is the object. But now it is different. We all are subjects. We help each other so that I think that the internationalization that is the beginning of this changing of paradigm.

Even if African and Asian leaders confirm that the structural innovation has led to more equality and a new organizational identity and mindset, the material also shows remnants of old thinking and practices, especially regarding bilateral project collaboration including funding from the Global North:

> To be honest, in the beginning, even after the Serikat International, and even today, there were people who thought we are givers. We are your donors. We are your donors. So, we are here to give you. And who wants to dictate what to do. And this could be a danger, but so far, I see this danger reducing. (African leader in Serikat)

Although the challenges in the South-North relations have received the most attention, there were also some indications about challenges in South-South cooperation, such as culture collisions illustrated by the following quote:

> In a culture that is so patriarchal, for example, the way our systems and our values come, they will turn again to equity and equality is that we always asking for women. Where are the women? We all know who is speaking. Why is not the woman's voice being heard? What is this woman saying? What is the female thing and just not just on gender issues, but just on all things that are that are relevant and important? (South-south worker in Serikat).

Despite these challenges, the outcomes of the structural innovation include the alignment with, and increased living out of, the foundational organizational values of equality in terms of mutuality in collaboration and reduced power asymmetries. In spite of remnants of the old mindset of givers and receivers, establishing equality in formal structures has facilitated new decision-making processes and changed how people see themselves and others. The organizational identity has changed, and diversity has increased among the organizational members, staff, and board, sometimes causing tensions as different voices contribute to the conversation, as we will see in the next section.

The structural innovations dismantle power asymmetries and enable the organizations to practice their value of equality in new forms of power distribution.

4.2   Enhanced Capabilities for Learning and Innovating

The value-motivated structural innovations nurtured other, indirect outcomes: new structures implemented to align organizational practice and structure with organizational values. They also facilitated and enhanced organizational capabilities for learning and innovating, as described below and illustrated by quotes from the data material. When diverse members were given a voice and vote, different perspectives came to the fore, resulting in transformative learning. In Serikat, they stress that learning jointly means overcoming the dichotomies of "us" and "them." This is illustrated in the following quote from a European leader who sees disturbance in her thinking as one of the benefits of the structural innovation:

> Something that is completely unexpected. Now, I see somebody else, and you say something that sounds very strange and opposable, maybe. And then he explains to me from his life story, maybe why he said he thinks like that. And then, all of a sudden, I see it in a different light and relate my own to what he said. And from then on, I can never, without hesitation, formulate, as I thought before my own conviction, which I thought was valid for everybody (…) I think that this disturbance that comes with it in the end comes as gain, as richness. Discussions become deeper; the way together becomes more intense. And that is, in the end, it's the richness.

This disturbance and change of perspectives facilitate learning together, and this capability for learning is one of the outcomes of the structural innovation in Serikat. Such deep learning does not come easily or without conflict and tension, but it enhances the organizational capacity for learning from and deep understanding of different situations and attitudes. As another European leader said: "This can lead to confusion, also to conflict, but first and foremost to a widened and deepened perception of situations and of own attitudes and actions."

Muungano established a decentralized global organization where all members have equal voice, thus enabling a more equal exchange of views, thoughts, and experiences. As one global leader says:

> But today, in collaborative discussions, new ideas come to the fore. We realize that, by thinking, praying, discerning, and working together, we learn more of what God intends for our mission and for organizational health. To me, that is a huge benefit of multiple organizations across the globe speaking into each other's lives.

In Muungano, it is realized that structural innovation is central to enhancing the conversations that propel learning and innovation. It is underlined that structures must be adjusted and fit for purpose and ongoing developments within the organization and its context, and that flexible structures play a role in facilitating learning and organizational innovation in changing contexts. In this process of learning together, it is expressed in Serikat that "everyone learns, in intended and unintended, often surprising ways."

In Muungano, the serendipitous element in learning and innovating is also recognized: Some things they do are intentional, and others are not, including as related to the outcomes of the new structure. Members were intentional in innovating their structure to align their organizational structure with their values. However, while pursuing equality and a polycentric structure reflecting developments in World Christianity and their new mission paradigm, they also established a structure that enhanced learning and innovative capacity.

Paradoxically, even as an increased capability for learning and innovating is observed in both organizations, the data also show how long it takes to fully implement the new mindset and let the values driving the structural innovations permeate practice. Although the new organizational reality is already formally established, material from both documents, interviews, and digital observations show that it is not yet fully implemented in real organizational life and practice. For instance, in Serikat, much discussion has recently occurred regarding experienced challenges of internationalization and equal partnership expressed in a formal document to the international council. However, even in that self-critical document, the authors acknowledge that the organization is progressing toward value alignment as members continue to learn and innovate for equality in a world still plagued by prejudice and injustice.

These findings show that expressing values of equality in organizational structures and living them out in organizational practice propels and enhances the innovative capability of organizational members. This innovative capacity, in turn, yields new social innovations, as described below.

4.3   Social Innovations

The increased capability to learn and innovate described above resulted in multiple organizational innovations regarding routines, budgeting, managing, reporting, and collaborating as products of the organizations' efforts to align practices and values. Some of these innovations are described below and illustrated using examples of quotations.

Unsurprisingly, many administrative innovations related to the issues of money, funding, budgeting, and reporting, as the question of money and financial inequality strongly influence the collaboration between members who used to see each other in terms of donors and receiving partners. In Serikat, they realize that finances flow in all directions today:

> Churches in the North must be careful not to persist in old self-images of "givers" versus "takers" – they could be badly mistaken. Real flows of money that do not go from the North to the South are often not documented in current accounting systems and thus not made known. It is different in a community. Everyone is a giver and a taker, and new forms of documentation emerge for this (…). So, we have to rethink whether we can make the non-budgetary contributions visible in the budget system. (Member of the management team in Serikat)

From observation data we also know how reporting on the methods of raising and managing funds as well as using them in program activities are essential for trust to grow between partners across the so-called Global North and South divide. Structural innovation facilitates new ways of operating that include process and service innovations, as expressed in an annual report of Serikat:

> The fact that Serikat cultivates the idea of a communion and is more than a classic aid organization means that our connection to members is unlike that of almost any other mission. This allows us to work and support each other at a level of community that large organizations hardly ever achieve. We know what moves our members and where their needs are because our members are also a part of Serikat.

In Muungano, there has been a shift toward having local member organizations and workers initiate, plan, and execute most of the work that expatriate experts used to perform. For them, this represents a profound shift and process innovation that correlates with changes in World Christianity as FBOs increase in the Global South and decline in the Global North. This process innovation catalyzes more local ownership of the projects and ensures better acceptance and diffusion of the results

of projects conducted. The local ownership has traditionally been a challenge and weakness of projects conducted by foreign experts for local communities.

Muungano has invented and conceptualized new modes of participating and collaborating in the alliance. Organizations contribute in one or more of seven participation streams that facilitate meaningful ways of integrating and acknowledging the different contributions from very diverse member organizations. This innovation confirms the equality of different organizations even if their mode of participating may be different. Serikat has developed a South-South partnership, while Muungano has developed the concept of "third table" or "Mezas," where different organizations in a region or across regions gather to discuss and reflect openly, as reported in a newsletter: "This is the first time I have been in a meeting with North Americans where we could negotiate. They normally just dictate to us – 'This is the way it is going to be.'"

Many examples of management innovations in Muungano show the organization has reinvented itself from a hierarchical structure to a polycentric alliance with new modes of governing:

> So, we don't rely on one central influence, usually in North America or some other strategic place where the headquarters is and where everything is thought out and then implemented. There are many centers of influence, and it will come out, it will pop up where there is visionary leadership and initiative. (A member of the global board and Director of a national organization)

The global leadership team in Muungano is thus focusing on promoting clarity of vision, building unity of commitment within the alliance, and facilitating national reflective leaders who can lead in their own context. As this Asian leader said:

> In the alliance, we no longer just look for instructions from the West and the US on policies we would implement. Now, in the alliance effort, there is freedom to consider your own vision and be led locally because you have your own local leadership and your local board.

This new way of governing opens a space for freedom and enables innovation. As a member of the global leadership team stated, "There's much more freedom within the alliance to innovate."

However, this polycentric and decentralized structure also faces challenges. Some global leaders ask how they can lead when they cannot direct national self-governed organizations; others point to tensions related to where the global leadership directs its attention. Another tension relates to the emphasis placed on being reflective practitioners informed by a global movement. Some think this is too abstract and

theoretical, taking time away from doing the actual work, and asking for more operational support, directions, and guidance from the alliance rather than mere spaces for reflection and learning together.

Despite such challenges, this collective case study shows how the structural innovation of equality enables a diverse set of organizational innovations with a social aim, such as administrative innovations, management innovations, and new ways of collaborating. Further, the described innovation outcomes facilitate performance outcomes, as described below.

4.4   Organizational Performance

The data indicate performance outcomes in both FBOs. One example from Muungano is the increased number of projects because of the efforts of organizations from the Global South and the local freedom they have to experiment and collaborate with other organizations. Another is that Muungano has reframed how to measure progress, moving from measuring results to emphasizing the effects their project results may have on individuals and communities.

Muungano has seen strong growth in the global alliance of the more than 100 organizations that compose it, especially in the Global South. The structural innovation that facilitated their membership in the alliance has enabled this growth:

> Among those who are newer organizations, that means from the Global South, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, it's just growing, and it's going to continue to grow with personnel and with projects (…). So, it has increased, even increased dramatically. The way of working has changed, and there are many more players. (Member of the global board)

Muungano's new way of conducting projects, where locally embedded organizations drive the process, both enhances the number of projects and increases the reception and diffusion of their results. It achieves it organizational effect goals and does not just produce result goals in the project. This positively influences its ability to achieve its ultimate goal even if progress is hard to measure:

> Whether the goal is met or not, we can celebrate it because it's done so much good things for us on this journey; we've learned new lessons with the attitudes we've learned, new values, and principles. The movement has grown, and more and more organizations are coming forward and getting involved. (Member of global leadership team.)

We also see outcomes related to financial performance. In Serikat, most income still comes from European members, but the financial contributions of African and

Asian members are growing. One story illustrates this shift in mindset and shows how contributions from southern partners have increased. In July 2021, Germany was hit by unprecedented floods, causing huge damage and loss of life. In response, member churches in Africa and Asia raised and sent money to support the relief work in Germany. This outcome shows that the risk the founding partners in Serikat took when giving up power to let African and Asian members have a majority vote in decisions on strategy and budget did not lead to mismanagement of funds, as some critics had feared, but to increased ownership and financial contributions from the Global South. Innovation involves risk, but, in this case, it led to increased performance.

In sum, we see signs that the new innovative structure of equality implemented in two different FBOs yielded four different categories of outcomes: (a) living out of values and practice in line with the value of equality, (b) an enhanced innovative capability manifested in a diverse set of (c) new organizational innovations, which influenced (d) organizational performance, as illustrated in Figure 3.
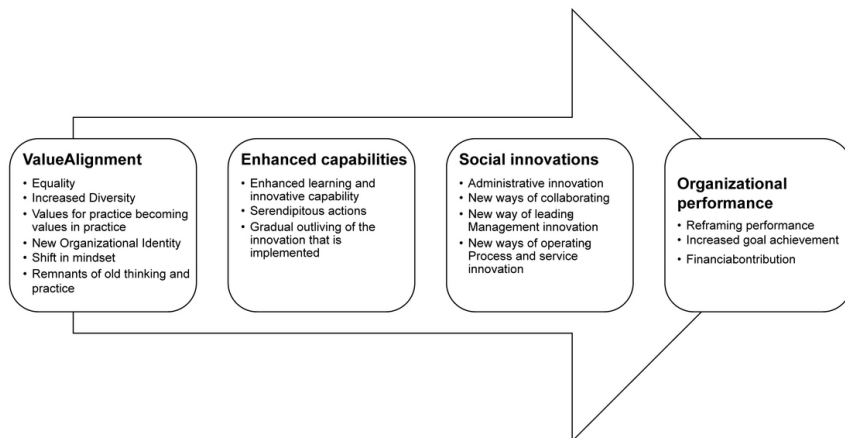

Figure 3 Significance of structural innovation for equality in FBOs.

5.   The Significance of Structural Innovation for Equality in FBOs

This study explored the significance of structural innovation in FBOs. Findings show that the innovation of more democratic structures in the FBOs yielded intended and valued outcomes such as processes and practices aligning with the organizations' ultimate goals and values. Three other categories of indirect out-

comes were observed: learning and innovative capabilities, new organizational innovations, and improved organizational performance.

5.1 Structural Innovation Toward Value Alignment

Even if remnants of the old mindset of givers and receivers remained, equality was established in the formal structure, in the decision-making processes, and, increasingly, in how people looked at themselves and others. The organizational identity changed, and the diversity in staff and deciding bodies increased – sometimes challenging not only Western hegemony in decision-making but also hierarchy and gender roles.

This enabled the intentions of structural innovation to be achieved: The organizations became more aligned with their values, and values as ideals *for* practice have increasingly been performed as values *in* practice (Askeland & Aadland, 2017). The organizations did not innovate for the sake of innovation or to improve financial performances, as has been the case in most previous studies on the outcome of innovation in NPOs. Rather, we argue that the organizational innovations were value-driven as specifically equality motivated and guided them. Their beliefs and values gave the organizations a rationale for change, and value alignment resulted from the innovation. As the structural innovations helped to link everyday practices with the organizational purpose, one could conceptualize them as a form of values work (Askeland et al., 2020), infusing the organization with values (Selznick: 1984). This is in line with other studies implying that such combinations of "soft" value vitalization and "hard" restructuring may be a valuable strategy for long-term organizational survival for FBOs (Finke, 2004; Finley et al., 2011; Patrikios, 2020).

5.2 Enhanced Capability for Learning and Innovating Contributing to Social Innovations

It seems that, when the values of equality are institutionalized in organizational structures and lived out in organizational practice, one outcome is enhanced innovative capability. The new structure gave everyone a voice and accelerated creative tensions and reflections on practice and values in safe spaces that enabled continuous learning together and increased and sustained the organizations' innovation capabilities. These ongoing group reflections facilitated new types of innovations, which were also important in leading to the structural innovation of equality.

This is a clear finding in the data and highlights the significance that value-driven structural innovation can have for innovative capability in FBOs. It is a way social innovation can be stimulated and nurtured (Eurich & Langer, 2016), especially in mature organizations where the need to innovate can be discouraged by long-existing bureaucratic procedures (Vinokur-Kaplan & Cnaan, 2014)

However, not all structural innovation leads to more innovation. Hierarchical structures and power distances that limit knowledge sharing and synergies hinder innovation (Cernikovaite & Lauzikas, 2011). As Muungano reinvented itself, moving from a centralized hierarchy to a global alliance with locally embedded self-governed organizations, it created a structure that enhanced experimentation and innovation. This innovative structure was not its explicit goal; it intentionally took a risk and gave up control and power to enhance equality by aligning organizational structure and practice with foundational values and theological convictions, but not innovation as such. The material clearly shows, however, that the innovative capacity it developed while innovating its structure and the mindset behind it was enhanced in the new structure, where everyone has a voice and the local freedom to experiment in their context while remaining informed by the exchange and perspectives of a global alliance. This finding is not highlighted in previous research on the outcomes of organizational innovations in NPOs and is an important contribution of this study.

The increased capability to learn and innovate resulted in social innovations regarding routines, budgeting, managing, reporting, and collaborating that, in different ways, contributed to efforts to align organizational practices and values. We also saw process and product innovations that furthered organizational goals. Since these innovations share a social purpose, they are social innovations. Thus, we see the significance of structural innovation in catalyzing more social innovations in FBOs.

5.3 Improved Performance as an Outcome of Structural Innovation

Findings from this study show that structural innovation enhanced innovative capability that manifested itself in different innovative ways of working and delivering services, which, in turn, influenced organizational performance in the two FBOs. Although the data are too limited to allow conclusions on either hard performance outcomes or causes and effects, the findings show that projects increased in number, and informants reported better reception and use of their services and products. This outcome results especially because of the efforts of organizations from the Global South and the local freedom they have to experiment and collaborate with other organizations. Another clear finding is increased financial contributions from partners in Africa and Asia to the common work in Serikat, which is in line with previous research mainly focusing on outcomes of innovation in NPOs in financial performance (do Adro et al., 2021, 2022; Jaskyte, 2020; McDonald et al., 2021).

In sum, structural innovation for equality in two FBOs yielded value-related capabilities, organizational innovation, and performance outcomes, as described in the introductory quote from a national director in Muungano. The structural

innovation and organizational innovation outcomes share a social purpose and are thus regarded as social innovations.

These FBO innovations are closely related to community development (Eriksen & Leis-Peters, 2022). Living out equality not only in the organization but in a community includes reciprocity between the givers and receivers there. This is called conviviality, which means "living together" in diversity and reciprocity, and is a core concept for community development (Addy, 2022). When FBOs start from within by implementing structural innovation for equality, the value of equality is practiced from within them in different multicultural contexts. This starting point may contribute to conviviality, where people live together in diverse communities. Thus, global FBOs can be regarded as laboratories of diverse communities or, as one Serikat leader puts it:

> I think it's just putting into practice ecumene, the whole basic idea of human ecumenical. We all belong together in this world (…). I think Christianity knew that all people belong together from the beginning on, and now is a time to put it into a new kind of praxis.

6.   Concluding Remarks

The findings presented in this study show how value-driven structural innovation led to value alignment and increased innovative capacity that improved organizational performance, thus showing the significance of structural innovation for cultivating social innovation.

The findings underline the importance of aligning organizational structures and practices with organizational values so that the change an organization aspires to create in its surroundings permeates outwards from the organization itself. This way, external social innovations emerge from internal organizational values and practices. This correlates with previous research on how organizational innovation can foster an organization's social impact (Boyd, 2011; Evans et al., 2011) and perspectives on expressive organizing, which emphasize that social innovation originates from the inside out (IDG, 2023; Nilsson & Paddock, 2013). The findings also support a more systemic view of social innovation moving beyond fixing one concrete problem at a time to transforming attitudes, behavior, or perceptions, resulting in new social practices, including the creation of new institutions, new social systems (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014), and organizational forms rebalancing power disparities (Nicholls et al., 2015).

The structural innovations explored in this study are examples of social and organizational innovations as they share a social purpose, including system-level

thinking and complexity in search of ways to increase innovative capacity through a distributed reflexive agency. Such innovations disrupt social practices and relationships to enhance equality in global FBOs engaged in international mission and diaconia. Thus, they are examples of profound social innovations as institutional work (Nilsson, 2019). These insights into organizational dynamics and structural innovation highlight their significance for enhancing innovation capabilities and stimulating social innovations (Eurich & Langer, 2016), which can both enable FBOs to make an impact according to their values and be a valuable strategy for their long-term organizational survival.

6.1   Limitations of the Study

This current study has some limitations related to the research design, as discussed in the Method section. Additionally, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to FBOs in general, as we explore only two organizations in a qualitative collective case study. However, based on participant validation and discussions with other practitioners and experts in the field, we argue that the findings presented here are transferrable and relevant for other FBOs and NPOs.

6.2   Future Research

Given the methodological limitations in this study, we encourage future studies to investigate quantitatively the significance of structural innovation in FBOs. Other avenues for further research are how to lead global teams; exploring the dynamics of continuing innovative processes; how to maintain the innovative capacity in FBOs; and how to lead and manage value-based innovation processes in FBOs, including shifts in mindset.

7.   Practical Implications

The findings in this study have practical implications as they remind boards and leaders in FBOs and NPOs about the significance of structures for value alignment, learning and innovative capability, and organizational performance. Important questions leaders and board members could ask themselves are: Do our structure and practice reflect our values? Do they enhance or hinder our goals and vision? This study points to the importance of common reflection in safe spaces as drivers and underlying mechanisms for innovation. Leaders in FBOs can facilitate such safe spaces for reflection on values and practices that might generate social innovation from inside and outside the organization. As the introductory quote states, changing from the inside allows organizations to "flourish within their own countries" and

"collaborate in creative ways." The lessons from this study may help FBOs and NPOs to be the change they want to create in their surroundings. In turn, this will clear space for new ways of being, thinking, relating, collaborating, and acting (IDG, 2021) as well as subsequently widening and deepening understanding and thus potentially contributing toward a flourishing humanity.

8. Appendix

Overview of Informants

Role	Region	Gender
Serikat		
Management Team	Europe	M
Management Team	Europe	M
Management Team	Asia	F
Management Team	Africa	M
Management Team	Europe	F
Board Member and member church	Europe	F
Regional leader	Asia	M
Pastor in member church	Africa	M
South-South worker	Africa	F
Muungano		
National director and member of global board	Europe	F
National director	Africa	M
Alliance leadership team	Latin America	F
National director	Europe	M
Alliance leadership team	North America	F
Alliance leadership team	Europe	M
Alliance leadership team	Africa	F
National director	North America	M
Alliance leadership team	North America	M
Alliance leadership team	Asia	M
Alliance leadership team	Africa	M
National director	Latin America	M
Former member of Alliance leadership team	Oceania	M
Total number of informants: 22. Some were interviewed twice		

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