

# Celebrating 35 Years of Building Trust

**You might not know it from glancing at the news headlines, but the world has made tremendous progress in overcoming poverty in the last few decades.**

In 30 years, the share of the global population living in absolute poverty has dropped from 53% to under 17%. Global literacy has risen tremendously. The rate of mortality for children under-five has been halved.


But this progress has been uneven, with too many people and communities having been left behind.

Much more needs to be done.

And it is within this context, of needing to *do* more, that Synergos reflects on our own thirty-five years of global impact work and how we can continue to create impact that meets these current, urgent challenges.

**We believe that much of the social and economic progress of the last several decades are results of greater inclusion and collaboration:** of women, youth, and traditionally marginalized groups playing larger roles in their societies and of different parts of society – including business, government, and communities – coming together to work more effectively as a whole.





Over the last few decades, Synergos has brought together networks of individual philanthropists, community-based organizations, local leaders, foundations, government agencies and businesses to help people who are denied the most basic of rights: the opportunity to build a better life.

Thirty-five years ago, Peggy Dulany founded Synergos on the (then) novel premise that tackling the problems of poverty and inequity required collaboration among all stakeholders – and that for collaboration to take place, mindsets needed to shift so that all available insights, experiences, and resources are brought to the table when addressing social challenges.

**Peggy understood, even in 1987, that open hearts and minds leads to more effective transformations at the personal, community, and systems level.**





**Peggy and her early partners borrowed the organization's name – *Synergos* – from the Greek root meaning *working together*.**

And by doing just that – working together – **the organization and our members and partners have inspired, led, and supported collaborations in more than 30 countries and regions throughout the world**, mobilizing resources and networks to tackle the underlying causes of poverty, inequity, and social injustice.

We have used this inclusive approach with partners, like you, around the world for 35 years to achieve extraordinary results.

In India, a collaboration we helped create between government, civil society, and businesses, contributed to an almost 40% reduction in stunting, the main manifestation of under-nutrition among children under two in the state of Maharashtra.

In Namibia, we contributed to reductions in infant and maternal mortality by helping government programming to be more inclusive of communities.

We helped proximate leaders create the first grantmaking foundations in Ecuador, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe and supported the development of similar institutions in over a dozen other countries.

In a related initiative, we helped establish a partnership of community foundations along the Mexico-U.S. Border.

And In Brazil, we helped activists establish a leading NGO for the rights of children in Rio de Janeiro and helped bring the voices of communities and parents into a partnership for education in the Amazonian state of Pará.



**Reflecting on this work, Synergos and an international group of researchers and development practitioners developed the concept of bridging leadership.**

**Bridging leadership builds trust and is based on trust.**

It represents a paradigm shift in our approach to leadership: a movement away from less-inclusive forms of decision-making that have dominated much of human history. A movement away from ego, hierarchy, and fear.

Our work has shown that bridging leadership is needed in many kinds of complex situations, whether it's used to resolve conflict or simply to build alignment among diverse stakeholders around a shared goal, leading to better results.

**We have supported individuals and organizations to develop bridging leadership capacities.**

Bridging leaders:

- Elevate voices of actors that are often marginalized, such as communities directly affected by a problem
- Look for root causes of problems and help achieve solutions that are lasting and regenerative
- Have strong understanding of themselves and a sense of purpose
- View themselves/their organizations as part of a system that needs to change – not as outsiders that only provide resources or expertise to a system.

**Inner work – or personal reflection – is a core element of the Synergos approach to bridging leadership.** We believe that understanding others starts with looking inward to first understand ourselves.

**“Trusting oneself is even more important for us to be able to speak and act authentically, thereby becoming more likely to gain the trust of others.  
—Peggy Dulany**





Synergos helps leaders use our approach to address top issues in their communities and countries.

We guide them to use inner work to align with a deeper sense of purpose and become more open-hearted and capable of building trust. And through leadership, systems thinking, and collaboration, workshops and experiential learning, we help them achieve mastery of bridging leadership.

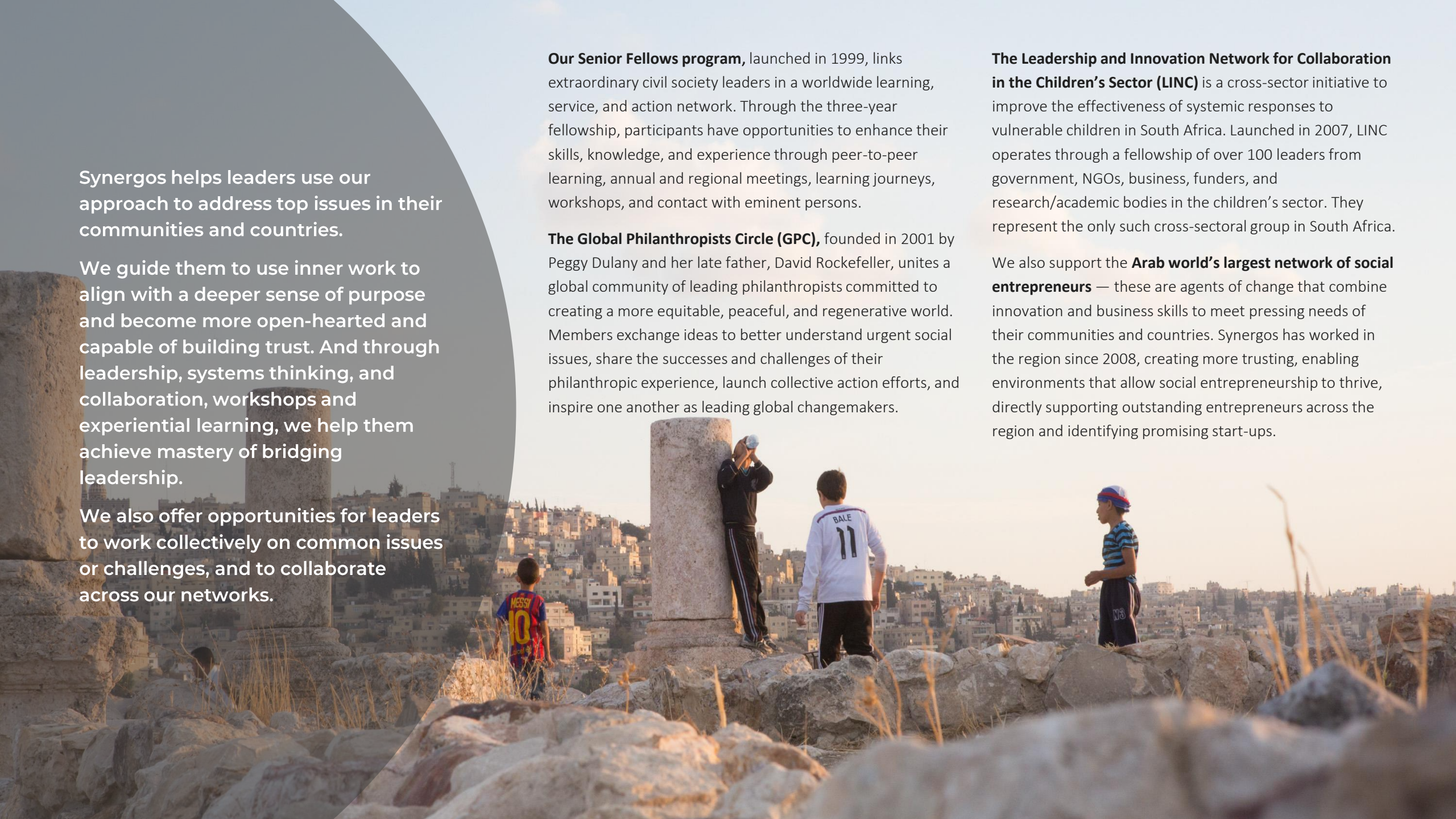
We also offer opportunities for leaders to work collectively on common issues or challenges, and to collaborate across our networks.

**Our Senior Fellows program**, launched in 1999, links extraordinary civil society leaders in a worldwide learning, service, and action network. Through the three-year fellowship, participants have opportunities to enhance their skills, knowledge, and experience through peer-to-peer learning, annual and regional meetings, learning journeys, workshops, and contact with eminent persons.

**The Global Philanthropists Circle (GPC)**, founded in 2001 by Peggy Dulany and her late father, David Rockefeller, unites a global community of leading philanthropists committed to creating a more equitable, peaceful, and regenerative world. Members exchange ideas to better understand urgent social issues, share the successes and challenges of their philanthropic experience, launch collective action efforts, and inspire one another as leading global changemakers.

**The Leadership and Innovation Network for Collaboration in the Children's Sector (LINC)** is a cross-sector initiative to improve the effectiveness of systemic responses to vulnerable children in South Africa. Launched in 2007, LINC operates through a fellowship of over 100 leaders from government, NGOs, business, funders, and research/academic bodies in the children's sector. They represent the only such cross-sectoral group in South Africa.

We also support the **Arab world's largest network of social entrepreneurs** — these are agents of change that combine innovation and business skills to meet pressing needs of their communities and countries. Synergos has worked in the region since 2008, creating more trusting, enabling environments that allow social entrepreneurship to thrive, directly supporting outstanding entrepreneurs across the region and identifying promising start-ups.



Today, Synergos works on agriculture and employment in Ethiopia and Nigeria, promoting the well-being of children in South Africa, preventing child drowning in Bangladesh, and strengthening a global set of youth leaders to roll out programming to help peers in foster care, among other programs. Our current programs aim to assist people and communities who have been left behind. **Our efforts to do more center around increasing inclusion and collaboration through bridging leadership.**

And we are helping our network of philanthropists launch new initiatives that are not confined to location but instead speak directly to current social issues. **Our Collaborative Communities enable GPC members to come together for learning, inspiration and action around particular issues** and partner with local communities, organizations, and businesses to help solve problems together. Current Collaborative Communities apply bridging leadership to climate and environmental philanthropy, spiritual civilization, sustainable food systems, a global dialogue initiative, investing in the next generation of philanthropists, and protection of the Amazon rainforest.



### Nigeria

agriculture • nutrition • employment



### Ethiopia

agriculture • nutrition



### Namibia

health • nutrition



### LAT-AM

philanthropy • inclusive development • climate change



### Southern Africa

social isolation among children



### Bangladesh

drowning prevention



### MENA

social entrepreneurship



### China & India

philanthropy • inclusive development • climate change



These accomplishments confirm to us that **our approach is part of what's needed to address the complex challenges our world faces.**

As such, we are committed to supporting the continuation of work with our network of bridging leaders, collaborative communities, and country/regional programs.

We thank our partners and supporters who have been on this journey with us and welcome your continuing engagement.

**Together, we can build a better world.**

**A world built on trust.**

**Thanks to our 35th Anniversary supporters**

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