

Explaining the SES4Food Initiative

Introduction: SES4Food is the follow-up on an extensive [mapping project](#) by SocietyWorks in cooperation with the Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) of social entrepreneurs (SEs) working in food value chains in 7 countries (Kenya, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, South-Sudan, Indonesia, Benin and Ghana). SES4Food now seeks the opportunity to start prototyping its unique approach in one or two partner countries.

Description of SES4Food: SES4Food is an international movement that recognizes the potential of entrepreneurial support initiatives, but sees that currently large groups of entrepreneurial youth are missing out, opportunities are lost and socially and environmentally friendly, feasible ideas and innovations do not reach the market and impact is kept small. Our vision is to connect self-organized networks of young innovative (design thinking) entrepreneurs that are now excluded from support with existing formal support networks (partnerships of NGOs, Universities, Hubs, Incubators etc.) by making use of the methodologies of Holacracy, Design Thinking, Art of Hosting, Spiral Dynamics and Storytelling.

Added Value of SES4Food:

- *No Formal Organization, but a Movement:* With SES4Food we wish to set up a movement that connects existing structures and host the people and organizations behind it to improve the ecosystem for social entrepreneurs working on food security.
- *More than research only:* SES4Food received takes the message from SEs serious that they are being researched, but not see the improvements from participating in research.
- *Not another incubator programme, but being a connector:* SES4Food will not set up another incubator project, but will create new opportunities, inclusion and impact through its unique methodology and approach by connecting existing support organizations and (informal) networks of SEs as they together will tackle bottlenecks and taking away barriers in the ecosystem, will learn from each other, and will create together new business opportunities.
- *Identifying the potential of hidden SEs:* SES4Food looks beyond the usual suspects and will find potential success stories of entrepreneurship within groups that are now merely excluded from support. SES4Food will build circles of trust and respect by tackling bottlenecks in the entrepreneurial ecosystem with an action-led approach through the creation of “Communities of Action” in which these groups of SEs actively participate.
- *Non-linear thinking:* SES4Food seeks to work with the actors in an innovative way to increase inclusion and impact. We will use methods and approaches like Design Thinking, Scrum and Agile and Holacracy and work according the concepts of Crowd Mobilization to ensure the bottom-up approach and flexibility.
- *Learning with storytelling at its heart:* SES4Food will tell the dynamics of the Communities of Action and will deliver important new knowledge about practising with alternative methodologies to create co-creation and trust with the aim to improve the social entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Evidence for impact and upscaling: SES4Food has been inspired by the work of the [Berkana Institute](#) on problem-solving through self-organized communities. The [double S-curve model](#) has been a fundamental piece of The Berkana Institute’s theory of change and shows that all systems eventually will start to collapse as they reach their limits. As this happens isolated alternatives slowly begin to arise and give way to the new. According to [Wheatley and Frieze](#) these isolated local experiments can become more significant as they are connected with each other as networks that strengthen themselves through learning and knowledge sharing. Hence, upscaling will happen through networks that become learning communities of which the most successful will ultimately be embraced by other stakeholders to increase impact.

Why SES4Food is now important:

- The current Aid & Trade approach in International Development is focusing merely on formal networks with the assumption that groups that are operating outside the formal networks will profit through a trickle-down effect. However, there is an increasing recognition that this is not happening automatically and more is needed to increase impact and inclusion of poorer communities (bottom of pyramid).
- Capacity building and entrepreneurial support programmes must take into account the new methodologies that incorporate the working methods and ideals of the new economy. This is important because more and more corporations and private sector actors are searching for business opportunities within the new economy, and they need credible partners that understand the local dynamics, risks and opportunities.
- After more than a decade food insecurity is again on the rise in the world. Climate change and conflicts are the main factors, according to the FAO 2017 report on [The state of food security and nutrition in the world](#). Therefore, new ways to reach out and support the Bottom of the Pyramid cannot be ignored.