

Alliance 2015

towards the eradication of poverty

**Alliance2015**

**Strategic  
Compass  
2021-2025**

**General Assembly**  
**May 20-21, 2021**



This document is designed for everyone who is part of **Alliance2015**, whether they have much or little direct experience of the Alliance.

It contains our renewed vision and mission; a reminder of where we came from; a summary of the assets, capacities and ways of working which make us who we are; an explanation of how we understand our context and how we combine this analysis with what we have learned from our experiences to date; a presentation of the impact goals we have designed together as our new guiding compass, and the ways we will change to best deliver those. We will complement this document with a 1.5-page executive summary for external audiences.

The shared effort to develop this Strategic Compass, our steps to operationalize it, and a summary of the learnings we draw from are captured in the annexes at the end of the document.

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Who we are

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Founded in 2000 to foster and nurture collaborations for greater scale and impact towards the Millennium Development Goals, Alliance2015 is a strategic and operational network of European-based international NGOs, working towards the broader vision of Agenda 2030 and a world free from poverty, hunger, injustice and inequality. We are engaged in partnerships of different types and at different levels, and Alliance2015 members are our first partnership of choice.

Alliance2015 members<sup>1</sup> are progressive organisations, with deep roots in our countries of foundation. We are considered ‘medium sized’ in the INGO context (with annual budgets ranging from €30m-350m) but with a large overall footprint of around €1bn, operating in 90 countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Concern, Hivos, Ibis and Welthungerhilfe were founders; Ibis left in 2015 and over the years Cesvi (2002), People in Need (2003), ACTED (2009), Helvetas (2013) and Ayuda en Acción (2019) joined.

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## Our story

As European-based INGOs, we have been driven from the outset by a belief in international development, one that is based on solidarity, and that strives to achieve global development goals and universal human rights. We have done this through building a flexible consortium model which allows members to retain their individual identities while opting into collaboration initiatives where added value in terms of scale, quality or impact can be achieved.

Our members are multi-sectoral organisations, so our network has a range of expertise and capacities. We have evolved towards a focus on **resilience-building through poverty reduction, hunger eradication and emergency preparedness and response**. The coming years will require us not only to collaborate and convene more as members, but to do even more as an alliance. This compass sets a vision for that way forward.

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# Our vision

Alliance2015 envisions a world without poverty, hunger, and fear of oppression.

We envision resilient and empowered people and societies, thriving on a healthy and environmentally robust planet, and progressing towards participation, inclusion and equality through effective, collective action.



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## Our beliefs

Underpinning this vision are our core beliefs.  
We believe in:

- The power of all people to realise their universal human rights through
  - › overcoming social, economic and environmental crisis and exclusion
  - › collectively challenging and changing the systems causing these
  - › building systems which have human and planetary thriving at their heart
- The power of better collaborations, in which we hold each other constructively to account for our humanitarian efforts and our contributions to meaningful human development in the framework of the SDGs.
- The unique role of civil society to hold decision makers to account and be a cornerstone of the fight against inequality.

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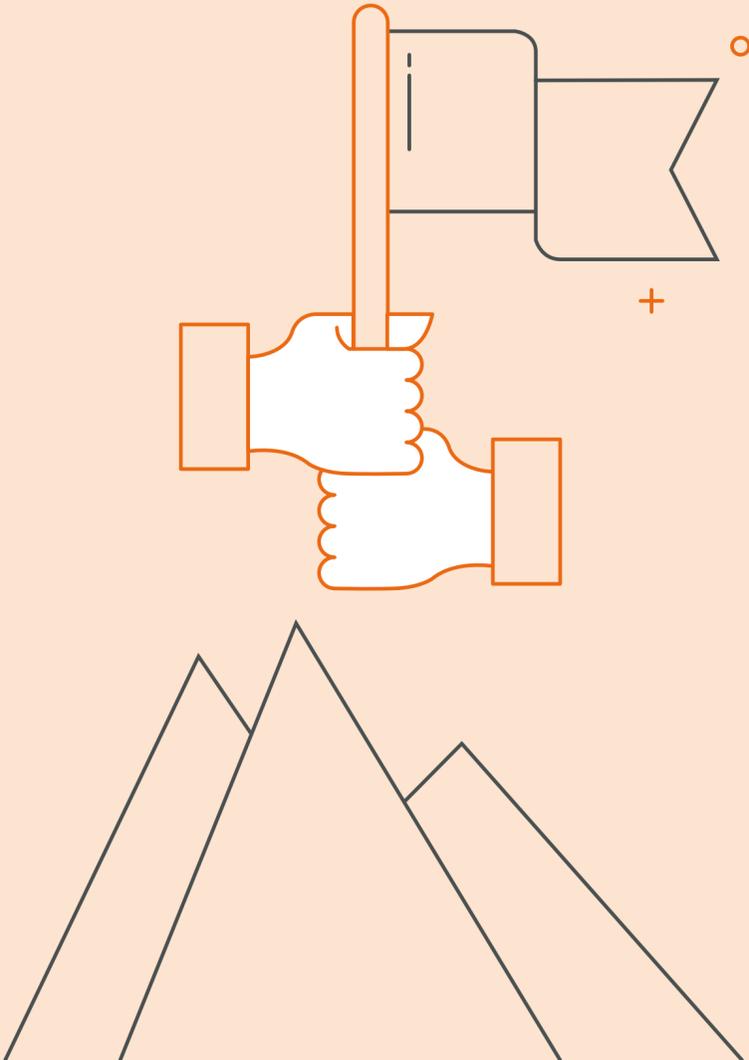
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# Our mission

Alliance2015 exists to catalyse and add significant value to the humanitarian and SDG-focussed work of its members by leveraging joint actions, knowledge and solidarity. We achieve greater reach and impact by working together, and by acting as a platform to channel influence more effectively to decision-makers.



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## Our assets and capacities

We work as an Alliance to leverage our extensive **experience** and **joint capabilities** in delivering our mission and vision. These include:

- Reach to 50 million people in 90 partner countries across the globe, every year.
- Working with 1600 partner civil society organisations.
- 20 years of Alliance2015 network experience working at scale in consortia, pooling support services, resources and knowledge and communications.
- Multi-sectoral, multi-approach ways of working, which generate a range of entry points for action, capacity building, convening, facilitation and influence.
- Specific shared areas of technical and sectoral expertise including: emergency preparedness and response, community resilience-building, nexus programming; programme-based advocacy; programming and advocacy focussed on the needs of the most vulnerable in relation to poverty, climate change, hunger and malnutrition, and exclusion.
- Extensive member networks, partnerships, contacts and access to decision-makers who affect global humanitarian and development action.

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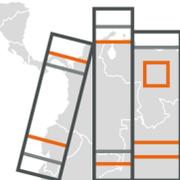
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## Our assets and capacities

More than **20 years** spent building experience, expertise to work at scale in consortia.

Reaching above **50 million people** in Europe and across the globe.

Through working with **1600 partner** civil society organisations and **90 countries.**



Extensive contacts, networks and access to decisions.



Concrete experience in pooling support services, resources and knowledge.



Multi-sectoral and multi-approach ways of working, entry points for action.

Specific shared areas of technical and sectoral expertise including:

- emergency preparedness and response;
- design and delivery of nexus programming;
- programme-based advocacy;
- programming and advocacy focussed on the needs of the most vulnerable in relation to climate change, hunger and malnutrition, and exclusion.



## 2

Strategic  
Compass  
2021-2025

## 2.1

Building on our 2018-2020 strategic plan, which was focused on **building community resilience**, the Alliance2015 Strategic Compass guides the Alliance2015's work for the period 2021-2025. It gives clarity and direction to everyone in Alliance2015 about what we do together, and how we contribute to making our common vision a reality through our joint work.

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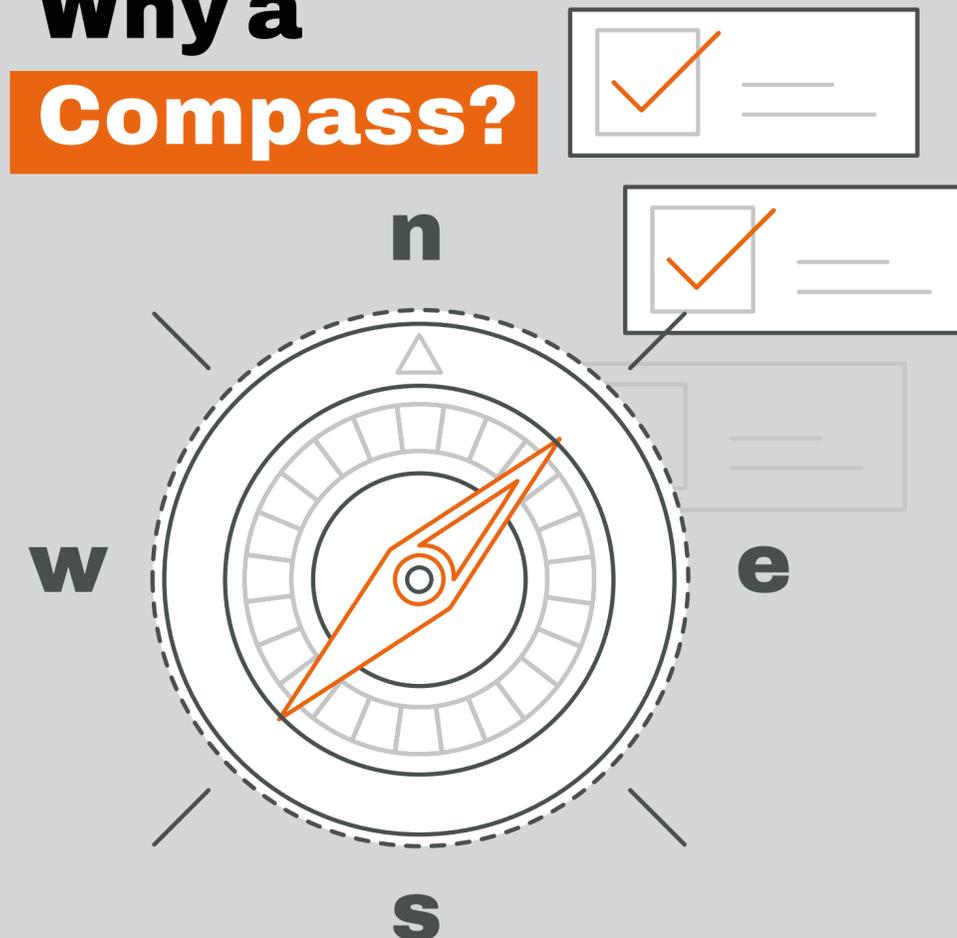
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A compass is an instrument well-adapted to guide a network, which is naturally both looser and more complex than a single organisation. A compass gives flexibility and direction in responding to external changes, while remaining focussed on clear end goals. It gives a framework in which we can choose and adjust our pathways as needed to meet our goals, responding to what changes, and what we learn along the way.

## Why a Compass?



## Navigating through a challenging context

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### Strategic Compass 2021-2025

Alliance2015 members' various analyses of the world in which we work show more similarities now than perhaps ever before. One implication stands out when we review our analyses jointly: **the scale of the challenges and opportunities involved in meeting humanitarian needs and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals call for a significantly enhanced level of quality collaboration between all types of actors.**

There has been great progress in global development over the last 30 years – economically, socially, politically, and in many respects, environmentally; but far too many people still live in poverty and crisis, inequality is increasing, and exclusion from

development opportunities remains pervasive. New opportunities for progress have emerged, as have new challenges; while many older challenges persist.

Today, global problems – such as climate change, food and nutrition insecurity- are also playing out at the local level, while crises erupting in one country, such as COVID-19 or the conflicts in Yemen, Syria or Somalia, can affect entire regions or humanity itself. Rapid technological progress, increasing economic interdependence, and dynamic population growth have accelerated development but these trends have also created new vulnerabilities in our societies.

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# Navigating through a challenging context

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A dominant model of economic development has set us on a path of **environmental breakdown**, with severe economic, social, and political consequences for people and societies. The frequency of crises driven by climate change and entrenched conflict has increased, and tackling these crises has also become more complex, as root causes are systemic and often globalised. These crises have been shown to exacerbate existing significant inequalities. In all this, the **most vulnerable and marginalised are worst affected, with disproportionately little voice and power.**

The ‘aid sector’ is being disrupted, both in positive and negative ways. On the one hand, there are growing, effective social movements, shifting the dial on issues like **climate, racism, decolonisation, and our economic models.** On the other hand, narrow national self-interests, cynicism about the effectiveness of aid of all kinds, are putting international cooperation into question and decreasing resources at a time of rise in global poverty and unprecedented humanitarian needs. Civil society space is shrinking and trust in NGOs is variable. The questions of how to shift power and localise responses pervade the discourse, but are understood and interpreted differently depending on context and by different actors.

# Navigating through a challenging context

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### Strategic Compass 2021-2025

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Meeting the global challenges and ambition outlined in this plan will require us to be agile and adaptive, and to do more by working with others. The role and contribution of local authorities, NGOs, partners and programme participants must be strengthened and encouraged. The realisation of greater levels of **localisation**, especially in the most challenging contexts, requires time and investment, and must take into account increased reporting, compliance and verification requirements placed on NGOs by their institutional donors. Alliance members must continue to develop impactful local partnership models that can contribute to learning and good practice.

As the numbers of people in poverty and caught up in crisis have grown, a scaled-up collective and collaborative approach is needed to address the greatest **humanitarian and development challenges of our time**.

The need for better-resourced, flexible, agile, professional and effective NGOs at all levels, working in strong partnerships, has never been greater.

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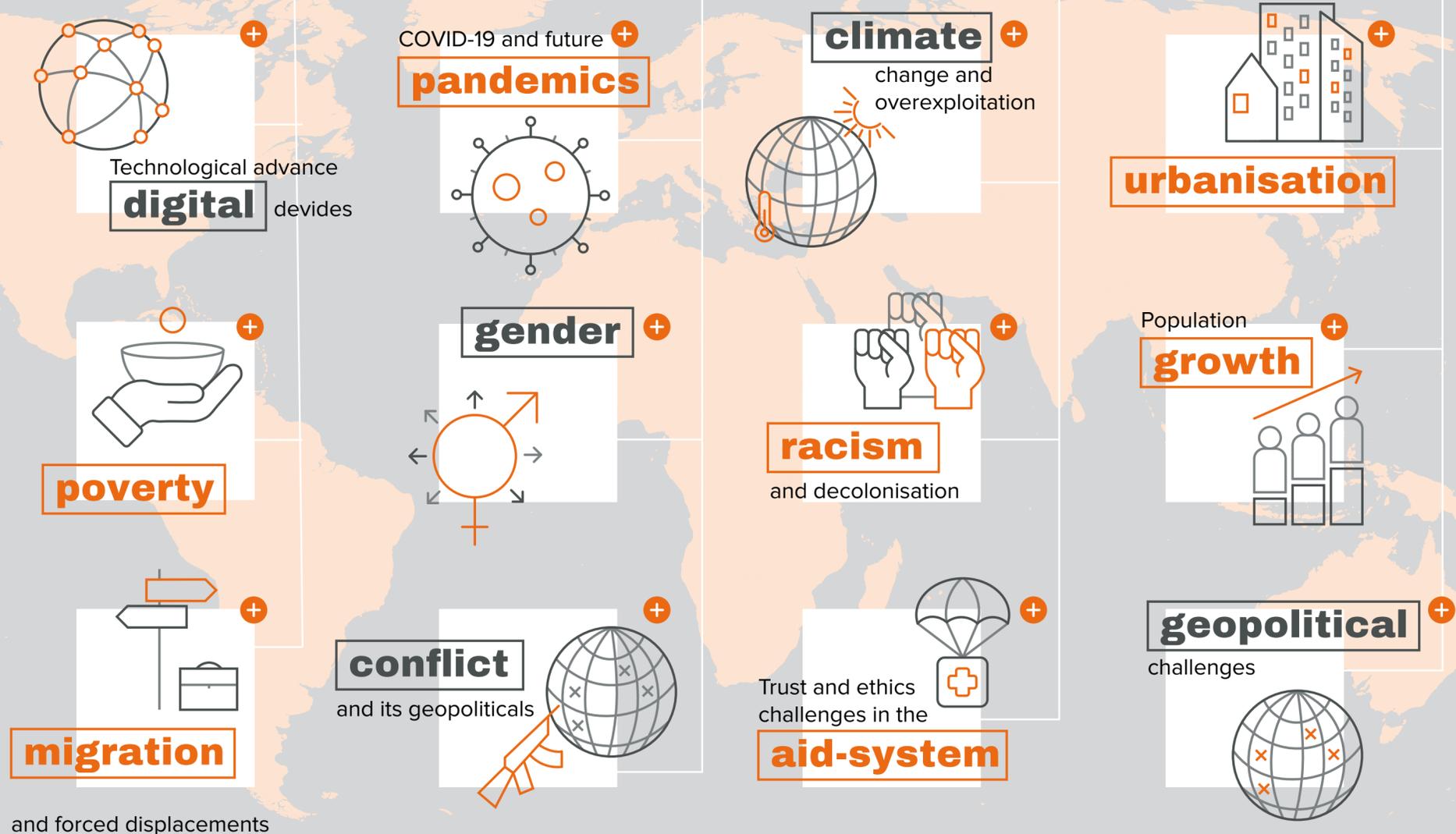
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Inequalities



# Navigating through a challenging context

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At a time of extraordinary and complex crises, with increasing conflicts and record numbers of displaced people, we need greater international cooperation and collaboration to reach the positive vision of the SDGs and address humanitarian needs. Alliance2015 will respond to some of the most critical aspects of this broader effort, aligning actively with other actors working on:

- **Better partnerships, at different levels and between different actors.** These are fundamental to leverage synergies, be effective and achieve scale. Networks and networked ways of working, while crossing sectoral boundaries, the North-South divide, and public/non-profit/private distinctions, will become increasingly important.

- A more comprehensive and nuanced approach to **localisation in emergency programming, international development and cooperation.** Localisation is key to strengthen local ownership; but localisation occurs at multiple levels by enhancing capacities at all relevant levels.
- **More effective actors with shared concepts of the common good** (e.g., the SDGs, humanitarian principles and good practice standards, etc), who can constructively connect local realities and global politics, be it through concrete programmes on the ground or by amplifying the voice of local and national actors at regional and global level.
- An increase in **lean structures and agile ways of working**, which can facilitate fast, flexible, innovative, proactive and inclusive responses in volatile and rapidly changing environments.

## Our impact goals

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As a central pillar of our strategic compass, we designed **three impact goals** and intensively reviewed our **ways of working**. This was based on a range of inputs: a joint analysis of the context; learnings and reflections from extensive consultations across our Alliance; 20 years of joint emergency preparedness and response, longer-term programming and learning. From our analysis of the external context and our joint capabilities as a network, joint emergency response remains an essential priority, building on two decades of joint experience and action. Together, we will continue to focus on **the SDGs, preparing for and responding to emergencies of all kinds, building community resilience and working with marginalised and vulnerable groups and communities as actors and activists** to reach three impact goals:



# Our impact goals

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### 1. Climate: building climate resilient pathways to drive more equitable and effective humanitarian and development outcomes.

The climate crisis is transforming into a protracted crisis, impacting all areas of life, especially for the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalised. It is the result of human behaviour and a direct cause of increasing poverty, inequality, and humanitarian disasters that need to be addressed, including conflicts, famines, floods, droughts, and forced, unsafe mass migration.

Based on our presence in countries worst-affected by the climate crisis, and our access in countries with power to influence at several levels, **we support communities to strengthen their resilience. We employ a ‘nexus approach’ - addressing their humanitarian needs with a long-term perspective - and we channel their voices to speak out for sustainable and just solutions.**

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## Our impact goals

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#### 2. Food: transforming systems to tackle hunger and malnutrition, prioritising sustainability, equity and the needs and rights of those who are marginalised.

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The production and consumption of nutritious food is the most basic building block of human survival and flourishing. Hunger and malnutrition are on the increase, made significantly worse by COVID-19 and strongly correlated to poverty and exclusion. The link between how we produce, distribute and consume food, the inequalities in our society, our effect on our climate and environment, conflict and humanitarian crises is clear and requires urgent attention.

Based on our experience using multi-sectoral and human rights-based approaches to tackle hunger, malnutrition and working on pro-poor and sustainable food systems, **we will contribute to the creation of nutrition-focussed, equitable, sustainable, and economically viable food systems, which respond to the needs and rights of marginalised people in crisis as a priority.**

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## Our impact goals

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### 3. Equitable civil society partnerships: contributing to more effective and inclusive local-to-global civil society collaboration.

A healthy civil society is a critical component of effective international development cooperation and humanitarian action. Civil society can connect local concerns to national and global decision making, and can ensure that power-holders are held responsible for listening and responding to people's needs effectively. Yet we need to be conscious that CSOs in many of the countries where we work are increasingly suppressed or marginalized (a situation often made worse by COVID-19), and continuously struggle to protect and sustain their organisations, safely engage, and raise their voices.

Based on our extensive networks, our knowledge and know-how and our access to channels and resources, **we will actively seek and amplify the voices of civil society actors we work with at all levels and with all relevant stakeholders.** We will work to enable access to the decision-making channels relevant to people's constituencies, to influence decisions that affect them. We will deepen our existing experience to build and share more impactful and inclusive models of collaboration towards greater impact, quality and sustainability in emergency response and human development.



## Our ways of working

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Our ways of working are how we bring our assets and capacities to life.

#### Joint programming and capacity building

Our starting point is that we are a **driven-from-the-ground humanitarian and development actor, facilitating, brokering and delivering joint, innovative and scaled responses with partners to the locally determined needs of affected and marginalised populations.**

We support those populations and partners in speaking out at local, national, regional and global level to influence the decisions that affect them.

#### Joint emergency preparedness and response

Conflict, the growing climate crisis, and the record number of people displaced, and in need of humanitarian assistance drive our continuing priority commitment to addressing acute humanitarian needs. This means **we engage in joint emergency preparedness and response to new and emerging crises of all kinds** where we are positioned to add value by responding together. We actively review our significant emergency responses to identify learning for future responses.

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# Our ways of working

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### 'Nexus' approaches

We use context-sensitive 'nexus' approaches. This means that where a short-term emergency response is needed, we ensure it, while considering from the outset the medium and long-term needs in the specific context, adapting our tools, resources and capabilities to fit.

### Modelling collaboration

We are a leader in collaboration, innovating, modelling and sharing multi-stakeholder partnership and collaboration practices.

## Our ways of working

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### Context-adapted complementarity and coordination

We are set up to deal with the complexity of ground realities, strategically and operationally. We offer complementarity, covering different geographic and sectoral areas and approaches. We have light-touch but robust approaches to lead and coordinate joint analyses, assessments and response for crisis and non-crisis contexts, design responses and advocacy strategies with partners; and to use our existing relationships and knowledge to align with or influence other actors, clusters and institutions, including donors.

### Using our knowledge to improve impact and have influence

Based on our research and models, and rooted in our experience on the ground, we collect and share knowledge with our partners and peers; and we develop advocacy and communication campaigns targeted at bringing local needs and voices into relevant decision-making processes. In Europe, we deploy a progressive and dynamic four-year advocacy strategy focussed on the EU, organised around our impact goals. In countries of operation, we support our teams and partners in joint advocacy, prioritising our support where our impact goals can best serve local needs.

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# Our ways of working

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### Relationship resources

At the local level, our members have teams, partnership networks, relationships and trust with national civil society, local governments and the local private sector across 90 countries. We are present in humanitarian clusters, development fora, multi-stakeholder partnerships and human rights networks, and have open dialogue with national delegations of international actors. Our donor relationships help us to actively seek and share donor intelligence to influence funding decisions and access resources where we and our partners can add value.

### Thematic focus

We prioritize our local support to initiatives focused on our strategic compass's impact goals. To deepen our understanding and effectiveness on these themes, we research and develop shared models on these themes to support our field work, and the advocacy actions which flow from it. We promote and facilitate learning among our members on the topics included in our impact goals.

# Our ways of working

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### Digitalisation

#### focus

We leverage digital technology for increased effectiveness, efficiency and quality in programming; and we share lessons in accountable management of personal data. Conscious of the risks that the digital transformation bears, including the possibility of a widening digital gap and irresponsible data governance, we commit to highlighting and addressing those, while making responsible use of the opportunities new technologies provide to tackle poverty, inequality and exclusion.

### Value for money

We have internal cost and administrative structures that allow us to work as a platform that not only achieves impact, but also maximises value for money. We do this by developing simple collaboration tools and building accountable and efficient systems.

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# How are we organised

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In the light of the Compass, we reorganise to emphasise support for joint initiatives at country (and regional) level, focus on the themes of our impact goals, and strengthen our ability to channel country-based analysis and voices to global-level advocacy. Country and regional colleagues become more engaged, and we reach more deeply and constructively into the expertise and capacities across our membership to serve our common purpose.

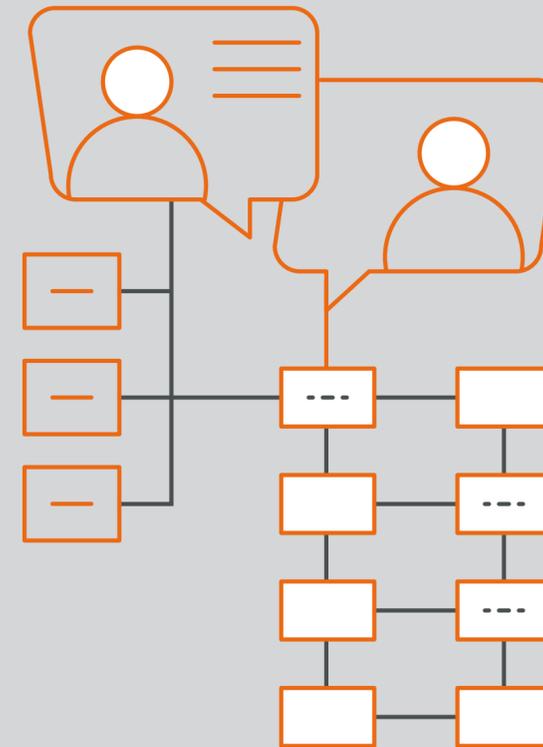
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# How are we organised

## At country level

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- We reinforce the **coordination structure in ‘strategic’ countries or regions, i.e. those whose collaborations focus on the themes of our impact goals**; and light coordination support to others who working together on other thematics/approaches.
- We refresh the **Alliance2015 Country Lead Agency** role with clear, simple role definitions, and with tools and support from across the Alliance to help set manage and deliver joint objectives with other relevant Alliance2015 actors.
- We deploy national & regional **joint initiative “incubators”, supported or seconded by members**, to stimulate and facilitate joint strategizing, action and fundraising in ‘strategic’ countries or regions, according to their demand.

# How are we organised

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## At global level (member headquarters and Brussels hub)

- Our Brussels hub comprises a **joint initiative support team** with a slightly increased capacity.
- We develop and implement **a joint fundraising strategy for joint initiatives, proactively gathering and sharing strategy-relevant intelligence** on the EU with countries.
- We review our **working group structure, to guide strategy implementation more effectively**, and to oversee the **stimulation of and support to potential joint initiatives** at the different levels.
- We combine global level **strategic communications with advocacy**, and upgrade and combine our approach to **knowledge management, and monitoring evaluation accountability and learning (MEAL)**. These two connected workstreams ensure the targeted collection and strategic use of data to allow improved advocacy, learning, accountability, and communications; and capture and share improved tools and practices in collaboration.
- We ensure that **the engagement and participation across the Alliance2015 membership** is growing, and that member colleagues with common interests have access to tools and online support to create or grow **communities of practice for sharing and learning, and incubating potential joint initiatives**.

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## Annex One - how did we build our compass?

The Compass was built collaboratively across the Alliance2015, steered by our Strategy Group who were staff appointed by our Executive Board<sup>2</sup> and the hub. This group held the threads of the process together, making sure we held true to the principles to which Alliance2015 members had committed in May 2020, when the Core Groups digested the **Mid Term Review**, and acting as a key channel into the member organisations. The most fundamental of these principles was to **make sure we started from the needs and views expressed from the countries where we are working.**

We started by analysing the world we are working in; first, by listening to analyses from five programme countries, then diving into our members' own strategy processes, documents and analyses; and second, by interviewing ten 'external' people from other networks and institutions to help us see how this all looks from the perspective of a network, not an individual organisation.

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<sup>2</sup> The Alliance2015 Strategy Group comprises one senior colleague per member, delegated by their CEO, plus two MEAL experts, and the hub team, and is led by the Alliance2015 Director. It was facilitated by **reospartners.com**

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## Annex One - how did we build our compass?

Alongside, we processed the learning from the Alliance2015's 2020 mid-term review, and the work of the Alliance2015 Core Working Groups<sup>3</sup> – most of them with 20 years' experience of collaborating. Then, we conducted conversations and World Cafés across Alliance2015 countries and regions, involving over 200 people, which has provided a rich basis to identify priorities and for building our operational plans in the next phase. We cross referenced where members are putting priorities and resources in their strategies.

Throughout the process we constantly revisited, revised and renewed our expression of why we chose to work together, what we are trying to achieve by collaborating, and how to express that value helpfully to people outside of our network.

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<sup>3</sup> These have been the key delivery mechanism for Alliance2015 strategy delivery to date: groups of senior Head Quarters (HQ) staff, one per member, supported since 2017 by the Hub in Brussels, and divided functionally according to focus, such as 'programme', 'emergency', 'communications', 'advocacy' and 'fundraising'.

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# Annex Two - key learnings from the strategy consultation process

## 1. Background

The mid-term review conducted at the end of 2019 and processed with the Core Groups in May 2020, provided the framework for a wide consultation across Alliance2015, particularly hearing the voices of staff members at Country and Regional levels. The process design included:

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# Annex Two - key learnings from the strategy consultation process

## 1. Background

- The **Alliance2015 Strategy World Cafés** (September 2020)
- 7 dedicated interviews with **key informants** (November and December 2020)
- A **Country Lead Agency** (LA) discussion (December 2020)
- Two **Regional Conversations** in December 2020 with **Latin America** and Caribbean (LAC) and Asia's CDs and RDs
- **Core Group reflections and input to strategy processes** – September 2020 to January 2021
- A **survey with networks and task forces** in November 2020

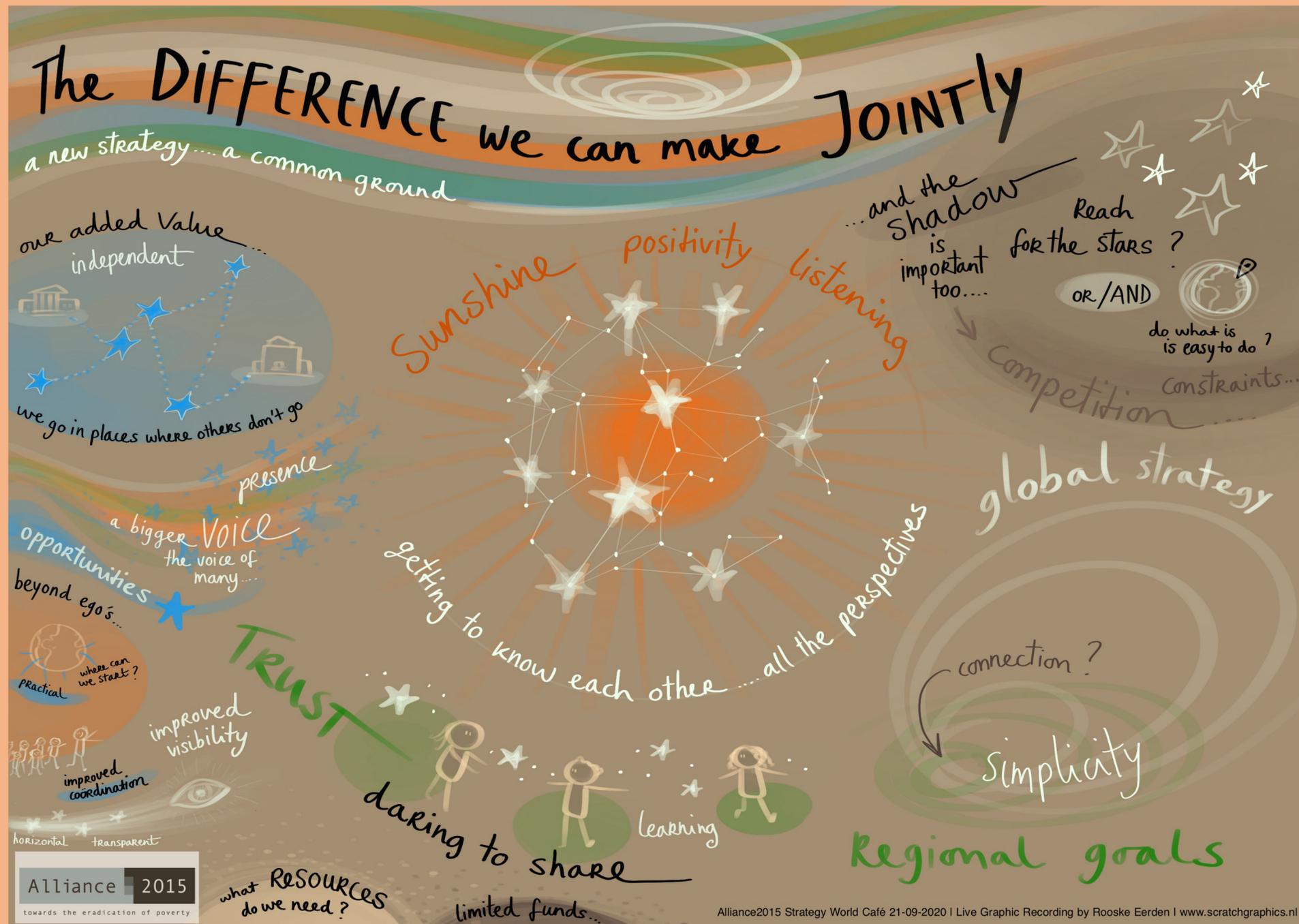
The hub, as part of its work in the Strategy Group, ensured, collated and analysed the notes of all these sessions; reflected them back to the Chairs Coordination Group (in some cases) and the Strategy Group; and prepared them to be used in the strategy definition process, and directly in ongoing work with countries and members. Detailed notes can be accessed by clicking at the links above.

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# Annex Two - key learnings from the strategy consultation process

## 2. Digested outputs of internal consultations

- **“Making sense” of Alliance2015, internally and externally** is an active, organic ongoing task at all levels (countries, regions, Head Quarters); to be seen as an opportunity, not as a problem: “a garden to be constantly cultivated”. This can be done with, e.g.:
  - › **Clearer role definitions:** country lead agency, working group structures, hub, governance structure. The structure of groups of all kinds should have more real link to strategy.

### Country Lead Agency (LA) ideas:

- › **“Primary” tasks should become much clearer (administrative, coordination, push for collaboration, create space for discussion), still with some margin of flexibility: main tasks clearly defined and opportunities to ‘reinvent’ according to local needs.**
- › **Clear mandate from HQ.**
- › **Formal joint plan, endorsed by HQ.**
- › **Add Co-lead / Co-chair / Emergency country LA.**
- › **3-year mandates.**
- › **Building a stronger culture of critique and openness to share gaps/failures, but no rigid performance pressure (KPIs).**
- › **Included in inductions.**

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## Annex Two - key learnings from the strategy consultation process

### 2. Digested outputs of internal consultations

- › **Improved** induction, and tools for collaboration, cooperation, information, knowledge and communication, available on a rolling basis.
- › **Better understanding** of each other's competencies at country and regional level, enhanced with learning from across the Alliance about what makes for powerful collaborations.
- › **Recognising** that joint programming is not always the only or best entry point for meaningful cooperation and collaboration – “start by doing something together, which makes sense in the context”.

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## Annex Two - key learnings from the strategy consultation process

### 2. Digested outputs of internal consultations

- › **Prioritising advocacy** as a meaningful joint initiative.
- › **Renewing our brand** as a distinctive voice in addition to, not competing with, our members; and adding value to members' individual branding.
- › **Clarifying our culture of internal accountability:** based on building trust, being realistic about personality issues and expectations, maturely containing disappointments and problems, and avoiding rule-based accountability procedures (sanctions).
- › **Renewing our internal funding mechanism** to support cooperation and collaboration in a broader sense.

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# Annex Two - key learnings from the strategy consultation process

## 2. Digested outputs of internal consultations

- **Alliance2015 consortia are possible, important, and add value**, but we need to better fill the gap between expectations and reality, recognising that the environment gets more and more challenging, and that we need to better prepare the ground for collaborations. This can be achieved through e.g.:
  - › Higher levels of sharing on issues like administration, HR, finance and logistics at country level.
  - › A culture of actively valuing networking and connections.
  - › Better collection and sharing of early donor intelligence.
  - › Better competency mapping at country/ regional level.
  - › Maturing our understanding of a ‘good’ Alliance2015 consortium: 2-3 Alliance2015 partners together with strong local partners is more realistic, effective and relevant than seeking consortia with many Alliance2015 partners.
  - › Being clearer how we approach localisation in each case, recognising its complexities.

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# Annex Two - key learnings from the strategy consultation process

## 2. Digested outputs of internal consultations

- **Strong appetite for more and better organised sharing of learnings and knowledge management**, on programme and advocacy themes (climate change; migration; social inclusion were often mentioned), and operational support topics. Ideas to achieve this include:
  - › Refining knowledge management tools and practice at hub level.
  - › Organising knowledge exchange through regional conversations on identified topics such as climate change & migration.
- › Enhanced role for the Alliance2015 Networks, linking them more intelligently into the Alliance2015 structure.

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## Annex Three - what next?

To turn our Compass into action we now need to make a few further strategic choices and create an operational plan.

### Strategic choices:

- Financial sustainability of Alliance2015: review models and choose.
- Branding: to show how we position as Alliance2015, and add value to our members' branding.
- Membership strategy: grow or maintain?

### Operational plan:

- Renewed organigram, showing clear decision making, consultation and implementation roles across Alliance2015.
- Five-year top-line plan with detailed 2021 and 2022 plan.
  - › Developing our thinking on how we will approach and operationalise our three focus topics.
- Fully worked out MEAL framework, integrated with a knowledge management and a communications strategy.
- Renewed internal funding mechanism(s).
- Renewed membership policy.

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