



**Humanitarian  
Leadership  
Academy**

**ECO-LEADERSHIP**

**A NEW  
LEADERSHIP  
PARADIGM**



# Why is a different leadership approach required?

- The 2023 report From Nuffield College at Oxford University, entitled "International NGOs and The Long Humanitarian Century" interviewed 50 NGO CEO's about their views on NGO Leadership.
- There was a strong sense from CEO's of wanting and needing —to move their organisations in new and different directions. And quickly. This desire was matched by doubts and frustrations regarding their freedom and scope to do so.
- CEOs referred to internal factors (such as excessive controls, compliance, hierarchy, risk aversion, audit and target cultures and a paternalistic approach to local partners and program participants) making change much more challenging alongside radical uncertainties in their external environment which they are having difficulty in responding to.

# **The term Eco-Leadership was coined by Dr Simon Western to describe a new leadership approach for organisations**

Eco-Leadership emerged as a response to three key disruptions of the polycrisis:

- The technology revolution
- The environmental emergency
- Globalisation, social change and rising social inequity

Eco-Leadership emphasises adaptability and agility, allowing leaders to respond nimbly to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of the polycrisis.

# The four dominant leadership approaches

Research identifies four dominant leadership approaches that emerged over the past century:

- Controller Leadership  
'Controlling resources to maximise efficiency'
- Therapist Leadership  
'Happy workers are more productive workers'
- Messiah Leadership  
'Vision and strong cultures'
- Eco-Leadership  
'Connectivity, Networks, & Ethics'



## **Bridging theory and practice**

Each of the four approaches remain active and present in organisations.

Eco-Leadership is the latest evidence-based approach to leadership and brings a new eco-systemic direction to leadership.

It is now used in leading international organisations, such as the Ford Motor Company and taught in business schools.



# Moving to a new leadership approach

Eco-Leadership addresses two inter-related challenges:

De-centralising leadership - moving away from top-down approaches to enable everybody to take leadership when appropriate, creating more adaptive, participative, and dynamic organisations.

Eco-systemic leadership –navigating the complexities of our interconnected world and igniting purpose and enchantment in the hearts of those who dare to lead differently.



# Recognising eco-systems

“Organisations are eco-systems within ecosystems” (Western 2019)



# Creating adaptive organisations

Eco-Leadership empowers organisations to:

- Respond creatively to the challenges and opportunities presented by the rapidly changing world.
- Create cultures of innovation.
- Stimulate learning within organisations.
- Promote collaboration and partnerships in their eco-system to take their work to scale.

Eco-Leadership pays particular attention to leading from the edge, enabling marginalised voices to be heard, and bringing fresh ideas, experience, knowledge and resources.





## Eco-Leadership in Indonesia

- Emphasis on pursuing opportunities for impact at scale, shifting more power to local partners, increasing income and reducing costs.
- The SC role focuses on coordination, resource mobilization, policy development, program quality and impact, learning and advocacy
- Local partners receiving 3.16 % of the total program budget (USD 460,610) in 2018 to 28.31% of the total program budget (USD 4,152,278) in 2022. Plan to increase to 40% by 2024.
- SC partnerships increased from 8 partners in 2018 to 44 partners in 2022
- Program and support staff decreased from 473 in 2018 to 217 in 2022



## Long-term outcomes of Eco-Leadership

In summary, Eco-Leadership recognises the interdependence between environmental, social, and economic systems.

### Leaders practicing Eco-Leadership:

- Lead within their eco-system and collaborate to address environmental and social issues
- Engage in ethical decision-making
- Encourage and promote leadership from the edge



To find out more about **Eco-Leadership**:  
[www.ecoleadershipinstitute.org](http://www.ecoleadershipinstitute.org)



For more information on the **Humanitarian Leadership Academy**:  
[www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org](http://www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org)