

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a United Nations flag waving. The flag is blue with a white emblem in the center, which consists of a world map surrounded by a laurel wreath. The flag is set against a light blue sky. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular box on the left side of the flag.

Leading Change in United Nations Organizations

By Catherine Bertini
Rockefeller Foundation Fellow

June 2019

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Catherine Bertini is a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow and a Distinguished Fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The Rockefeller Foundation grant that supported Bertini's fellowship was administered by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

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Preamble

When I walked in the door of the Rome headquarters of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) on my first day as Executive Director, I was about to take on the responsibility of leading a then \$1.2 billion organization with 8,000 staff members and operations in 80 countries. It was a time of massive geopolitical shifts caused by the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union. I was taking office three months after WFP became independent from a parent agency, so I suspected that major change would be necessary.

I had been nominated by the administration of President George H. W. Bush. In advance of my appointment, a number of my government's officials went out of their way to make sure I knew about WFP through field visits, briefings and attendance at related international events as they presented my candidature to the United Nations.

But in the three-and-a-half months between the announcement of my appointment and my arrival, neither WFP nor the United Nations offered transitional support. I did receive two partial days of briefings organized by my predecessor in the Rome headquarters; multiple letters; and phone calls from job seekers, representatives of job seekers and staff



Catherine Bertini in Geneva, 2001.

This paper is written with incoming CEOs in mind so they can be better prepared for their challenging new roles.

who didn't think they had been well treated in the past. The best preparation that I had were from my past experiences and my gut instinct.

My experience with the lack of transition is not unique. In fact, it is the experience of most CEOs in the UN system. This paper is written with incoming CEOs in mind so they can be better prepared for their challenging new roles, avoid some of the pitfalls that others have encountered and hit the ground running.

Introduction

This paper provides food for thought for incoming senior officials of the United Nations on a range of issues related to leading their organizations and embarking on change.

For decades, the Rockefeller Foundation has been committed to supporting excellence and efficiency within international organizations, especially the United Nations. In 2017 the foundation funded a fellowship in which I looked into various aspects of international organizations, including leadership, governance and change management. I found that while wholesale global, institutional change may not currently be imminent, there are individual institutional changes under way. There is always a need for strong, competent change leadership within each international organization. Each executive head (agency chief executive) has a mandate to understand his organization and, where appropriate, lead change. Thus, my decision was to focus this aspect of the fellowship on leading change within the United Nations and its agencies.

From the onset, I decided that the paper must reflect the actual experience of leaders. I met with some current international organization leaders and had informal discussions with others. As a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow, I convened former UN CEOs and deputies from a variety of agencies and departments at the foundation's Bellagio Conference Centre in Italy in 2019. Those leaders' inputs, my own thoughts, written documents and comments by others in writing or interviews are the basis for this paper.

The 17 senior leaders who gathered in Bellagio had vigorous discussions, agreed on several key ideas, and found many common experiences. The transition to UN leadership,

The transition to UN leadership is so significant that it is crucial to prepare in advance.

especially by the majority of executive heads who arrive from outside the system, is so significant that it is crucial to prepare in advance. The first 100 days in office must be used to learn about the broad mission and purpose of the organization, the state of and needs of the staff and the intricacies of leadership. All of us recounted our challenges in bringing about change, whether typical changes of practices, structure and systems or transformational change. Some changes were successful, some were not, and some were fairly minor, but we found there were important lessons to learn from all.

The discussion confirmed my own experience. The participants could not identify an incoming UN agency CEO, not even the UN Secretary-General, who had any preparation beyond briefings and recommendations and what he created for himself. Yet the demands for immediate leadership are enormous. On occasion, an incoming official had transition support from a foundation or government on an ad hoc basis. But there was no organized information on change management and no guidance for how to begin and follow through on leading organizational change.

This is very problematic given the immense issues facing incoming leaders. Most UN organizations and many Secretariat departments are very large, with complicated dynam-



Leading Change conference participants at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Conference Centre, February 2019.

ics affecting them from inside and out. The Secretary-General, along with every peace-keeping mission head and every agency head, is expected to lead global or national change amidst endemic poverty, disease, malnutrition, war, civil strife, natural disasters, climate change, fragile peace and changing geopolitical winds. Often, the high expectations for success – measured in building peace and saving and improving lives, communities and nations – are matched with low or unclear expectations of funding and necessary political support. Yet the world expects success and results. This requires mature, creative, careful but risk-taking leadership.

A UN agency CEO has significant power and authority, but how he uses it will impact, in large measure, the ability to create relevant and lasting change. Many leaders have succeeded in spite of the challenges and seem to use common approaches, which this paper describes:

- ▶ acting as a positive role model
- ▶ carefully assessing the mission, performance and capacities of the organization
- ▶ implementing opportunistic changes for ongoing improvement
- ▶ if necessary, leading the organization through major transformational change

The first chapter, “Coming in”, captures what new leaders should do before arrival, when they walk in the door and over the first 100 days. The second chapter, “Leading a UN organization”, focuses on personal leadership, building relationships with staff and governing

bodies, getting a handle on performance and accountability, and dealing with the loneliness of the job. The last chapter, “Leading change”, is broken into two broad areas. The first explores how leaders seize ongoing opportunities for change and move them forward. The second examines how leaders assess whether transformational change is necessary and, if so, how they envision, plan and implement it. The bibliography provides a selection of publications of past examples of change.

The primary audience for this paper is incoming UN agency heads, Secretariat department heads and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. It might also be useful for incoming deputies and other new senior officials in UN organizations. I hope it provides valuable advice, insights and lessons learned from the personal experience of many UN leaders and will therefore be useful to new senior leaders as they embark on their challenging missions to change the world for the better.

Chapter I: Coming in

Pre-entry: From appointment or election to arrival

The time between an appointment or election to lead an international organization and the first day on the job is extremely challenging for a new executive. She has been working toward achieving the position for some time and, presumably, briefing and planning for the possibility. The euphoria of hearing the news of the appointment or election then becomes tempered by all the work yet to be done to prepare and depart from the current, demanding job that any successful candidate probably possesses.

Many new constituents will be angling for face time with the incoming agency head. Others will be lobbying for jobs. The new head will want to be conducting briefings, considering staff, finding housing and organizing her own transition. At the same time, her existing job has its own obligations, projects to complete and active constituencies. Balancing the incoming and outgoing assignments and their competing demands for time is her first challenge.

My appointment to lead WFP was announced 13 December 1991, and my new assignment was to begin 5 April 1992. Meanwhile, my role as Assistant Secretary of Food and Consumer Services for the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), with the responsibility for domestic food assistance programmes, was already a 50-hour-a-week job. To manage both, I set aside specific days for travel to Rome for briefings and the housing search and prioritized the type of appointments or calls I would take related to the upcoming role. In doing so I annoyed, if not angered, old associates who wanted me to hire their friends and denied seeing an ambassador who later became the head of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and therefore one of my future bosses. Nonetheless, I still believe it was important to create priorities and try to honour them in the interest of completing one role and starting the next.

Of course, not every new agency head has the luxury of 110 days to prepare. Some have almost no official lead time. Henrietta Holsman Fore had a 10-day transition to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). David Beasley was appointed only seven days before the beginning of his term at WFP. Sérgio Vieira de Mello was appointed 51 days before his start date at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Sadako Ogata also had less than two months from election by the UN General Assembly to assume her role as UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). She writes in her book, *The Turbulent Decade*, that "life turned very hectic. I had to grade exams and papers and approve theses. I could not abandon students".¹ Even if there is time, the United Nations offers little to no assistance for the transition. The current Secretary-General António Guterres was provided space and a carryover senior staff member but had to do his own fundraising for his transition and temporary staff. Incoming UN agency leaders are on their own to create transitions. To a certain extent they are at the mercy of their predecessors' willingness to organize a transition, as the predecessors usually have the authority to provide whatever they choose.

There are many things to think about in this interim period – if you have the time:

- ▶ What is the mandate and mission of the organization as written in its charter and governance papers?
- ▶ How well is the organization considered to be achieving its mission?
- ▶ Whom does the organization serve? How effectively does it serve them?
- ▶ What does the organization chart look like? How many staff members are there?
- ▶ What is the budget? Who provides the funding?
- ▶ How does the governance process work? What countries are currently on the board? What are some of their major concerns? Does the board micromanage?

Where do you learn all of this? You can request briefings from your predecessor while she is still in the job. Officials in your own government may have answers. But much will be discovered from meetings with interested parties from other governments, active nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners and major donors. If there is time and she is amenable, the outgoing executive head may include you in an all-staff meeting or invite

Learning about the organization is not enough. You need to examine your own personal passions, biases, values, and leadership vision before walking in.

you to visit offices. Some incoming leaders have had the benefit of support from interested foundations. Briefings and background are critical. It may not be possible to learn as much as you would like before you walk in the door on your first day, but the organization will be more than happy to help you learn once you arrive.

The leaders in Bellagio agreed that learning about the organization is not enough. You need to examine your own personal passions, biases, values and leadership vision before

walking in. You should assess what can be taken from your past experience and anticipate what the new organization knows or thinks about you. You need to plan how you will talk about yourself. You may want to build a small, virtual support group of friends or former colleagues who understand you and what you will be dealing with. They could listen to your concerns and provide advice.

Walking in the door: The first 100 days

“I solemnly declare and promise to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as an international civil servant of the United Nations, to discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the United Nations only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any Government or other source external to the Organization.

“I also solemnly declare and promise to respect the obligations incumbent upon me as set out in the Staff Regulations and Rules.”

– *Oath of Office for international civil servants*



Secretary-General António Guterres' first day of work, 3 January 2017, accompanied by Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary-General (left); Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed (right); and other senior officials.

I will never forget the heavy sense of responsibility that overcame me when I recited the oath of office in 1992. I was being asked to dramatically expand my scope, to think globally and to somehow lead an incredibly complex, international bureaucracy in need of significant change.

How you enter, how you speak, what you wear, whether you treat your new colleagues with respect, whether you show a keen interest in their work and who, if anyone, you bring with you will all be important to whether your first weeks and months are smooth or rocky. These challenges can be summarized as modelling your values, understanding your organization and making your first personnel decisions.

Modelling your values

Your responsibility now is to the United Nations and to the international civil service, not to your own government. William Swing, former Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), said that when his government asked him if it could put in his

Your responsibility now is to the United Nations and to the international civil service, not to your own government.

name as a candidate for election to lead IOM, he responded that he would be pleased to accept its endorsement but not its instructions on how to run the agency. At your appoint-

ment, he said, emphasize that your focus and loyalty is to the organization, not to your government or a previous employer. Swing said that this served him well for two mandates (10 years).

On the other hand, in a 2018 China Central Television (CCTV) interview, Wu Hongbo, former Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, mentioned that part of his UN role was to protect China's national interest. Christopher Burnham, who was UN Under-Secretary-General for Management, also articulated a commitment to his national government over UN principles in *The Washington Post* in 2005: "I'm not here to be a careerist. I came here at the request of the White House. It's my duty to make the UN more effective. My primary loyalty is to the United States of America". Such statements are contrary to the UN charter's direction to "refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization".

Any intergovernmental organization (i.e., the staff and governing board) is waiting to see whether the new leader is serving herself, her government, or the organization. It is not difficult for people to judge this, which they sometimes do very quickly. There was a strong collective view among the leaders in Bellagio that every agency head must follow

Box 1 - Being different

For decades, the image of a senior UN official was that of an older man, more often than not from the North. Especially now with Secretary-General António Guterres' actions to achieve 50/50 male/female parity among his senior appointees, there is no longer a stereotypical persona (see photos of UN agency heads in 1992 and in 2018). But that doesn't mean that women and people from the South are suddenly accepted by all. Often, they still have to take extra steps to earn respect.

When then Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Ibrahim Gambari to be the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs in its present configuration, Gambari was the first person from the South to hold the position. There was rumbling in the ranks about this, so the Secretary-General appeared at an all-staff meeting of the Department of Political Affairs to underscore his support for the new Under-Secretary-General.

Ameerah Haq reported that when she became Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Timor-Leste, she made extra efforts to work with the police and the military to gain their confidence, particularly to underscore the importance of capacity building. Additionally, there had not been a woman in such a leadership role there before.

In the late 1990s there was a predominance of female agency heads in the funds and programmes dealing with development and in humanitarian work. Three of the four executive heads of the organizations in the UN Development Group were women: UNICEF, UN-



Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the UN Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in 1992, predecessor body to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

the rules of the organization from the very beginning and not expect exceptions. If the leader doesn't follow the rules, how can she demand that the rest of the organization follow them? How you present yourself, whether your press is focused on the organization or on you, whether you support the United Nations and the Secretary-General, whether you spend the organization's money on your housing and your entertainment, and many other actions will all influence how your staff and sometimes your governing body will define you and your personal mission. Perhaps the most powerful words about this are from former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who wrote in his book *Markings*: "Success for the glory of God or your own, for the peace of mankind or for your own? Upon the answer to this question depends the result of your actions".²

Enter the organization expressing appreciation for the new role and respect for the mission and accomplishments of the organization. Everyone – the beneficiaries, staff, board, donors and partners – wants you to be an articulate and effective representative and speak of your group's work with pride. Know enough about your organization to do this on day one. Plan what you say at the beginning. You may want to consider training in public speaking and/or in handling the press. Since much, if not all, of your budget may come

FPA and WFP. The three organizations had issues with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), especially over the Resident Coordinator system, which was then led by UNDP. Often, UNDP officials characterized the differences as the women giving the man a hard time. Gender had nothing to do with it.

Twice when I introduced myself as Catherine Bertini, the Executive Director of WFP, once to an Italian official and once to an American protocol person, I was told that I was not who they were expecting, as they were to meet an Under-Secretary-General of the UN, and that clearly could not be me. Kofi Annan once gave me some unsolicited advice on this topic: "Don't worry if people underestimate you. That makes it easier to surprise them".



Secretary-General António Guterres and the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in 2018.

from voluntary contributions, the effectiveness of your voice and of your organization's public relations approach is important to your organization's success.

Having an understanding of yourself and how you come across to others will enhance the effectiveness of your leadership. You are the leader, not one of the guys. Some people will never call you by your first name and always use Mrs. Bertini or your title. WFP folks mostly call their Executive Directors "ED". From the beginning, I tried always to dress like I thought the head of the agency should dress – suited skirts or dresses in any office, casual skirts on field trips and jackets with pants only on long airline flights. (Of course, this was before chancellors and secretaries of state made pantsuits ubiquitous.) Also, I never wore blue jeans while on duty. Mari Simonen, former Deputy Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), also agreed that the leader should pay attention to the clothes she wears. If your clothes or jewelry are too smart or expensive, it may send the wrong message and create resentment. This is true for women and men.

Ameerah Haq stressed that when you enter an existing mission, you must deal with a range of existing senior actors and therefore must understand their perceptions of you and your role so you can gently and gradually break down their stereotypes and prejudices.

Having an understanding of yourself and how you come across to others will enhance the effectiveness of your leadership.

Irene Khan, Director General of the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), suggested being aware of your reputation and working out a strategy for how to present yourself. You should understand your preferred way of working and meld that into what works best for you and for others. Don't be autocratic or arrogant, she said. When visiting field operations, make a point of visiting more remote locations and not always the capital. Luis Fernando, Chief Operating Officer of the NGO Fundación Paraguaya, recommended caution: "When one is in a position of power, the temptation to be arrogant is huge". I would add not to fall for the trappings around you. There will be a car and driver assigned to you and someone who meets you as you exit an airline jet bridge and takes you to the VIP room while others handle your luggage and official entry. But always remember to thank the driver, the flight attendant, the cafeteria workers, the security officers and others who help you out.

Understanding your organization

As in any organization, there are a variety of basics you need to master. You had some information about the organization before you entered, but in your first few months on the job you need to develop a detailed and nuanced understanding of internal and external players and performance. In the process you must establish priorities and timelines for yourself for the transition and learning phase. Is your funding and financial management system in good shape? How is your staff organized, trained, selected, promoted and contracted? What is the gender balance and the regional balance? Does your organization respect and support its staff? Is it perceived to be a fair, transparent and moral organization? Does the organization perform as it should?

There was consensus among senior executives in Bellagio that there is never enough time to learn all you should know about your new organization because you need to start making tough decisions very quickly, so your learning curve is steep. But you can steer the process around specific issues and people. There was also consensus that this is not the time to announce your vision for major changes. That will come after you have had time to get the lay of the land and engage in more focused assessment.

At this stage, all agreed that listening is critical. You “cannot overemphasize the importance of listening”, said Gerald Walzer, former Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees. Listening is not just a briefing or headquarters process. Helen Clark, former Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), suggested that “if most staff are in the field and outside headquarters, you need to get to the field quickly”. Visiting the field builds knowledge, credibility and legitimacy. Every UN agency is a bureaucracy, and the norm is to follow hierarchical systems. For delegation and management this can work in your favour, but when it comes to knowing what is on the mind of your staff, you cannot depend on managers. You must find ways to listen to people at all levels and in different places.

Helen Clark created brain trusts of people from across the organization to get feedback. Jessie Mabutas, who served as Assistant President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), advised having conversations with the audit function staff early on to get an independent view of current finances and the state of the organization as a whole. Irene Khan emphasized the need to create time and spaces to meet with people you would not normally meet, including after work in social settings. She and some others sent out birthday cards to staff members.

Listening doesn't start and stop with your organization's staff, but must include meetings with governments, donors, partners in the UN and the NGO community, and other stakeholders. Most importantly, find out what customers and beneficiaries think about how your organization works. Do they think you effectively meet their needs?

You have a governing body and need to learn about the governance structure and key players in that process. What does the governing body expect from you? What do you expect from it? Is there the correct mix of responsibilities between you and the board – with the board establishing strategic direction and approving your budgets and with you leading the agency? Or is there a history of micromanagement or neglect? What is your funding model? How secure is your funding?

A unique aspect of UN leadership is appreciating the larger UN system and NGO networks in which your organization operates. Louise Fresco, former Assistant Director-General of FAO, reminded us

that each agency is “part of a particular ecosystem, and its work and role need to be seen in the context of other international organizations, NGOs, regional bodies, etc.” Noeleen

Heyzer, who previously served as

Executive Director of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which is now part of UN Women, added that the organizational synergies inside such an ecosystem are critical to success. Early on, you need to understand that the work of your organization is not totally unique. Rather, it is one of the contributors in the broader international system. This

A unique aspect of UN leadership is appreciating the larger UN system and NGO networks in which your organization operates.

Box 2 – The first 100 days: Leadership dos and don'ts

Do

- Be an ethical role model.
- Reach out to all internal and external stakeholders.
- Prioritize building relationships with staff.
- Get to the field.
- Be ready to communicate the good things the organization stands for and has achieved.
- Emphasize your desire for innovative thinking.
- Figure out your organization's role in the bigger system.
- Remember that you are an international civil servant.
- Learn where the information is concerning finances and performance.
- Select your Chief of Staff.
- Establish your leadership with your governing body.
- Take care of yourself.

Don't

- Think you know all there is to know about your organization.
- Bring in a senior team of outsiders.
- Cave in to inappropriate pressures from governments.
- Restructure or launch a major change process immediately.

Source: Bellagio Convening 2019

brings you quickly back to the charter and mission of your organization. Ultimately, your agency was created to help improve people's lives. If you don't keep those people and that mission front and centre, you will never be as effective as you had desired when you began your new role.

In fact, many observers of the humanitarian system, some of whom convened in Bellagio for a different conference, pointed out that the United Nations is sometimes seen in the system as the big bully or the large organization to whom all other organizations must defer. Others, like Luis Fernando, said that the UN agencies always seem far away and that they are not really in the field like NGOs are. He said that they are important because they have money, but they are very slow to make decisions and impose many conditions. In his book, *A Billion Lives*, Jan Egeland, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, writes, "The growth in high-quality civil society movements, especially within third world societies, is probably the single most important trend in global efforts to combat poverty and conflict. They are vastly more important than governments and intergovernmental organizations like the UN tend to recognize".³ The lesson here is

not to believe all the self-descriptions of your own organization. Instead, you must figure out how others in your ecosystem think about your group and learn this before you even enter the space.

At the same time, you should be thinking about the positioning of your organization and its work in the future. You aren't there yet. You are still learning about this new challenge. But soon you will have to think through your organization's place in the world as it is changing. It will be essential to develop an understanding of global trends. Geopolitics are always shifting. Will those shifts have major impacts on where or how you work or how you are funded? How will a significant decrease in security impact your work? Will donors become less generous or find other organizations to do what you do at a lesser cost? Are shifts in support for multilateralism going to impact your ability to succeed in your mission? Jessie Mabutas pointed out that UN entities are already competing with many others for funds from traditional donors and are "no longer getting preferential access to funds". Carolyn McAskie, former Acting Emergency Relief Coordinator for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and former Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Burundi, suggested that the "UN needs to do more to access funds in innovative ways". For instance, with WFP and UNHCR, at what point will donors want to cut out the agencies in favour of banks and NGOs to create far less expensive mechanisms to get cash to refugees and hungry people?

You will be learning the entire time you serve in your post. How well you learn and how wisely you lead with that knowledge will have a dramatic impact on your success. In the beginning of your tenure, learning so much so quickly can seem overwhelming. Many executives recommended that you use outside experts to help think through issues, act as a sounding board or provide fresh ideas. Sometimes it works best to have a single-issue, time-bound group of experts. Other times you may decide to bring together a wider group of external experts and internal staff to give you a nuanced understanding of the bigger picture. Again, diversity of gender, regions, expertise and experience is important for that

All leaders need trusted outsiders – experts or former colleagues – with whom they can share concerns and get advice.

process. Remember, you are entering a culture that is hard to decipher. The culture is created within a specific workplace, carrying aspects of the city in which the office operates and the religious and social traditions of the country. Ultimately, you may decide that aspects of the culture need to change (for instance, demeaning staff or ignoring women), but in the early days, understanding the nuances of the culture may protect you from making ill-advised decisions. Don't assume that "we have always done it this way" means that it is OK. This is especially true in relation to human resources policies because they could include treating people unequally or disrespectfully through contractual arrangements, transfer decisions, promotions, harassment, discrimination and abuse.

From a more personal perspective, the early days can make you feel unsure. All leaders need trusted outsiders – experts or former colleagues – with whom they can share concerns and get advice.

Making your first personnel decisions

Bringing your own people. Planning the makeup of your senior team begins before you arrive. You must decide whether to bring senior staff with you. The process continues as you assess existing “inside” executives and decide whether to keep, move or promote them. Virtually every former agency head who had input into this paper offered the same advice: walk in alone or with a maximum of one person. Do not bring multiple people with you. Any more than one automatically says to the rest of the staff that you don’t trust them. This sets up an unconstructive “us against them” dynamic that is hard to overcome. Bringing one person with you guarantees you have one person who you totally trust, who can advise you on what you do not see and who can “speak truth to power” to help keep you on a straight path. This person, however, should not be your deputy or in a position at the top of the organization.

A. Namanga Ngongi, former Deputy Executive Director of WFP, cautioned, however, that all of this assumes you are entering a functional organization. If it is well known that the organization needs dramatic change and if that is part of your mandate, this advice may not apply.

William Swing brought one assistant with him. Helen Clark brought one advisor. Sadako Ogata entered with no one, but soon thereafter hired an assistant to liaise with donor governments. Carol Bellamy, former Executive Director of UNICEF, entered alone and later brought a former colleague to lead its finance operation. I arrived alone. Six months later I hired a former USDA colleague who had been at FAO for a year as my Chief of Staff.

Leading the UN Secretariat is much more politically complex than running one agency. The last three Secretaries-General had different approaches in composing their immedi-



WFP Staff member distributing e-vouchers for food to women and their children participating in the Nutrimos project in El Salvador in 2017.

ate staff. Kofi Annan, the only Secretary-General to rise from the ranks of UN staff, built his immediate cabinet primarily from his former staff at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrived with a group of Korean nationals for senior roles. António Guterres brought senior people who had not worked in the Secretariat as well as some former UNHCR colleagues. None is a perfect approach, but there may be no such thing.

Some leaders bring an advisor from a previous role with a consultancy contract for no more than a couple of months. Essentially, this individual serves as the transition support, often partnered with a transition person from the inside. But this model works only if the new person is really temporary and doesn't angle for a role in the organization. If that happens, she – and you – lose trust within the organization.

Choosing your personal assistant. There is no agency in the United Nations where you are better off bringing your own personal assistant from outside the organization. The intricacies of the system, the languages, the culture, and processes are best known by the women and men who serve in these roles throughout the system. Replacing them with your own person from the outside is done at your own peril, as you lose access to a wealth of knowledge of systems and contacts.

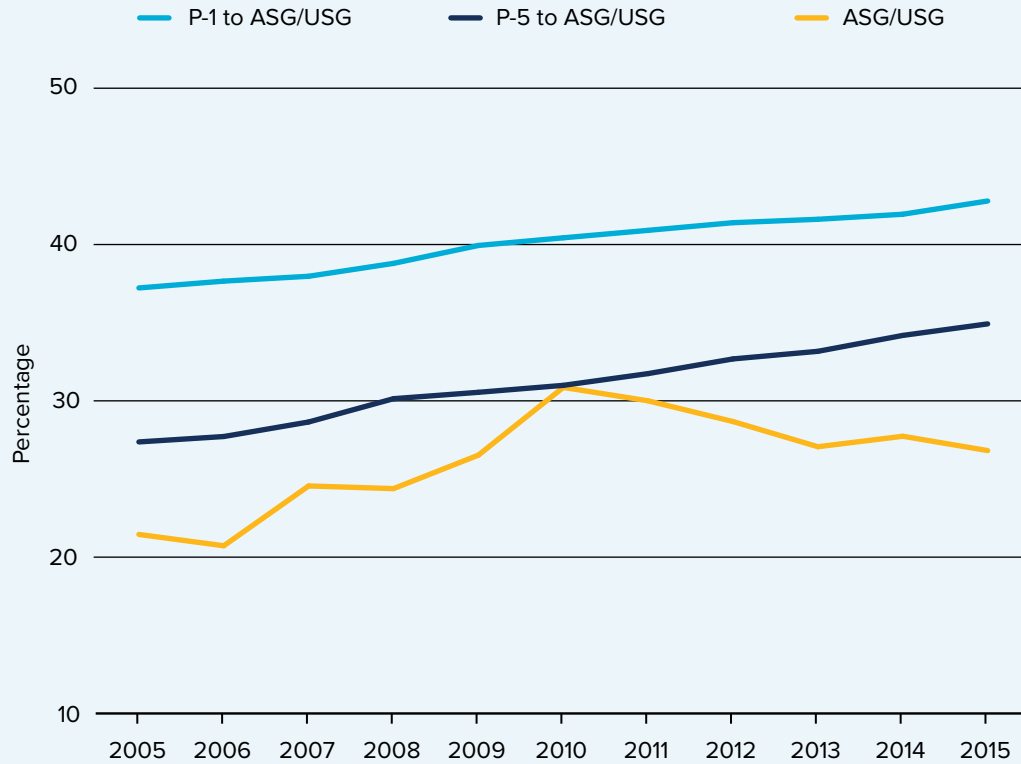
Selecting the Chief of Staff (or Director of the Office of the CEO). Senior officials all agreed that the Chief of Staff is critical to the success of the CEO. Choose wisely. The job is not to run the organization or even the staff, so the name is a bit of a misnomer. The job is to run your office. Therefore, that person needs to understand in depth your organizational and personal objectives, your style of operating, your family obligations, etc. She must ensure that all the support mechanisms that make you most effective are working properly and to your satisfaction – your scheduling operation, travel, the type of information you receive, your priorities for your time and some quality control over the output of the organization in meeting your established objectives. She is not the Chief Operating Officer of the organization, and she should not second-guess the programme or operational side. She certainly can and should raise issues you should be aware of or deal with. You need to trust her, but that does not mean she needs to be recruited from the outside. This totally depends on the organization and your particular situation.

Carol Bellamy described an effective Chief of Staff as someone who will be direct and frank, who will give you honest feedback, who will speak truth to power. She said the person should have respect within the organization and have a sense of the organization. Further, she advised that it would help if that person had field experience in the organization. Most CEOs did not distinguish between nationalities. Some thought it didn't matter if the Chief of Staff was the same nationality as the agency head. Others thought that the agency head was stronger if the Chief of Staff was of a different nationality. Again, this will depend on your specific situation.

Knowing when change is necessary

While this paper highlights change, it's important to remember, as Helen Clark said, that a leader should not arrive assuming all is wrong. You should take your time. Don't change for change's sake. Change because it is the right thing to do.

Figure 1 - Representation of women (P-1 to ASG/USG) in the UN system (2005 to 2015)



Source: UN General Assembly, Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system: report of the Secretary-General. 27 July 2017. A/72/200.



Senior women on staff (P5 and above) at the World Food Programme in 2002.

Chapter II: Leading a UN organization

You are already a proven leader. Your leadership is one of the major reasons you were appointed or elected to this new role. But if you have limited or no experience in the UN system, you will find that some aspects of your leadership style may be more important than they were in the private sector, your government or former NGO. In this chapter, you will find advice for engaging in leadership behaviours that are particularly important for your success in UN organizations.

There are hundreds of leadership roles, behaviours and characteristics recommended for private and public executives. The following is a list of essentials that apply to the leaders of an organization in any sector:

1. Communicating a compelling vision of the outcomes you want the organization to achieve and the changes you want to see in the world
2. Empowering and inspiring the staff
3. Driving for results, high performance and accountability
4. Making tough decisions
5. Acting with integrity and being trustworthy
6. Influencing the broader systems, partnerships and networks that contribute to your organization's mission
7. Carrying out transformational change

Your success as a leader in the United Nations is important not only to your organization, but to the United Nations as a whole. As Fabrizio Hochschild writes in *In and Above Conflict: A Study on Leadership in the UN*: “The UN system, UN mission and UN organizations are critically dependent on the quality of leadership provided by senior UN officials . . . [which] has a major impact on the UN's ability to sustain and to give meaning to the unique set of principles and international norms that underpin the organization and lend it authority and enduring relevance”.⁴

What is specific to leadership in the United Nations?

While leadership in the United Nations is based on the same principles as other sectors, UN organizations also present unique challenges that have to be understood and managed well. UN organizations are complex. They have evolved in many different ways.

By definition, UN organizations are established and owned by Member States. Members of governing bodies are almost always representatives of Member States. They sit on the boards to further the interests of their governments and to provide governance to the organization you are leading. Unlike corporate boards, UN boards are much more entwined in national and geopolitical interests that impact policy decisions and funding challenges. Sometimes boards micromanage organizations or try to do so. Dealing with them is often like walking through a political minefield. Staying the course requires cour-

Box 4 - Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)

The leadership role of an SRSG, who is appointed by the Secretary-General, is critically important. An SRSG has a mandate from the UN Security Council (UNSC) primarily to bring peace to the country or region he represents. The SRSG supervises the peacekeeping troops recruited from Member States, civilian support staff and most other UN activities in the country.

In addition to the usual leadership roles involved in running an organization, which can be as large as several thousand staff members, the job of the SRSG is especially challenging for a number of reasons:

- The situations on the ground are very volatile. They require fast decision-making of a political, military or humanitarian nature with little time to consult headquarters or the government or to build consensus among your senior managers.
- You have very little flexibility to adapt the mandate to changing circumstances because of the highly political nature of the mandate and the very complex negotiations that preceded it in the UNSC.
- You will have relatively little interaction with the Secretary-General even though your title is Special Representative of the Secretary-General.
- You have relatively little control over the appointments of your senior managers, and recruitment processes can take months at a time while you are facing a serious crisis.
- Members of your management team will come from many different professional traditions and may have very little experience working together across the disciplines.
- A lot of time is spent on headquarters-driven reporting and administrative processes with your most common interlocuter, a mid-level bureaucrat.
- Sometimes, your role is further complicated by serving two leaders in a jointly appointed position, for instance the United Nations and the African Union.

Leading a peacekeeping mission is complicated and critically important. It requires a unique set of political and managerial skills.

age in the face of pressure. Each governing body has its own personality, and, of course, Member States have their own legitimate concerns.

UN CEOs have to navigate highly complex and politicized environments in which Member States and other actors have overt and hidden interests. By virtue of the fact that many UN operations take place in fragile communities, security also becomes essential. In addition, human resource issues and staff interaction become

UN CEOs have to navigate highly complex and politicized environments in which Member States and other actors have overt and hidden interests.

critical parts of your job. This all means that UN leaders need high levels of political expertise and managerial skills.

All UN organizations are multilateral and multicultural. The staff members come from all around the world. Their previous experience may be in government service or the private sector or NGOs, with many different national and organizational cultures. This presents an important challenge to CEOs: how to bring together so many different cultures and weave them into one set of organizational values and behaviours.

In most UN organizations, staff costs are a large percentage of the total budget. As a result, the CEO must spend a significant amount of time listening and leading on staff issues. This includes ensuring that staff members are treated equitably, have reasonable opportunities for mobility and promotion, and are safe inside and outside the organization. Safety is not just physical safety. It is also protection from hostile office environments and decisions based on entitlement.

All UN organizations today work with partners at the institutional, operational and implementation levels. Many of these partners are both collaborators and competitors. They are often competing for the same sources of funding. They may compete for access and support from the host governments. They are members of the same coordinating bodies that you are (for example, those for the chief executives of the UN, the development system, and the humanitarian system). The donors demand cooperation, and yet their own systems sometimes foster competition. The Secretary-General strives for unity and cohesion, but is constrained by complex political interests and the overlapping mandates of different agencies.

Almost all CEOs are appointed as a result of a political process. Some are proposed directly by their governments and appointed by the Secretary-General without a competitive process. Some are elected by their governing bodies after intense, politicized campaigns. Others are appointed by the Secretary-General after intricate but informal consultations with competing Member States or groups of Member States. All CEOs have fixed terms. Renewal is not guaranteed and is now usually restricted to two terms.

Resource mobilization is critically important. Although the UN Secretariat and some organizations automatically receive assessed contributions (dues), most organizations, including those with assessed funding, are highly reliant on voluntary contributions and are under pressure to find alternative sources of funding. UNICEF is the best-known exam-

Interacting with donors and understanding their priorities and concerns is a critical component of the CEO's responsibilities.

ple of a large organization that has been successful in raising a significant amount of its budget (approximately one-third) from individuals and the private sector.

Interacting with donors and understanding their priorities and concerns is a critical component of the CEO's responsibilities. Working to ensure that the organization's mission is in sync with the donors' missions is key. At the same time, the source of almost all the resources that fund your organization is basically public funds with taxpayers as their base. So always remember that you are a steward of public funds designated for public good.

Given the intricacies of the United Nations, it is important to understand the context in which you will be operating. Learn to navigate the complex, ambiguous and ever-changing environments. Build and rebuild sound working relationships with the governing bodies and donors. Engage actively in resource mobilization. Foster strong working relationships with the heads of key partners. Be an active member of the United Nations and other international coordinating mechanisms. Operate confidently in the broader ecosystem.

Never forget that you are in a fishbowl. Private-sector and even government roles will not prepare you for the intensity of the United Nations. How you represent the organization, how you carry yourself, what you say and how you say it can make all the difference. Remember that the way you operationalize these critical roles makes a huge difference in whether you are effective or not.

In an informal survey, senior civil servants were asked what personal qualities they would hope an incoming leader would have. Although they have no choice or even voice in the selection process, they have seen many leaders come and go and can tell the good

Box 5 - Desirable qualities of a UN leader

- Building trust and credibility
- Keeping staff morale high
- Being a role model
- Setting and driving your priorities
- Being courageous and maintaining a “toughness in leadership”
- Developing trust and boundaries with the governing board
- Making difficult decisions
- Trusting your staff
- Being self-aware
- Being fair
- Engaging with staff
- Being a good listener
- Building a shared understanding of mission
- Delegating, empowering and holding staff accountable
- Being present and available
- Representing the organization confidently and with pride
- Sticking to principles and resisting inappropriate pressure
- Matching words to actions
- Keeping your organization current

Source: Bellagio Convening 2019

from the bad. They want the new leader to succeed, and they want to support that person. They hope the new leader has good listening, management and interpersonal skills; sharp political instincts; and subject matter expertise. They highlight the relationship between the leader and the staff as critical to success. This requires trust, respect, two-way loyalty, humility and a lack of arrogance, shared rationale for important decisions and solicitation of input and advice on key issues, including change. An incoming manager at any level of the United Nations would be wise to remember these comments. The characteristics they identified were very similar to those discussed by leaders in Bellagio (box 5). The next section looks at some of these qualities and provides concrete examples and advice.

Building trust and credibility

Your ultimate effectiveness as a leader of your agency will be significantly impacted by the trust and credibility you engender within your organization and with your peers in other organizations. This is especially true with your senior management team. Mari Simonen reminded leaders that your senior management team cannot help you to be effective unless you trust it. Carolyn McAskie advised leaders to “trust your staff, as normally they will live up to expectations. They want to be successful. You need to ensure that they have opportunities to do so”. She added that maintaining trust in your senior management team requires acknowledging and working on any internal team problems.

On a larger scale, building trust means being transparent in your operations and decision-making processes, including highlighting issues and admitting mistakes. Nigel Fisher, former Executive Director of the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), pointed to the

Building trust means being transparent in your operations and decision-making processes, including highlighting issues and admitting mistakes.

length of time it took for UN leaders to admit that Nepali troops were the source of the cholera bacteria that led to the devastating cholera epidemic in Haiti. This delay eroded trust when proactive communication and transparent problem-solving might have increased the United Nation’s credibility. Personal credibility is also essential to a leader. This kind of credibility is stronger if your colleagues know that your boss, for instance the Secretary-General, or your board has confidence in you, said Ibrahim Gambari. As mentioned before, he welcomed an all-staff town hall meet-

ing of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) convened by Secretary-General Kofi Annan during which the Secretary-General emphatically reiterated his full confidence in the new head of the department.

It is easy to say that UN leaders need to build trust by proactively communicating and listening. Have you ever seen an organization that was excellent at communication? Within the United Nations, UNICEF has a reputation of effective and well-organized public communications – not only through its headquarters and country operations, but also through its many national committees. But even UNICEF has multiple challenges with internal communications. Because of the geography, complexity and hierarchical nature, it is difficult to listen to everyone and to know what the staff knows and believes about the organization.

Keeping staff morale high

Staff morale is important in any organization. In the United Nations it is critical. Reward does not come from higher sales and monetary bonuses or plush assignments. Reward comes from mission and purpose. Recognizing individual accomplishments is, as always, important, but working as a team for a purpose larger than any one person – and larger even than the entire organization – is what excites the majority of the staff. In addition, in most UN organizations, staff costs are a much higher percentage of the total budget than in most large, private-sector systems. Therefore, low staff morale, which affects productivity, can be a huge cost to the organization. An organization with low staff morale for long periods of time will never do well in achieving its mission, and its leader will be incapable of realizing his vision.

Low staff morale has many roots – internal conflicts; stress; disconnect with the mission; inconsistent application of policies; lack of transparency, respect and fairness; funding instability; atmosphere of distrust and retribution – but it may be directly related to the leader and how he operates. Nils Kastberg, who has been a board member of at least six UN organizations, said that the agency head must be aware of how his management style impacts staff morale and how it might affect the staff’s well-being and mental health. He said that “poor or aggressive management styles undermine trust and impact performance”. An effective leader engages with staff members, respects their expertise, empowers them to make decisions at their level and listens to their concerns.

An effective leader engages with staff members, respects their expertise, empowers them to make decisions at their level and listens to their concerns.



Red Cross of Albania and WFP staff distributing aid in Kosovo in 1999.

Being a role model

What kind of leader do you want to be – one that is emulated or feared, respected or dismissed? As the executive head, you are always watched, often quoted and often discussed by others. You have the distinct opportunity to be a role model for all, especially for those who might specifically identify with you. Years after leaving WFP, I still meet younger, successful women leaders in international organizations who tell me that, as a younger female CEO, I was a role model for them even though I had never worked with them or even met them. For me, being a role model was showing respect for the staff and beneficiaries in both little and big ways. Do you eat in the cafeteria with the staff, or do you have food brought to your desk? Do you thank the security guards, drivers and cafeteria workers? Are you respectful of people's downtime to the extent possible? Is your speech respectful in meetings? Do your systems quickly and thoroughly investigate allegations of sexual harassment or other wrongdoing? Are staff members treated equally without regard to gender, nationality, sexual orientation or religion?

The same attitude and careful thinking apply to beneficiaries. No doubt you have heard the phrase, "There but for the grace of God go I". My grandmother said that to me so often that I started to think, "What if that woman was me? What would I want? What would I need?" As a result, I would always start a mission or initiative by understanding how it might impact the people my organization was supposed to serve. I learned a lot when I tried to place myself on the other side, as a recipient of the food distribution, maternal and child health provisions or the cooking pots. In what might have been noted only by me (except for the *Financial Times* reporter who said I looked like a Girl Scout leader), I always wore a skirt when visiting women whose basic attire included a skirt or cloth wrapped around them. It was my silent measure of respect.

Setting and driving your priorities

A UN agency head has so many invitations and meeting opportunities that there is always an almost overwhelming scheduling pressure. Early on, it will be important to establish priorities for how your office time is spent and how much time you spend in the field, on fundraising, at public relations events and in UN and other coordination meetings. Every one of your partners and stakeholders will expect face time from you, but you have to establish your own priorities and make sure your immediate office can implement them. Somehow, amid these many demands, you must organize yourself to ensure that you are present and available for your staff, your board and as many partners as possible.

During my first term at WFP, I was present at headquarters about 50 per cent of my days and was travelling the other half of the time. The travel was split roughly in half between visiting our field operations and visiting donors. However, after the new Secretary-General Kofi Annan established a new system of internal management committees, I had to add significant time for UN coordination meetings. Happily, video conference availability eventually cut down on much of the additional travel.

Setting organizational priorities is not easy given the dynamic environment in which UN organizations operate. The world changes quickly. Geopolitics make the landscape shift sometimes from day to day. Climate change impacts work in a dramatic fashion – usually predictable, sometimes not. Terrorism strikes when least expected. Governments change administrations and shift their own priorities and budgets. Developments in technology

create new, major opportunities, but also change the way the public understands issues and availability of services and support. Every leader must be aware of what is happening in the world and how it might impact his organization. He must know how to position the organization to take advantage of new opportunities to positively impact peoples' lives.

Once you have established a strategy or accepted the existing one, you need to focus on steering the organization in that direction. If staff members see you working on issues that don't directly impact your strategy, it gives them permission to do the same. If your donors see you working outside your lane, they may be less interested in supporting your work. Of course, it could be donors or governments that try to encourage you to work on a specific project of theirs or to accept a donation that does not fit into your strategy. It is as important to have a clear strategy as it is to resist the temptation to veer from it.

It is as important to have a clear strategy as it is to resist the temptation to veer from it.

Being courageous and maintaining a “toughness in leadership”

This is the required “toughness in leadership” discussed by Noeleen Heyzer and others in Bellagio. One of the areas where that toughness is most important is in responding to individual governments that want you to take contributions that don't fit your criteria or to hire certain staff members from within their ranks. Early in my first term at WFP, a government representative informed me that his government would like me to hire a member of my governing board's leadership team for an important role without a competitive process. I chose not to hire her, understanding the potential impact. The next year I had a challenging relationship with the board, but it was worth not establishing the precedent. After more requests from governments, sometimes from ambassadors asking for jobs for themselves, I did establish a precedent, which became a rule. The new procedure was that WFP would not consider hiring any person directly off the board or from a board member's government agency that dealt with WFP unless the person had been out of that role for at least one year. This worked for me. However, some of my successors abandoned the rule, reopening the door to government representatives applying pressure for jobs.

It is equally difficult to turn down donations, especially if your agency is voluntarily funded. But sometimes they don't make sense in terms of your strategy. This happened at WFP often enough that the agency created a committee of nutritionists and other experts to review any new food donation proposals. By now, much of the currency of WFP is cash, but food is still often in play. Turning down donors or not conducting an activity requested by a certain donor because it does not meet the organization's objectives can be problematic. However, agreeing to such a request can cause havoc and create an unnecessary precedent.

As Fabrizio Hochschild says in his paper: “There are different types of courage. One is the readiness to speak up to defend values in the knowledge that what one says may not prove popular. This type of courage also allows a leader to resist inappropriate pressure, take unpopular decisions and confront others where necessary. This courage is particularly critical in a UN context. A second, related type of courage is a willingness to

challenge the status quo, seek new opportunities, be ready to experiment and take risks without fear of failure”.⁵ For further thoughtful advice by Fabrizio Hochschild on leading in a UN context, refer to *In and Above Conflict: A Study on Leadership in the United Nations*.

Developing trust and boundaries with the governing board

The culture and past history of the organization contribute to the relationship between your governing body and the executive leadership. Traditionally, the board must be involved in setting the overall strategy and in approving your budget. Yet each agency has a different culture, and the board may be quite detached or may be heavily involved. Specialized agencies and the United Nations itself, where every government can participate on the board and sometimes on its subcommittees, are especially challenging to work

Each agency has a different culture, and the board may be quite detached or may be heavily involved.

with. Some boards resent the idea that the executive does anything other than present the budget and respond to their requests. Peter Hansen, who served as Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), noted that the power of the executive can shift depending on the issue under discus-

sion and how political it is. When it is in the interest of board members to ignore politically sensitive issues, the executive has more options to act. However, the executive is now isolated and politically unprotected. On the other hand, some boards like to micromanage decisions that should be the prerogative of the executive rather than engage in strategic discussion. Therefore, you must first understand what kind of board you have. Then you can lead or direct the relations so that your work together can be as smooth as possible.

Leaders in Bellagio discussed specific challenges they had in leading their boards. Board turnover was one. Carol Bellamy tried to actively engage with her board, but the membership was so transient, with governments often sending different people, that it was like working with a new board at every meeting. Gerald Walzer and Nils Kastberg had similar experiences, noting that this meant they had to exercise stronger leadership roles. Some boards expect informal and formal engagement. Helen Clark emphasized that learning those preferences early on is key for building relations. The leaders in Bellagio also pointed to a lack of preparation of board members. Governments don't necessarily think through the skill sets that make for constructive board members in their selection process. Some members did not have basic knowledge about roles, responsibilities and effective practices. Others did not prepare for meetings. Both problems resulted in delays and extra work for the executive.

For example, WFP inherited its budget approval processes from FAO. During one of my first internal sessions to review the budget that we might send to the board for approval, various department heads asked me to approve promotions for their secretaries and assistants within the context of the proposed budget. This made no sense to me at all. I thought this was board interference in operations, but it was how the promotions were always done. That year, instead, I asked the board to approve my authority to upgrade around 20 positions. The number was the same as the total of the last budget cycle year, but I argued

it was my job, not theirs, to decide which positions to upgrade. I told them I would report back in the next budget cycle on exactly what I had done. It worked.

For more intricate stories about how executives maneuvered through governing bodies to achieve long-term goals, it is worth reading James Ingram's *Bread and Stones*, which describes the organizational divorce of WFP from FAO, and Peter Piot's *No Time to Lose*, which includes detailed descriptions of the creation of the Joint United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

Your relationship with your own government is also worth a mention. It is important to manage that relationship for a variety of reasons. You want the organization to have continued support, especially during your mandate, but you don't want to create the perception or the reality that you take instructions from your government (or any other). This requires managing expectations. During my first term, there was a US Permanent Representative who disagreed in a board meeting with the WFP strategy paper on logistics. Additionally, he informally met with Americans from our staff during which he tried to undermine my leadership. At the next board meeting, I asked to see the senior official from Washington and the Permanent Representative alone in my office. I asked them whether it was US policy to oppose WFP's logistics strategy and was assured by the Washington official that it was not. In fact, they very much appreciated the WFP logistics operation. I asked whether it was US policy to undercut the American Executive Director within her own staff and was again assured that it was not. I then asked the Permanent Representative to cease and desist. Lo and behold, he did. Although it was infuriating and difficult when the Permanent Representative was undermining me with staff members and delegates, I real-



Governing board meeting room at the World Food Programme headquarters in Rome, Italy.

ized afterward that his earlier behaviour had backfired and had actually strengthened my position with the board. I was seen as stronger and more independent as a result of how I handled the disagreement with my own government.

Making difficult decisions

Every leader faces difficult decisions on a regular basis. In these cases, leading within the United Nations is actually not different than leading in any other organization. A leader must gather all relevant information and not delay or put off difficult decisions. Otherwise, he risks even more complications and/or political issues coming into play. At the same time, the leader must define his role and the scope of decisions he will make and those he will delegate. Cringeworthy examples abound about agency heads who did not delegate and who micromanaged. One such head used to hold daily senior staff meetings during which he would open his own mail, read some of it aloud, and assign senior managers to write his draft replies. Another approved all promotions and travel at every level of the organization and once ordered one of his own senior officials off an airplane because he had not approved the travel in advance. Agency heads who retain too much authority for themselves without delegating risk creating a weak organization. Carol Bellamy suggested delegating decision-making to the lowest possible level. In all cases, the leader must ensure that staff members at every level understand the scope of their responsibilities and are given the power to make decisions.

At WFP it was my intent to delegate many more decisions to field managers from the headquarters. However, before we could effectively do that, we had to create an integrated information system that allowed managers at all levels to have access to the same information, whether on finances, human resources or donations. It took several years and more than \$40 million, but we did create a workable, suitable system. Accountability then



Current UN Secretary-General António Guterres (center) with former Secretaries-General Kofi Annan (left, 1997–2006) and Ban Ki-moon (right, 2007–2016).

became a realistic option. If managers are empowered with authority for decision-making and have all relevant information, they can be held accountable for their decisions and for the success of their objectives. Without a system like this, a leader cannot be assured that managers will be effective in their mandates.

Shaping your senior management team

Most incoming CEOs inherit the predecessor's deputy, at least for some period of time. If you are lucky, the overlap is for less than a year, giving you time to assess the deputy's performance and your interactions. This helps you decide if you would like that person or another as your deputy. In some cases, the CEO never has the opportunity to choose a deputy, either because he is elected separately, as in the case of IOM, or because he is already in place with a long mandate. While knowledge of the organization is key for the first round of senior staff appointments, diversity is also critically important. Even 20 years ago it was noticeable when an organization's senior officials were mostly men from the North. Now it is seldom acceptable. Diversity in gender and in regional nationality is the new norm for obvious reasons. Also, you need to assess whether the candidates share your values.

Gerald Walzer identified four key characteristics of a deputy. He must:

- ▶ Appreciate the leader's qualities, entirely respect him and be motivated and willing to fully support what he is trying to achieve
- ▶ Always be ready to offer his opinion/advice and to critique when he differs on issues, but refrain from doing so in public, be it in house or outside; some will always try to drive a wedge between the deputy and the leader as a way of undermining the leader's powerbase and credibility
- ▶ Understand the role – which is to share, support and complement the leader – and have a clear understanding of who does what between the two of them; the deputy should remain conscious that he is not to compete with the leader
- ▶ Be a problem-solver who does not hesitate to exercise his authority and does not pass problems and issues to the leader that he can deal with and solve himself

In the experience of Ameerah Haq, the integrity of the deputy is crucial as well as having the guts and strength to stand up for principles and values. The deputy should have an established reputation and track record and strong interpersonal skills. A lack of coherence between the top official and the deputy is very destructive to both morale and per-

William Swing eloquently stated that an ideal deputy is “one who could step into my shoes confidently and step out of my shoes graciously”.

formance. Noeleen Heyzer suggested that your deputy should help you stand back and laugh and help you undo knots, but without your trust the deputy cannot effectively help you. William Swing eloquently stated that an ideal deputy is “one who could step into my shoes confidently and step out of my shoes graciously”.

Do you select insiders or outsiders? This is a dilemma. Leaders need senior staff with deep knowledge of the organization as well as fresh eyes and thinking. However, as already mentioned, not one of the executives interviewed recommended bringing in outsiders at the beginning of a mandate when you barely understand the organization. If there are serious weaknesses or if there is absolutely no one competent to fill a technical area vacancy, then recruiting from the outside, especially in a competitive process, could work. Meanwhile, part of building the organization and the staff's confidence in you is demonstrating confidence in them and, wherever possible, promoting from within.

Several times I opened senior-level jobs to competition and invited governments to recommend candidates. For instance, my deputy was filled this way once the deputy of my predecessor had left. A. Namanga Ngongi, from Cameroon, who was in WFP operations, was selected. Although he and I had grown up on different continents on opposite sides of the ocean, our values were remarkably consistent. We could almost finish each other's sentences. His work was critical to our success as an organization. He understood the organization inside and out. He had excellent judgment, widespread respect and my confidence. When I travelled, he stayed at the headquarters and had all the responsibility I had. I never returned and changed a decision that he made. Only once would I have made a different decision in what now seems an inconsequential matter, but to even once change a decision he had made would undermine the system as well as his confidence that I would back him up and the organization's confidence in the process. Therefore, the deputy's decision stood without change or challenge.



Photo: WFP/Photo Library

WFP senior leadership team in 1999 (left to right): Assistant Executive Director Jean-Jacques Graisse, who joined from UNDP in 1996 to lead WFP operations; Executive Director Catherine Bertini; and Deputy Executive Director A. Namanga Ngongi.

Every executive in Bellagio highlighted the importance of integrity in the selection process for senior officials. It is part of building trust and confidence between the leader, the staff and the board. Once the leader is seen caving to a particular government or interest, then it is assumed he will do it again and again. Your job is easier if you don't start that way. Governments of course should recommend candidates for open positions, but running an open interview and selection process is very different from just accepting a government's chosen candidate for a job without a transparent process. In fact, this is absolutely unacceptable, and the precedent will cause you even more dilemmas during your term. The first impression of you is not only about what kind of clothes you wear on your first day or whether you smile enough, but also about how you make the first round of staff decisions, which are being carefully observed by your organization and your partners.

Remember that any new directors or other senior people you recruit from outside your organization will have learning curves. They may need guidance on how to operate within your senior staff as well as within the United Nations. You might consider creating onboarding training for them not only on the intricacies of their new job, but on the principles for working successfully within the United Nation's multicultural, international context.

Coping with the loneliness of leadership

All day you are surrounded by people. The mission that constantly absorbs you is about helping people. When you travel to see the work of your organization, you are accompanied by staff and surrounded by beneficiaries. Yet you are in a job that many would describe as lonely. Peter Piot, the first Executive Director of UNAIDS, writes in his book, *No Time To Lose*, "These are lonely jobs, and there were very few people I could confide in and who understood what was at stake in terms of AIDS, how complex the environment was in which I had to operate, and how bizarre the behaviour was of people I had to interact with".⁶ Thoraya Obaid,

former Executive Director of UNFPA, added that "loneliness at the top is a reality which is tough to avoid". Many in Bellagio recognized this. The staff sees you as having more power than you really do. You have no pals at the office, and when you socialize with

people from work, your position is always implicit. It is important to develop supporting relationships and networks for as long as you are in your leadership role.

Thoraya Obaid also noted that "loneliness is minimized when there is a strong human-based relationship among the executive team, giving a sense of mutual security, safety and empowerment". Yet establishing this trusting relationship is rare, and you are still the boss with no peers in the house. However, you do have peers outside the house, and connecting to them is critically important. There was a time in the 1990s when there were few female executive heads in the UN system. Most were concentrated in humanitarian and development-related organizations. We started a practice of gathering twice a year on the occasion of the Secretary-General's meetings with all agency heads. These get-togethers were very useful from an operations perspective, but the camaraderie we built was even more important.

It is important to develop supporting relationships and networks for as long as you are in your leadership role.



Women UN agency heads in 2000 (left to right): Carol Bellamy (UNICEF), Carolyn McAskie (OCHA), Dr. Nafis Sadik (UNFPA), Sadako Ogata (UNHCR), Louise Fréchette (DSG), Dr. Gro Brundtland (WHO), Mary Robinson (UNHCHR), Catherine Bertini (WFP).

If you have a family with whom you live, this job is demanding for them, in part because you are so often travelling and working late in the office. You are also constantly the centre of attention, as your work world revolves around you. Both Peter Piot and Jan Egeland acknowledged the strain on family in their books. All leaders acknowledged that pressures exist. The United Nations provides little support for spouses and makes minimal effort to help them seek employment if they so desire. If your spouse intends to work in your headquarters city, you may both benefit from making those arrangements upon appointment, not upon arrival. You must pay extra attention to the needs of and stress on your family. Involving them in your struggles, openly discussing how your work affects them and taking time for family can be beneficial for all of you.

Finally, don't forget your friends and allies. Keeping in touch with close friends outside the UN circle is always important and helpful, as is that small group of advisors you hopefully organized before you started the job. These are the individuals with whom you can share your deepest concerns, highest hopes and craziest ideas.

Chapter III: Leading change

Change should be inherent in everything the organization and its leader do. That means you will always be engaged in change. On a daily basis, you are setting goals and continuously improving performance based on performance indicators, evaluations and reviews. Sometimes you see an opportunity to do things differently and seize it. In special cases you may decide – after careful observation and thorough assessment – that the organization needs transformational changes in mission, programmes, culture, systems and structure.

This chapter provides advice on leading different types of change. It focuses mostly on transformational change – first, because it is the most difficult and second, because the United Nations needs much more of it to reach its vision for the world.

Sometimes you do not get to decide whether or not to initiate change because it is part of your mandate or is absolutely essential for organizational survival. There are myriad examples in which the executives had no choice and faced mandated changes prompted by internal or external pressures. Nigel Fisher, as incoming Executive Director of UNOPS, was told by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to “fix it or shut it down!” William Swing arrived at IOM knowing that the current operations were unable to handle the hugely increased numbers of migrants around the world. UNIFEM was almost on financial life support when Noeleen Heyzer became its Executive Director. Carolyn McAskie arrived at OCHA with the instruction to “do something about the overlap and duplication between Geneva and New York”, a complex undertaking involving shifts of power and mindset as well as structure and systems. When Peter Hansen began his first term as Commissioner General of UNRWA, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had already decided, unilaterally, that the headquarters of UNRWA would be moved from Vienna to Gaza. Such a major change, which Peter Hansen led, was much more than a headquarters move and was fraught with internal and external complications.

Opportunistic change

Many of the changes you will make are what I call “opportunistic”. These are often aimed at fixing a problem or introducing a new idea, the “low hanging fruit” or “quick wins”. While they may seem obvious to you, the staff or other stakeholders may not see the issues as important, and you cannot go forward without their support. Effective leaders are always looking for some opening that allows them to move a change forward. This could be a veteran staff member retiring or a new board member who is an ally. Often, new policies require new systems or let you innovate. Sometimes it is the fact that you just arrived and people are willing to give you some leeway.

After arriving at UNICEF following the death of long-term and highly regarded Executive Director James Grant, Carol Bellamy found that every single one of the UNICEF country representatives believed that she reported to the Executive Director. If 150 people report to one person, then they really have no boss. Regional Directors did exist, so Carol “restructured” by empowering the eight regions with more managerial responsibility.

At UNFPA, when the US government decided in 2002 to withdraw all funding, the organization was short \$34 million. A large organizational effort was necessary to create the fundraising initiative to reach out to countries around the world and individuals in the United States to raise more resources. As a result, among all the voluntarily funded programmes, UNFPA earned the support of the largest number of donor countries.

Jan Egeland used the failures and lessons learned from the Darfur emergency response to generate an overhaul of the humanitarian coordination system. He did so in conjunction with other key humanitarian organizations rather than just within OCHA.

Kofi Annan's first round of change, announced midway through his first year as Secretary-General, was popular and welcomed. He created a cabinet of his senior officials as well as groups for the like-minded called United Nations Development Group, Peace & Security, Economic & Social and Humanitarian Affairs. He proposed the creation of the Deputy Secretary-General position to the General Assembly, and after long debate it was approved. All of those actions significantly improved coherence, direction and substantive communications among funds, programmes and Secretariat departments.

António Guterres launched an ambitious reform of the current Resident Coordinator system with the intention of strengthening the authority of the senior UN official in each country, strengthening cohesion of the United Nations and other actors in each country, improving accountability and focusing on delivery on the ground.

One of my first decisions at WFP was to move the headquarters. While the benefits seemed overwhelming to me, it required extensive background work and sensitivity to staff and key stakeholders in order to win their support. The story of the change is included in box 6.

Even when a change seems obvious, you have to pay attention to many of the factors you will read below. These factors are essential to transformational change. You need to understand resistance and be as inclusive as possible. You should communicate the benefits of the change and what the organization will look like afterward. You must consider timing and develop a plan for implementation based on data. You may need additional resources and should identify allies to support you and your efforts.

Transformational change

One of the most important responsibilities of any CEO is to decide if transformational change is needed and, if so, how to plan and implement it. What is transformational change? It is a change in vision, direction and culture, typically accompanied by new structures, systems, operations and even services. Some leaders undertake transformational change because their organizations are “broken”, but sometimes this process starts with smaller changes that uncover fundamental issues.

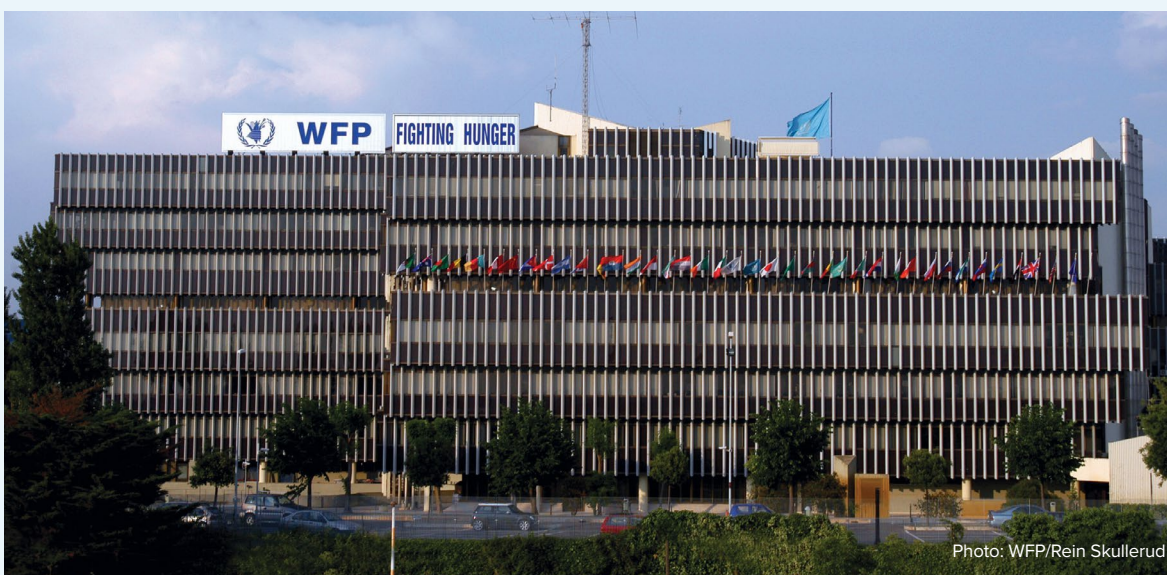
In most international organizations, you may find that the monitoring information needed to assess operational, financial and staff performance is not easily available, is fragmented or is even inaccurate. This was my experience at WFP. A few months into my first term, I could not get the financial information I needed to make decisions about field operations. Therefore, I asked the organization's external auditor to conduct a special review of the WFP field financial system. The auditor said, “We could do that, but you won't like what we find”. I said, “That is exactly why I want you to do it. How will I know what works and what needs to be fixed without a review like the one you could conduct?” The review was extremely negative, which was shocking news to the board. At the same time

Box 6 - Moving headquarters

I spent the first day of my first term, a Sunday, viewing the headquarters building when it was empty. The space was dirty and dingy. Staff desks were crammed up against each other. Toilet facilities were minimally adequate. I learned later that heating and air conditioning barely operated except in the office of the Executive Director and the room where the board met. I wanted to move the staff to a better facility as soon as possible, but there were two major obstacles. First, the staff liked the location primarily because of the proximity to their residences and their children's schools, despite a dismal office environment. Second, the government of Italy paid the rent on the space and didn't want us to move.

To build staff willingness, we commissioned an engineering study of building safety, which reported dangerously filthy air ducts and potentially hazardous waste under the building from old petrol tanks. After learning the results of the study, the staff wanted to move – but where to? We talked to staff members about their needs for working space, parking and location. In response, we reviewed the postal codes of all the staff, limited our search to sites convenient to most of them and found the facility that now houses WFP in Parco di Medici. However, our host government was not yet convinced. So we gave tours of the bowels of the existing building to delegates from donor countries who were attending our board meetings. This led to a proposition from the Australian delegate to delete the sentence “The Headquarters of WFP shall be in Rome, Italy” from our general regulations. When that draft was circulated, the Italian government became supportive. The reference to Rome headquarters language remained, and we moved in January 1998.

Of course, many staff members and delegates complained about the move itself and the new location, but that changed starting the day we moved in. Every staff member had a clean space with enough working area (though some complained about the open office configuration). Almost all had natural lighting. Everyone who wanted it had parking. A large UN flag flew over the building, seen by all from a major highway, and the WFP logo and acronym were painted in large letters on a billboard-type sign on top of the building. Staff morale and enthusiasm soared.



The new World Food Programme headquarters was opened in January 1998. Photo from 2004.

Box 7 - Transformational change principles

1. **Vision** – Begin with a clear vision and a compelling case for change.
2. **Leadership** – Change starts with the top and must be led from the top; demonstrate visible commitment.
3. **Engagement** – Change is all about people; involve people at all levels, communicate, enter into a dialogue and create a sense of ownership.
4. **Support** – Nurture allies and active change agents; get the right people into key roles.
5. **Resistance** – Analyze potential obstacles and resistance; deal with staff concerns and act decisively.
6. **Systems thinking** – Take a holistic, systemic view of organizational change; invest in adequate resources.
7. **Learning** – Build in success indicators, plan for the unexpected, manage risks, get feedback, learn and adapt – and be persistent.
8. **Processes** – Ground the change in the systems and processes.
9. **Culture** – Consolidate the change in behaviours, mindsets and the culture.
10. **Accountability** – Be accountable and hold others accountable for the utilization of resources, the achievement of results and compliance with policy.

we submitted the report to the board, we presented a short-term plan (which we called “quick wins”) and the outline of a long-term plan to transform the financial management system. Both plans won approval. Regular progress reports on the “quick wins” helped keep momentum going and build confidence in both leadership and the plan. My response to the report turned out to be one of the first steps in what was to become a transformational change for WFP.

The remainder of this chapter provides change principles to guide your journey and details how they play out in the context of the United Nations. Much of the discussion in Bellagio concerned the challenge of leading change. The 10 change principles in box 7 are summarized from a variety of literature and verified in discussions with senior leaders as relevant to UN executives.

Change is always more complicated than you think it will be. Thoraya Obaid said that internal change happens with systems “kicking and screaming”. William Swing pointed out, “Change is not easy and always takes longer than expected. For those seeking change, change always takes too long. For those resisting change, change appears too soon”. The United Nations, for example, has a special reputation for resisting change. One former journalist from *The Economist* captured the challenge as “changing the UNchangable”.

Peter Hansen pointed to the history of the UN structure as a unique barrier. The United Nations was created in the 1940s deliberately with silos, he noted, as a “conscious strategy to create separate, specialist entities so that sectoral/functional experts could engage with each other and focus on issues in their area of interest, not dissimilar from civil service structures in most founding countries (i.e., ministries of health, agriculture)”. Now, he con-

tinued, “the preference is for cross-cutting, multidisciplinary work, but the siloed formats help explain why various strategies towards greater coordination, like ONE UN or Delivery as One, have limited traction”.

To make it worse, you typically do not have much data on which to rely, and a large part of your decisions will be based on your gut instinct. You achieved a lot in your career to get to this point, so your gut is not to be underestimated. It will help you decide what change might be needed (or if you have no choice, how to design the change), but data and advice from many others will eventually validate your efforts or send you in a different direction.

Given this, my shorthand advice is:

- ▶ Do not change for the sake of change (or for your own ego).
- ▶ Change only what you have to change.
- ▶ Consider the pros and cons of changing what should be changed.
- ▶ Lead an inclusive process of change, no matter how complex or “simple” it is.

Planning the change

Timing

Your change vision is a result of considerable analysis: timing, assessment of external and internal drivers, and extensive work with stakeholders. In the United Nations, launching change is inextricably connected to your term in office. Although the consensus in Bellagio was not to start too soon, there was also consensus not to start too late. Ideally, you embark on significant change when your organization most needs it, for instance, when it is starting to age off its peak in the life cycle chart (see figure 2). However, in your lifetime as a CEO, you have only your term(s) in which to operate. Hopefully you will have the time to assess, deliberate and, if you think change is necessary, lead the process. You must create a timeline for your anticipated changes and set goals on the calendar for when each phase will start and finish.

It is important not to begin too late in your mandate. Any significant change will take time to implement and even more time to be accepted. Beginning a change in your last year or two may be important for external reasons, but it may not last beyond your tenure. If you start too late, especially during your last term, internal resistance will be almost too much to overcome, as everyone will know that you are a “lame duck” and that the organization will be around far longer than you.

Kofi Annan’s first well-regarded change initiative, mentioned earlier, started during the first year of his first term. Some expected that he would have another robust round at the beginning of his second term. Recall that at this time he had been re-elected by acclamation by the General Assembly six months before his first term was to end and that he and the United Nations had won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001. But his anticipated 2002 reform package was modest, to say the most. The euphoria of the years 2000–02 crashed in 2003 over the UN Security Council vote not to go to war in Iraq and the subsequent US–UK Coalition action to do so, coupled with the oil-for-food allegations. On top of that, tragically, the UN suffered the agony of the Baghdad Canal Hotel attack against the United Nations and the gut-wrenching loss of lives. By 2005 the Secretary-General felt he needed to embark on a robust change programme and did propose some initiatives in 2006.

A high-level panel he appointed also made proposals, but these came too late in his term to implement. Fortunately, the next Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon implemented some of the proposals.

Assessment

Once you've decided to consider launching a change effort, the first step is assessment. Remember, you may not need to engage in transformational change, which is highly disruptive, so you must know what is wrong and what requires fundamental reshaping, not just fixing. Because assessment is so crucial, the leaders in Bellagio recommended using trusted, experienced consultants to assist. Consultants can be of great value, but have to be chosen wisely and used carefully. They should be seen as advisors and not take over the review process, which must remain the purview of the leader. One strong word of advice if you have not worked with management consulting firms before: be sure there is an understanding about who from the firm will be doing the work. You also need to make sure that the consultant does not walk in with a cookie-cutter approach and has a comprehensive view of assessment. Too often a persuasive senior consultant presents to you, but the work is done almost completely by very junior people who have a limited understanding of any organization.

Some CEOs, for example at FAO, were forced to have an external assessment. They then responded to the report and separately planned and launched a change process. On the other end of the continuum, senior management carries out its own assessment and hires a consultant as part of the entire change process. If your consultant is playing an ongoing role, you should carefully choose the team working with her. Is your senior team or a special team drawing on different levels of staff?

Now you are ready to think about what the assessment should include.

Mandate and mission. Always start with the mandate and mission. How do the existing governance papers describe the mandate of the organization? What is the organization's stated mission? In your opinion, and in the opinions of others with whom you consulted in your transition, does the organization adequately fulfil its mandate and its mission? Does it go beyond either? Does the organization need to refocus? Are the mandate, mission, and associated programmes still relevant in today's world? Do they need change?

The mandate and mission are the prerogative and responsibility of your governing body. You can certainly propose changes to them, but as A. Namanga Ngongi pointed out, very few UN organizational mandates have been abandoned in the last 74 years. However, it is relevant to consider whether the mandate is still valid.

Internal performance and capacity. Assuming the mandate and mission are in order, think about whether the organization could, if managed or organized differently, better meet the mission and mandate. Are the fundamentals of the organization (finance, human resources, security, etc.) in order?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? Is it functioning at the most efficient and effective levels possible to meet its mandate? Essentially, is it healthy? And, is the organizational culture healthy?

External environment. What is the ecosystem in which your organization exists? How does your environment impact your organizational effectiveness? How does the organization impact the rest of the system? Where should the organization sit and be positioned in

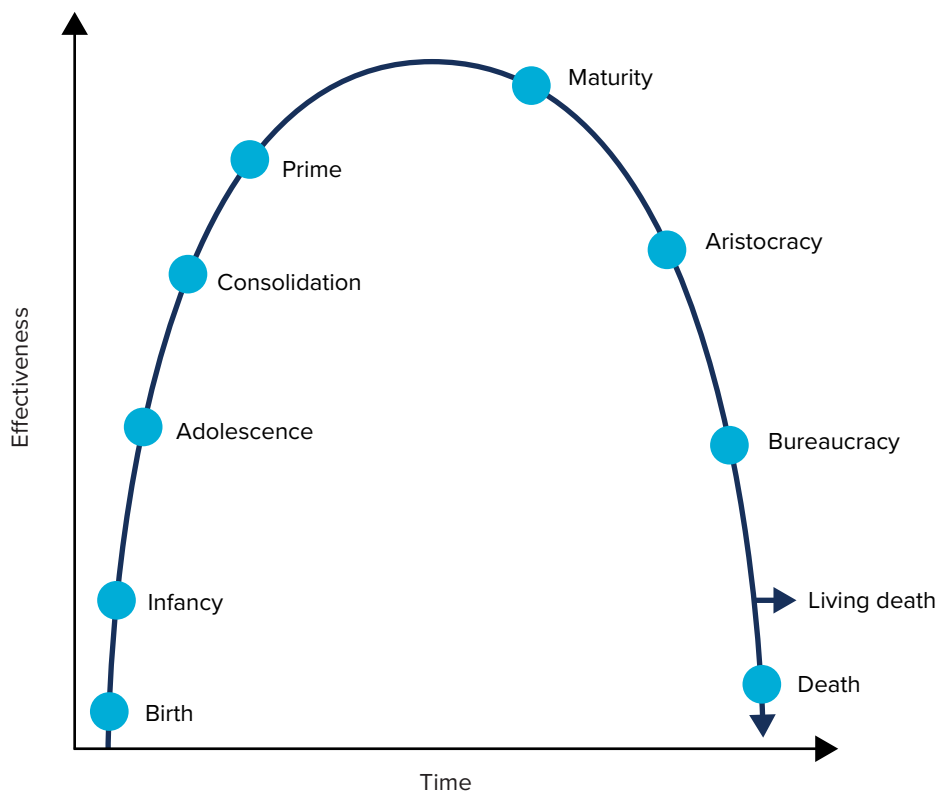
the future? What is the image and reputation of your organization within the UN system, within the countries in which it operates, and within global public opinion?

Future trends. Louise Fresco recommended taking a long view: “You need a long-term vision based on an analysis of the future by assessing potential trends and whether your organization is future fit”. She advised to “repair the roof when the sun is shining”. What are the external trends or contextual challenges that might impact your mission, programmes, or future effectiveness? Is your organization prepared to address them or are changes required?

Forces for change. Peter Hansen advised leaders to understand the forces and pressures for change and to differentiate between internal problems and external forces, understanding the underlying political forces at play and self-interest of those involved. What incentives or inducements can be used to facilitate the change process? What are the benefits for all involved to changing the status quo? Are there external or internal agents that are insisting on change? Who would, or could, be drivers of change? Impediments to change?

Life cycle. I found it very useful to use a life cycle model of an organization developed by Piers Campbell to situate my organization and to better understand problems and patterns associated with each stage (figure 2). Organizations typically have a life cycle that starts with birth and infancy, goes through adolescence, consolidation, prime, maturity, aristocracy, bureaucracy, living death, and death.

Figure 2 - Life cycle model of the internal evolution of an intergovernmental organization (IGO)



Source: Piers Campbell

racy and bureaucracy and then may end with death (sometimes called the “living death”). After all, few UN organizations have ever died. Well-established organizations often find it difficult to overcome the bureaucracy, entrenched systems and resistant cultures.

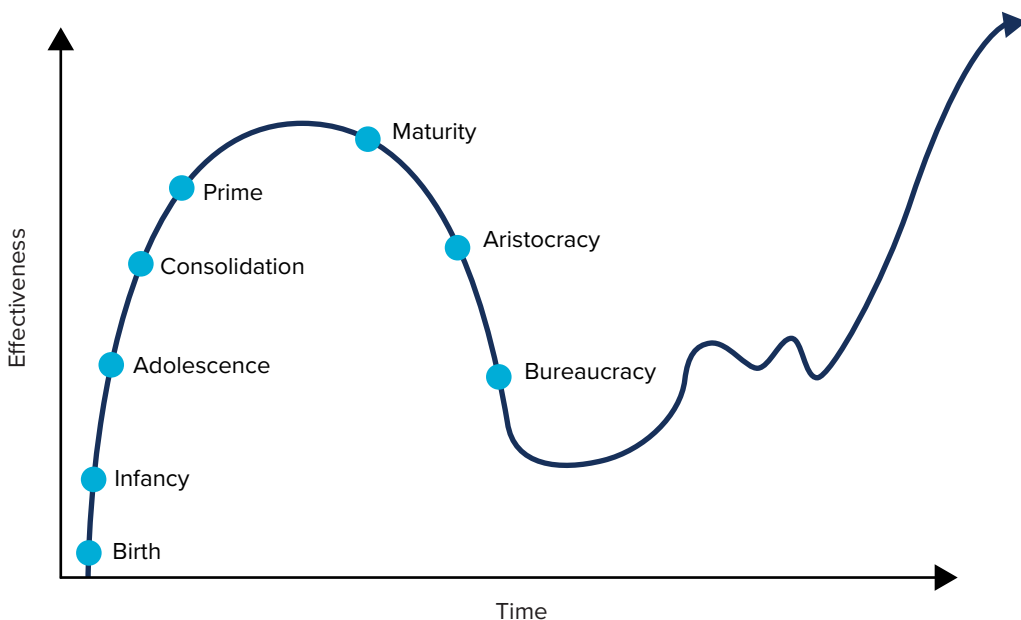
I used the tool to look at WFP and its partner organizations. In 1993–95, the tool helped us understand the entrenched bureaucratic nature of our administration, which we essentially inherited from FAO. It also helped us understand the tensions between our emergency operations (in adolescence) and our traditional development work (in aristocracy). In 2001–02 the extended life cycle model (figure 3) helped us to appreciate when WFP might be at the top of the curve (mature), hence the need to change before we began a decline. Whether the organization actually declined or not, the concept was extremely useful. It also helped me to understand that some UN organizations had been on life support for decades and needed to die or transform. However, they seldom ever do.

At this point you should have information from many sources (for example, life cycle analyses, employee satisfaction surveys, culture assessments, systems audits, stakeholder interviews, member state feedback) that you and your team have used to get a comprehensive picture of the past, present and future. Your consultant can be an essential partner in organizing the data and creating an analysis for you to consider what the organization should be in the future and how to get there. In other words, it is time to write the strategic vision and plan.

Strategic vision

How should your organization describe its new vision? How can you encapsulate what it aspires to do to better the world? Once you have the answers to these questions clear in your mind, you can then move to descriptive language that is clear and compelling and

Figure 3 - Extended life cycle model of the internal evolution of an intergovernmental organization (IGO)



Source: Piers Campbell

finally to concrete strategies for achieving the vision. UNFPA moved from a vision of family planning programming (which was perceived by some governments as an anti-developing country strategy) toward human rights, especially sexual and reproductive rights. Although there remains resistance to this agenda by some countries, it has gained support because of its human rights dimension. Thoraya Obaid pointed out that a vision statement becomes a marketing trademark, which makes it even more important to understand what the statement is advocating.

In 1994 WFP created its first mission statement. The four-paragraph statement proposed to the board by the Secretariat became two full, single-spaced pages by the time the board amended and approved it. We distilled their two-page concept into two words, “End Hunger”, as the vision. It was simple, easy to understand and easy to communicate. Yet the Director-General of FAO, an important player, scoffed at me for using “End Hunger”. “How can you possibly end all of the world’s hunger?” he asked. I told him that if one agency could end hunger on its own, there would be no hunger, but we would strive to end hunger in every community in which we operated. The vision challenges each organization to align activities toward a single end. The story reminds leaders to interact with organizations that have overlapping mandates and missions and to build consensus within networks.

Thoraya Obaid reminded us that the vision becomes the standard for an organization and needs to inform every action. For example, if the vision of the United Nations is to keep the peace, then the actions of the peacekeepers themselves must conform. Engaging in sexual harassment or worse weakens the whole organization and the credibility of the vision.

Internal change vision

Through your assessment process, you learned what you need to know about your organization. You also began to decide what strengths you want to build on and what weaknesses you need to address. You have a strategic vision that describes the end state. Now you need to package all of that in an internal change vision and plan.

Your vision of change should be aspirational and transformational. It should include an explanation of why the changes are critical to the future effectiveness of the organization. Remember, you need to build the same sense of urgency in your staff that you feel. Where possible, the vision should explain why these changes would enhance opportunities for the staff or otherwise make their work more impactful and useful. Louise Fresco recommended communicating the benefits of any change process. The vision for change should be firmly grounded in the strategic vision and in values of service such as improving the lives of the people you serve.

Your change vision and its implementation plan should highlight the effectiveness of the organization and give credit to it. At the same time, it should emphasize how much stronger the organization could be. It needs to take into account the current culture of the organization and how it might impact the process. Sometimes the vision will point to changes in the culture and why they are needed. The internal vision should be clear about the importance of the changes, while giving staff confidence that the organization will be even stronger with these new approaches. How you initially communicate that vision – and continue to promote it internally – is essential. Ibrahim Gambari stressed that before

you begin change you should be able to articulate why change will improve the organization and benefit the staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Implementing the change

Once you have a vision and know where you are going, you need leadership. It is key that you are the leader and that your senior management team (SMT) buys into this plan to make it happen. Organization leaders have been known to replace members of the SMT who drag their feet or disrupt implementation of change. In fact, several people said that moving or removing recalcitrant SMT members is a must. Part of your plan should be regular discussions, even having retreats to reflect on current issues with your SMT, advised Jessie Mabutas. If the SMT doesn't also demonstrate ownership of the process, the rest of the organization will never do so. Luis Fernando recommended continually ensuring that key people – staff, donors and the governing board – support your change.

Change partners

You are the overall leader, but you need a second senior person to carry the plan forward and a third person to act as your change manager. There was much discussion of both roles in Bellagio. Everyone agreed that the best people for each role are those already inside your organization – not people you bring or have brought from the outside. The people need to be known and respected inside the house. They need to understand the house. Change is challenging enough without suspicions and lack of trust in the people who are leading it. After all, you are a new person to the process, so surround yourself with people who share your vision and whom the organization already trusts. Some examples where the deputy had a large role in driving change include UNHCR, UN-RWA, and WFP.

Most Bellagio participants said that they would rely on their deputy to manage the change process under their leadership. Many believed that appointing a change manager

Staff members are the most critical stakeholders for the organization and in any change.

to follow through on the details and timing of the plan and to reach out to staff members throughout the organization is a positive move. Depending on your needs, the change manager could be a strategist, planner, manager, facilitator or some combination

of these qualities. Experience shows that change managers are not in these roles for long periods of time, as the burden is quite large and the burnout rate is high, so CEOs reboot the process every couple of years or so.

Your managers and staff should be partners in the change process. Therefore, your managers must have sufficient authority to make changes in accordance with the plan. If they seem to be disempowered (for instance, having to seek headquarters approval or clarification on a regular basis), then managers and staff will quickly lose confidence in the process. By definition, implementation must include staff at all levels. All those in Bellagio suggested that unless the change has deep roots, it will die. Staff members are the most critical stakeholders for the organization and in any change. Thus, they should have a major role in shaping the process of change and implementing it. Use multiple mechanisms to hear their voices and interact with them. Have space to listen to all of them, not

just senior managers. Helen Clark established staff councils to give feedback and advice on the change process. She warned, however, that the councils can become obstacles if leaders do not seriously engage with them, and they feel excluded.

Sometimes the complexity of the vision may require piece-by-piece implementation with support building at every phase. Early on at WFP we knew we wanted to move the regional offices to the field as some other agencies had done. But we were not just following the pack. We felt our operations could be far more effective if senior leaders and their support teams were based in or near the people they served. Experts in finance, human resources or logistics could then easily travel to countries in their region, and senior management would also be in the same or a close time zone. Implementing this concept took years. We started with Latin America and the Middle East, the two regions with mostly development programmes and few emergencies at that time. We set up regional offices in Managua and Cairo. (My successor later moved the Managua office to Panama City.) A few months after these moves, in December 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated much of Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Our regional director was immediately leading our response. We would not have been as successful if the decision-makers and key experts were eight time zones away in Rome. Next, we moved the Asia bureau to Bangkok. It then took another three years before we could be reasonably sure that the Africa bureau leadership would support regional offices moving to Africa.

We felt our operations could be far more effective if senior leaders and their support teams were based in or near the people they served.



Photo: Gawaher Atif

Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, Vice President of Uganda (standing); Judith Lewis, WFP Regional Director (seated left); and Catherine Bertini (seated right) at the opening of the WFP Kampala, Uganda, regional office, 2002.

Change incentives and culture

Making change requires taking risks. Each person in the organization and certainly all in leadership roles at any level will perceive a risk in change. You must encourage a risk-taking culture and support the innovators and out-of-the-box thinkers. The day that someone is disciplined or heartily criticized for starting something new is the day that much of the innovation shuts down. Louise Fresco suggested that you should “allow for a certain level of risk and be more accepting of any mistakes”. In addition to accepting risk taking, you need to incentivize it. In particular, you should incentivize actions that are central to the plan. As mentioned, when I joined WFP it was not the culture for staff to move from the headquarters to the field, and the regional offices were all based in Rome. Few senior jobs existed in the field. We slowly started to shift more senior-level jobs to the field, but we needed people to go with them. When the head of the Asia bureau, a longtime and highly regarded WFP staff member, offered to move from the headquarters to China to head the office, he helped open the dam. When another well-regarded but younger staff member finished his assignment in Somalia after having served in two other difficult duty stations, I gave him an accelerated promotion and offered him first choice for his next assignment. I wanted to send the message that taking and succeeding in difficult field assignments had a reward. (As an aside, he chose Tanzania, as it was peaceful and had no crisis to manage. Shortly thereafter, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans fled across the border into Tanzania, so he didn’t actually find the tranquility he sought!)

The word change implies innovation, but doesn’t always mean it. As Luis Fernando pointed out, real innovation is the key to continuous change.



Bullet-riddled façade of the World Food Programme office in Kigali, Rwanda, following genocide, 1994.

Security of staff

Security concerns – real and perceived – are critically important. Since the mid-1990s, the number of staff members killed in action has increased dramatically and the resulting security measures created to protect them also constrain operations. Attempting to move staff to the field or increasing operational efficiency becomes difficult to implement in the face of dangerous conditions. Make sure to have the best and most up-to-date security measures possible and to incentivize staff for taking on difficult assignments.

Accountability

Any transformation process requires a massive investment of the organization’s time and resources, even if it does not need a significant additional budget. It is important that you build accountability into your thinking and planning – accountability for the utilization of resources, the achievement of results and compliance with policy. Your core accountability is to your governing bodies and Member States. There is a broader accountability to the staff, beneficiaries and partners.

Accountability starts with engagement. From the very beginning, inform, consult and explore with the stakeholders. Define outcomes and indicators, measure performance and report. Only with this kind of data can staff improve performance.

Obstacles to change

It is no surprise that you will encounter many obstacles as you implement your change plan. According to the leaders in Bellagio, the largest one is probably the United Nations itself. As Mari Simonen said, it has a “risk-averse culture with few incentives to change or innovate”. Along similar lines,

Louise Fresco said that we work in a “culture that constrains risk taking and promotes inertia”. Add to that a complicated structure of governance. Helen Clark noted that the UN headquarters and

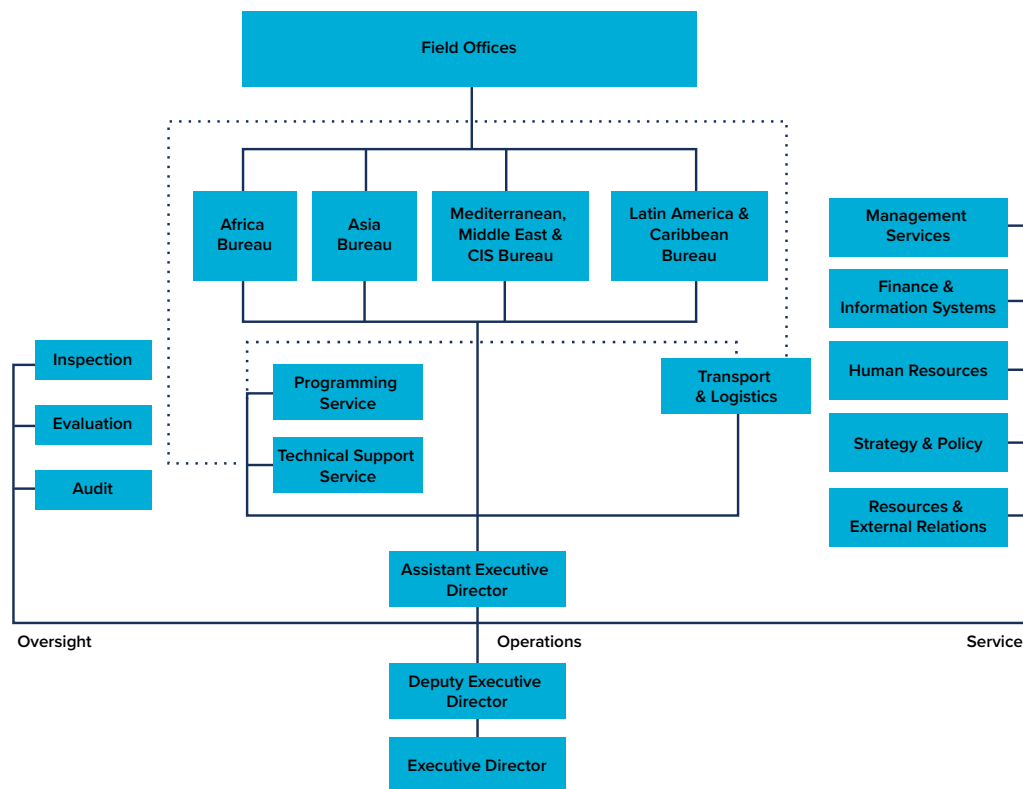
It is important for headquarters to always be seen respecting the work done in the field.

Secretariat are seen as an obstacle to change by agency leaders, but they, in turn, are often constrained by the attitudes of Member States.

Peter Hansen and Carolyn McAskie pointed to OCHA as a victim of both culture and structure. Unlike other UN agencies, OCHA is part of the UN Secretariat and is subject to its rules, which are not conducive to quick emergency responses. However, 85 percent of OCHA’s funding comes not from the United Nations but from voluntary contributions from donor governments. Nevertheless, the head of OCHA leads a major department in the UN Secretariat and is the Emergency Relief Coordinator for the international humanitarian system.

UN department heads have very specific challenges. They are experienced senior leaders who report to and have a lot of interaction with the Secretary-General. Many have large budgets. However, they have much less freedom of manoeuvre than the executive heads of agencies, particularly with respect to managing their programmes and budgets. They also often encounter significant micromanagement from Member States.

Figure 4 - World Food Programme organization chart (1996)



Source: World Food Programme

Leaders of the UN field-based missions, especially those large missions created by the UN Security Council and run by Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, are typically second-guessed by the New York bureaucracy, whose culture is very different from any field operation, making their efforts to implement change more challenging. The cultural divide between the field and headquarters is so strong that responsibilities, communications, decision-making, staff postings and other issues are conflictual and can result in resistance to change efforts. Therefore, it is important for headquarters to always be seen respecting the work done in the field. In the WFP change process, we created an inverted diagram to show the importance of the staff in the field (figure 4). The Field Offices were on the top of the organizational chart. The Executive Director was at the point of the diagram at the bottom of the page. Our Policy Director coined a phrase: “We serve the hungry poor. They do not live in Rome”.

The definition of field itself can be confusing and unclear. It depends on where the person who uses the word sits. For instance, for someone who is based in the Secretariat, a reference to the field could mean anywhere outside New York City, like in Rome. In Rome the reference to the field could mean the Regional Office in Nairobi. In Nairobi the definition of the field could have meant the facilities in Lokichokio in northern Kenya, which served Operation Lifeline Sudan. There, the staff lived in small cabins and walked one way to the latrines and another way to the mess hall. But that was not the field to them. The



Photo: WFP/Peter Smerdon



Photo: Tom Haskell



Photo: Tom Haskell

The definition of “field” varies greatly depending on the person and where that person is located. The field can refer to a Regional Office in Nairobi (above), a field facility in Lokichokio, Kenya (left, 1998), or tents in southern Sudan (right, 1998).

field was in southern Sudan where staff would be flown in from Lokichokio for two weeks at a time and would live in tents, drinking purified river water, cooking for themselves and travelling each day to meet with a different chief to arrange the reception for bulk food air-drops from the back sides of large C-130 airplanes.

You may find that your governing bodies are a source of resistance. Consider Kofi Annan’s decision to allow benefits to the same-sex spouses of staff members, an operational rather than an organizational change. Once he gave the legal office final direction to approve the new policy, delegates from Egypt and India argued that the issue should

be decided by the Member States and not by the Secretary-General. They orchestrated an effort for the General Assembly to turn down the decision, but ultimately the Secretary-General's decision prevailed. Member States sometimes try to thwart change or promote it, depending on whether the location is favourable to them, whether their country is properly respected or whether there are staff members from their countries who might be negatively impacted. More recently, WFP attempted to make some organizational changes that were totally within the purview of the Executive Director, but for various reasons the governing body decided that these changes could not happen without its approval.

Nils Kastberg had an interesting observation about the creation of UNAIDS. The agencies involved as cosponsors saw its creation as a threat to their independence in the HIV/AIDS area. To ensure their buy-in, Member States established a task force involving all stakeholders. In the end, it resulted in a governing body composed of all those involved in responding to the pandemic: people living with HIV/AIDS, UN agencies, key NGOs and others. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is another example of a diverse governing body that includes Member States, employers and worker representatives.

A related concern is the need for resources. Some changes do not require more resources, just a realignment of those that exist. However, you must consider whether resources are required and if you have the authority to secure them or must ask your governing body. Kofi Annan's proposal to add the position of Deputy Secretary-General, for instance, needed General Assembly approval. The creation of his Cabinet and executive committees did not.

Some sectors of the public may resist change, especially if your work is visionary or controversial. Ibrahim Gambari reminded us that there may be negative, extreme attitudes, and if so, you may need to develop a tailored communication strategy. The United Nations is not always effective at communicating its role and what it does. The UN communication may be too general to address the specific concerns of the public you need to reach.

Staff members often resist change, based on individual concerns, but all who discussed this in Bellagio felt that inclusion and active communication, in particular with staff unions,

Internal rumour mills can confuse change, and you can control or at least ameliorate some of this with greater transparency and a safe space for staff members to share their views.

would reduce this resistance. However, not all staff members decide to engage. You need to use different methods and show that what they say influences your thinking. Ameerah Haq noted, to many nodding heads, that internal rumour mills can confuse change and that you can control or at least ameliorate some of this with greater transparency and a safe space for staff members to share their views. One extraordinary example came from Thoraya Obaid, who instituted a 360-degree performance assessment for herself and her senior team, and she shared her own results and her

improvement plan with the entire organization. This kind of leadership matters. Staff resistance is often created, according to Irene Khan, "when there is a gap between rhetoric and reality especially in the behaviour of those in leadership roles". Remember, you are the role

model, and if staff members see that you are not serious about the strategic vision or the change vision, they know they are free to stick to the old ways.

Sometimes the system will “fight back” – for instance, by dragging out decision making in the human resources process or postponing compliance procedures. This may be because your staff does not believe you are serious or it does not like the changes. Your change manager should stay on top of such resistance and bring it to your attention so it is dealt with early on – before it spreads. There will always be staff members who do not come on board with the change and need to be removed. Buyout programmes can be a useful tool for that.

A simple rule of thumb is the 25:50:25 model that Piers Campbell has used in many UN agencies. When faced with change, 25 percent will embrace it; 50 percent will be uneasy, anxious and initially opposed but can be convinced over time; and 25 percent will resist whatever you do. The supportive quarter could help persuade the bulk of the staff on the merits of change. But avoid the temptation to devote too much time to the resisters until you have momentum.

At a certain point, however, leaders must be prepared to be tough and, if necessary, remove managers and staff members from their positions or from the organization if they continue to present obstacles. It is difficult in UN organizations to do this, though not impossible. By creating momentum for change; by inspiring, listening, engaging with the staff; by creating and communicating an inspiring vision for change; it is possible to bring around some of the resisters. However, there will be a hard-core group that will have to move on.

When faced with change, 25 percent will embrace it; 50 percent will be uneasy, anxious and initially opposed but can be convinced over time; and 25 percent will resist whatever you do.

Making change last

The hope of any CEO is that change lasts for as long as it is necessary and relevant. But once you depart from your job and the organization, you have no control over what will happen within the organization. How do you ensure that programmes and structures in which you put high stakes during your term carry on, if indeed they should?

Carolyn McAskie reported that the “sorting out” of functions at OCHA between Geneva and New York, part of her specific instructions, took much effort and a lot of time. Yet as soon as the new Under-Secretary-General for OCHA was in place, he undid all the change. She suggested mobilizing donors and other critical players, particularly senior UN colleagues, to help ensure the changes last.

Within months of my departure from WFP, my successor transferred the country locations of two of the Regional Offices we had established. While I thought that quick action was odd, it did not undermine our transformational change, which was to move regions from headquarters to the field. Where they were located was not critical in the long term, just awkward for the departing staff and governments.

Ibrahim Gambari proposed training large numbers of young people and providing career options for them for the future as one way to build longer-term capacity and val-

ues. Strengthening key components of the organization could increase longevity and build resilience.

Logistics were always the base of WFP’s work. Through all our change and restructuring, the senior staff highlighted the important role of logistics and encouraged creativity. One of their inventions was a “joint logistics cell”, which has become the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), an airline that today moves hundreds of thousands of people in and out of zones that do not have commercial air service.

Responding to donors’ concerns and building consensus among them for change can be longer lasting. For instance, donors’ main complaint to me as I started my term was that a minority of countries, including the United States, gave food but no cash for its transport, storage or overhead. The change we proposed for “full cost recovery” remains a pillar of WFP’s work.

Change is ongoing. It never really ends. As Nigel Fisher pointed out, change is more of a cyclical and continuing process. It needs constant assessing and renewing. At the same time, he advised being sure to remain flexible and nimble in the process.

Conclusion

Leading an international organization is a challenging role. You have to employ virtually every leadership and management skill set you ever acquired – and learn some new ones – to be successful. You are a leader, strategist, manager, fundraiser and political (with a small p) operator. You must be tough, empathetic, respectful, thoughtful, articulate and dignified but not too serious. You have to make difficult decisions and live with them.

You will learn much, and you will give up a lot. But the reward is great: you can make a difference.

You must cheer on your staff and provide direction as you build and maintain a cohesive, mission-driven team.

You will learn much, and you will give up a lot. But the reward is great: you can make a difference. Peter Piot writes in *No Time to Lose*, “Despite all imperfections, working as a senior UN official was a great privilege and allowed me to influence the global agenda in a way that very few positions offer”.⁸

When you lead change in your organization, you must do so with wisdom, understanding and your objective communicated to all relevant parties. You must always listen before acting. And if you succeed with an ambitious, transformational change of the organization, you can dramatically impact its future effectiveness. As a result, your leadership can improve the lives of many people served by your organization for years to come.

“I inherited a belief that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to your country – or to humanity. This service required a sacrifice of all personal interests, but likewise the courage to stand up unflinchingly for your convictions.”

– Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*





Rwanda, 1994.

About Catherine Bertini

Catherine Bertini served for 10 years as Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme, the first woman to serve in the role and the third woman to lead a UN agency. She was the first American appointed to a full term at WFP.

Her work began in 1992 amid increasing numbers of people cut off from food in humanitarian crises and dramatically more people impacted by natural disasters, forcing WFP to shift focus. Her predecessor, James Ingram, had won significant governance changes that allowed WFP to operate as a separate UN programme not under the direction of the Food and Agriculture Organization. These circumstances provided the opportunity to lead major transformational reform at WFP.

Bertini's work, and that of the entire WFP staff, was recognized by the World Food Prize Foundation, which named her its 2003 World Food Prize Laureate for "transforming the United Nations World Food Programme into the largest and most responsive humanitarian relief organization in the world, capable of ensuring that food of good quality would be available in sufficient quantities to the world's neediest, even in the direst of circumstances".

She also served as UN Under-Secretary-General for management, appointed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In this role she was responsible for managing the UN Secretariat's human, financial and physical resources as well as managing the UN pension fund investments and security of staff.

For 12 years, she taught a graduate course on the United Nations at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs of Syracuse University, where she is now Professor Emeritus. She is Chair of the Board of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and a Distinguished Fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. She writes this paper in her role as a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow.

Acknowledgments

This project was a group effort, and many people must be recognized and thanked for their contributions. The first is Piers Campbell, President of MANNET, a Swiss consultancy group. Piers is a specialist in organizational development and change. As soon as the Rockefeller Foundation appointed me as a Fellow and I began work on governance and change in the international system, I reached out to Piers. His advice had been instrumental in advising on all aspects of WFP's "Decade of Change". For this paper, Piers together with his colleague, John Hailey, helped design its focus, developed background materials, facilitated the February 2019 Bellagio Convening, and provided invaluable guidance for my writing. John is a Professor at Cass Business School, City, University of London, United Kingdom.

Catherine Gerard is an expert in leadership and organizational development and a colleague at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, where she directs the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration. She advised on this paper and helped immensely in its text and presentation.

Much of the follow-up research and gathering of all details necessary for putting the pieces of this paper together was managed by Alyssa Ceretti at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Frank Cerbo of Global Main Streets Associates, LLC served as archivist, finding the unfindable. Also contributing in helpful ways at the Council were Alesha Black, Ana Teasdale, Sharlene Prosser, Katelyn Jones and Tria Raimundo. Catherine Hug and her team at Chicago Creative Group oversaw the editing and design of this paper.

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Seventeen former UN CEOs or deputies gave up a week of their time to gather at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Conference Centre to discuss these issues. They were generous with their time, sharing stories and their guidance. A list of their names and UN titles follows. I owe additional thanks to Thoraya Obaid, Purnima Mane, Bjorn Andersson, Marcela Suazo and A. Namanga Ngongi.

Funding for this project was provided by the Rockefeller Foundation as part of my fellowship. The foundation's history in supporting international organizations generally and the United Nations specifically has been an important intellectual and financial base for progress in creating and enhancing international cooperation.

Finally, I'd like to thank my colleagues at WFP. Transformational change at WFP was achieved with the active participation of thousands of WFP staff members throughout the world and a terrific senior management team. Our leadership team was superb – Deputy A. Namanga Ngongi and Assistant Executive Directors Jean-Jacques Graise and later Jessie Mabutas.

Our process at WFP was far from perfect. I made many mistakes. However, the transformation we created still resonates. I am hopeful that the more upbeat examples included in this paper will help encourage others to take on the challenge of change.

Bellagio Convening participants, February 2019

Carol Bellamy

Chair, Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
Former Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund

Catherine Bertini

Former Executive Director, World Food Programme
Former Under-Secretary-General for Management, United Nations

Piers Campbell

President, MANNET

Helen Clark

Former Prime Minister, New Zealand
Former Administrator, United Nations Development Programme

Luis Fernando

Chief Executive Officer, Fundación Paraguaya

Nigel Fisher

Former Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services

Louise O. Fresco

President, Wageningen University & Research
Former Assistant Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Ibrahim Gambari

Joint African Union-United Nations Special Representative for Darfur and Head of United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operations in Darfur
Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Department of Political Affairs

John Hailey

Professor, Cass Business School, City, University of London

Peter Hansen

Former Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
Former Under-Secretary-General, Department of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator

Ameerah Haq

Former Under-Secretary General, Department of Field Support, United Nations
Former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Timor-Leste

Noeleen Heyzer

Former Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women
Former Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Affairs Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Nils Kastberg

Former Head of Section, Humanitarian Action, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden
Former Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations in Rome

Irene Khan

Director-General, International Development Law Organization
Former Secretary-General, Amnesty International

Jessie Mabutas

Former Assistant President, International Fund for Agricultural Development
Former Assistant Executive Director, World Food Programme

Carolyn McAskie

Former Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Emergency Relief Coordinator,
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Burundi

Mari Simonen

Former Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund

William Swing

Former Director General, International Organization for Migration

Gerald Walzer

Former Deputy High Commissioner, Office of the High Commissioner of
Refugees

Endnotes

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2. Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings* (Canada, Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1964), p. 146.
3. Jan Egeland, *A Billion Lives: An Eyewitness Report from the Frontlines of Humanity* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2008), p. 233.
4. Fabrizio Hochschild, *In and Above Conflict: A Study on Leadership in the UN* (Geneva, United Nations, 2010), p. 9.
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7. United Nations General Assembly, Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system: report of the Secretary-General, A/72/200.
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Acronyms and key terms

ACC: Administrative Committee on Coordination

ASG: United Nations Assistant Secretary-General

CEB: Chief Executives Board for Coordination

CEO: chief executive officer

DFS: Department of Field Support (United Nations)

DHA: Department of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)

DM: Department of Management (United Nations)

DPA: Department of Political Affairs (United Nations)

DPKO: Department of Peacekeeping Operations (United Nations)

DSG: United Nations Deputy Secretary-General

ED: Executive Director

ESCAP: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Executive head: CEO of a UN organization

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

ICJ: International Court of Justice

IDLO: International Development Law Organization

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

IGO: intergovernmental organization

ILO: International Labour Organization

IOM: International Organization for Migration

NGO: nongovernmental organization

OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Permanent Representative (perm rep): chief delegate, sometimes titled ambassador, to a UN agency

SG: United Nations Secretary-General

SMT: senior management team

SRSG: special representative of the Secretary-General

UN: United Nations

UN Women: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

UNAIDS: Joint United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS

UNAMID: United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNHAS: United Nations Humanitarian Air Service

UNHCHR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women, now part of UN Women

UNOPS: United Nations Office for Project Services

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

UNWTO: World Tourism Organization

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

USG: United Nations Under-Secretary-General

WFP: World Food Programme

WHO: World Health Organization

Selected bibliography

This selected bibliography is based on an extensive review of existing publications related to the theme “Leading change in United Nations organizations”. It is divided into five sections: planning for change, reporting on change, biographies and autobiographies that include stories about change, studies on leadership and change, and organizational reviews. Within each section, publications are listed in reverse chronological order.

Planning for change

- UN Secretariat. Restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar: report of the Secretary-General. 13 October 2017. A/72/525.
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Jolly, Richard, ed. *Jim Grant: UNICEF Visionary*. Florence: UNICEF, 2011. See especially Peter Adamson, "The Mad American", 19–38, and Kul Gautam, "Ten Commandments of Jim Grant's Leadership for Development," 137–46.

Ingram, James. *Bread and Stones: Leadership and the Struggle to Reform the United Nations World Food Programme*. Charleston, South Carolina: BookSurge, LLC, 2007.

Studies on leadership and change

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United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF Organizational Review Synthesis Report: Findings and Summary Recommendations*. New York, 2007.

United Nations Development Programme. *Joint Assessment of the Institutional Effectiveness of UNDP*. New York, 2017.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR's Senior Management Structure: Final Report of the Independent Study*. Geneva, 2005.

This paper provides food for thought for incoming senior officials of the United Nations on a range of issues related to leading their organizations and embarking on change.