



# STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

*THROUGH SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS  
AND BRIDGING LEADERSHIP*

## POLICY BRIEF

### ISSUE AND EVIDENCE

#### SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

- 62.1% of children in South Africa live in multidimensional poverty.
- 88.4% of children living in rural areas are affected by multidimensional poverty.
- This, further exacerbated by high HIV rates results in increased vulnerability for youth and children.

(Statistics South Africa, 2020).

#### LEADERSHIP

- Leaders are prone to leadership burnout as well as increased isolation. Social connectedness not only creates better leaders, but reduces these factors.
- Strengthening the resilience and leadership development of leaders in the childcare space makes leaders who are better equipped to support the developmental needs of the vulnerable youth and children.

#### AIM

- Strengthen the integration and connection between social connectedness and Bridging Leadership within programme, practice and policy.
- Increasing the impact and reach of the Social Connectedness Programme.

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## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### PARTICIPANTS

5

Organizational  
Leaders  
interviewed.



4

Organizations  
based  
in South Africa.

### RESPONSES

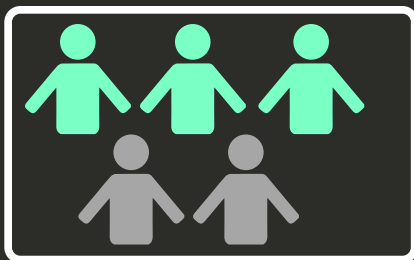
Healing

Awareness

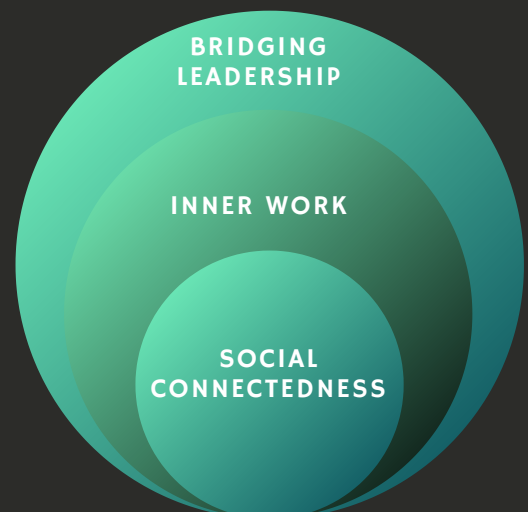
IMPACT  
OF  
SOCIAL  
CONNECTEDNESS

Resilience

Empathy



Indicated  
aspects of  
shared  
leadership in  
their overall  
style



Social connectedness reinforces Bridging Leadership



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. UTILIZE BELONGING AS A FRAMEWORK

The belonging framework can be applied to both internal policies and best practices, as well as in developing frameworks within other organizations or governmental entities. This specific measurement framework can be used specifically in the Social Connectedness Programme, but also for the overall work of Synergos and SCSC.

## 2. STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

- The development of community mapping.
- The implementation and encouragement of circles of care and support, specifically for existing leaders.
- Spaces where youth leaders as well as 'older' leaders are able to interact and draw from one another should be encouraged in order to foster social connectedness as well as the spirit of collaboration.
- The National Youth Development Agency should consider drawing from Synergos' expertise and research into social connectedness and Bridging Leadership to strengthen their capacity and existing policy frameworks.
- The South African Government as a whole should be increasingly engaged with, in order to develop policies which foster social connectedness at a national, provincial and local level.

## 3. FOCUS ON TRAINING AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH YOUTH

- Work with university student offices (e.g. Department of Student Affairs) across South Africa to strengthen their existing policies and frameworks for student engagement and success.
- Increase focus on working with the Department of Basic Education.
- Grants to encourage practice and development of social connectedness and Bridging Leadership within emerging organizations.
- Increase programmes directed at the youth, such as with the Social Connectedness Fellowship programme.
- Youth leadership programmes which focus on training and workshops.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4. PROGRAMME AND PRACTICE TOOLKITS

The Social Connectedness Programme should more intentionally utilize Bridging Leadership within workshops and toolkits as a means of reinforcing practices and principles of social connectedness.

## 5. FOSTERING SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND BRIDGING LEADERSHIP

Fostering social connectedness and Bridging Leadership through increased advocacy, grassroots campaigning targeted at the youth.

## 6. RESEARCH

In-depth and systematic research is recommended in broadening knowledge, strengthening effectiveness of the Programme and accounting for gaps within the research.