CHAPTER 1

Change from the Inside Out

Abstract This chapter illustrates a life story, intellectually and emotionally. Anecdotal evidence from my own experience shows the interconnected influence that the four dimensions of human experience (aspiration, emotion, thought, and sensation) have on each other, on our personal wellbeing, and on others. Following the storyline through the next pages you will be guided to gradually notice the connection between your own experiences and this framework; four interconnected principles operated in them:

Connection—Everything is linked. Nothing exists in a vacuum.
Change—Everything evolves, constantly.
Continuum—Everything is connected in a seamless flow.
Complementarity—Everything exists in relation to something else, that may be its opposite and the counterpart that makes it complete.

Keywords Connection · Change · Continuum · Complementarity
Introduction

Observing seagulls, I feel a glimmer of their freedom inside. Birds do not weigh themselves down with things. What they have they are; at any time, in any place, ready to stay or move on. Though human beings are commonly qualified as the zenith of evolution, we can learn from animals. No lion is inclined to kill and collect more food than he needs for himself and his pride; no eagle builds more than one nest to breed her offspring. Putting things into perspective, it appears that the retirement vision of many hardworking people strangely resembles an animalistic routine: spending time outdoors or with friends, enjoying sunshine and nature. As reflected upon by the Dalai Lama, ‘Man sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices his money to recuperate his health’. Thinking back about the past 20 years of my life, the second part of the Dalai Lama’s contemplation is even more accurate: ‘He is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then he dies having never really lived’. So driven was I by the craving for something or another, that I omitted to savour the beauty of now.

How lucky I am that my recent plans have not generated the expected results. The past twelve months taught me that life is a house of cards; neatly stacked at this moment, and ready to collapse in the next when a single card is pulled out. A collapsing house of cards may turn out to be the greatest of gifts; a grace that one would have never dared to ask for. Had I been confronted with the perspective of my present situation a year ago I would have been frozen with worry; clinging for dear life to the status quo, afraid to lose what I had and treasured. As this book goes into print COVID-19 engulfs the World. Declared a Pandemic on March 11th, 2020, the unfolding crisis is a reminder that everything can change always, from one moment to the next. It also illustrates the dramatic consequences that ensue when societies do not invest systematically to cover the basic social needs of everyone. 2020 shows what happens when the interests of a few dominate over the needs of many; while the majority shy away from thinking, and doing something, about the consequences. The outcome of COVID-19 depends on the ability and willingness of individuals and institutions to widen their perspective radically. Hopefully, the paradigm shift that is presented in this book contributes to this change in dynamics.
1.1 Work to Live or Live to Work

We grow up with the understanding that ‘work’ is how we contribute to society. Thinking within this mental logic, our jobs define us. What we do daily not only shapes our habits and skills, our relationships and assets, it gradually makes us who we are, at least at the surface. Consequently, our jobs become central in determining the perception that we have of our own worth. The What becomes the Who. In addition, and although there are very diverse working relations and constellations today, with freelancing ever-growing thanks to technology, traditionally, work placed the worker in a position within a structure. The average employee did spend more time at the workplace than at home; more time with co-workers than with family and friends. Unemployment is unsettling because, beyond the material implications, it is uprooting not merely cherished habits but the social bounds and beliefs underneath; not just eliminating a set of activities but the personal eco-environment that they have been operated in.

However, despite and because of this deep personal attachment to our day-to-day work, a paradoxical mechanism is at play. The What takes over the Why and the How. We focus on the tasks on our immediate radar, losing sight of the bigger picture. On the other hand, though, having narrowed down our perspective so much we lose sight of the actual impact of these multiple micro-tasks and their interaction. Rather than sharpening our focus on a very circumscribed field in order to give our very best in this particular field, we rush from one task to the next, just as a hamster keeps running in its wheel, step after step after step. There is always one more task, deadline, or paper to tackle; absorbing our time and energy. Our mental space is saturated before we even start to think what matters for ourselves.

Martin Luther King said ‘Whatever your life’s work is, do it so well that the living and the dead and the unborn, could do no better’. If we followed his words, there would never be the need to worry what we should have done differently. Similarly, a central principle of Karma yoga is to give one’s best, and then let go\(^1\); the results of whatever has been done are not in the hands of the one who acted (Raju 1954). However, that the output of our doing is no longer the centre does not remove the responsibility to give one’s best. Giving what we have and can do, in every single moment, dedicating our whole being, all our attention to the very situation that we are in, the person we interact with, the task at
hand, means that we do the best we can at that moment. If you act in line with your values, putting all the possible effort, and the best knowledge that you have at the time of the action, why would you blame yourself if the outcome of your action is not the expected one?

Shifting scope from future outcomes to present input does not remove responsibility, rather it puts the cursor on the right spot; where we can actually do something about it. Life is complex and what happens involves many interconnected factors. Focusing on the present, in the understanding that the result is not in our control takes away distraction. Not flagellating ourselves when things go wrong, nor praising our merits when they go well, liberates mental space that can be put to good use—like zooming in on the meaning of our occupation, the Why.

The brain likes simplicity. Therefore, most conversations start with questions like ‘What do you do?’ ‘Where do you come from?’, etc. People in boxes are easier to grasp, assess, and categorize than free-floating electrons. Tasks are more tangible than the explorations of aspirations, emotions, or thoughts. Safe ground. Think about the last social event that you attended, which included new people whom you never met before. What do you remember from the small talk about weather and work? Imagine how much more interesting these conversations could have been if instead of asking for a person’s job, you would have asked about their passion; the Why that matters to them? Hiding behind the shell of our past achievements and present social status is a means of surfing on the social wave. Diving underneath requires a deep breath but discovering the fauna and flora deep down is more than worth it.¹

Observing how opaque the border between self and shell has been for myself, I wonder how many of us consciously distinguish between what we do and who we are. Maybe this is one of the reasons why many of those who have a high-intensity career do not live very long after retirement (Kuhn et al 2010). As the occupational centre of their existence is removed, the rest crumbles, just as removing a load-bearing column in a cathedral is not conducive to the overall stability.

As we move through life, the situations that we come across can show us that paralysis and breakthroughs are often close neighbours, located beside each other. Consciously looking for this strange juxtaposition allows us to identify the constellations at play, and to make our choice in full awareness of the options. Instead of navigating on autopilot, stepping through doors that seem to be the only ones, forgoing the fact that a whole corridor lined with many alternative doors lies just ahead. Fear
and liberation belong to the same reality; located at opposing ends of the same spectrum of becoming ourselves. At which end of this spectrum we place ourselves as we move along is the result of circumstances and choice.

* * *

From time to time it slowly sinks in how entirely different and liberating my new situation is. Since the day I was born, I have never lived without some type of affiliation. From a stable middle-class family, I went on to attend kindergarten, school, and university; always seeking to fit in. After graduation I went abroad, joining the ranks of the United Nations. The identity of these institutions, and the changing roles of being a daughter, a student, and a humanitarian worker were an integral part of how I perceived and presented myself. The removal of one single card brought the house of my apparent identity down, pushing me out of my secure comfort zone, across a rainbow of freedom. Travelling from one end of the spectrum to the other, I discovered a pair of wings that had been hidden. Folded, unknown, on my back, they were patiently waiting for their moment to unfold. As do yours.

Every path is unique. Thus, no comparison is valid, and the only thing I shall seek to summarize here is my own glimpse of a rocky path, and how smooth it eventually became. Unremarked, the veil softly dissolved, leaving the view through a wide-open window. No flashes or stars, no groundbreaking eureka moment, just an onset of an inner calmness that still makes me smile; a smile that grows like a flower from the inside out.

I always thought of insight as a moment, a unique slip in time when everything changes. But maybe there is an alternative. A slow transition whereby each conscious step joins the next, leading to a reality that leaves no ‘before’—everything having merged into the present. Unlike many of those who write about a sudden epiphany as they faced the wall; I never felt at the abyss where I wanted to end everything. For most of my life, I have been very lucky.

Still, I felt constantly driven, always under the invisible pressure of accomplishment. Propelled by the need to leave a mark, to justify my presence, I was craving confirmation that I did actually deserve the privileges that I had been given. Never feeling that what I did was enough; it seemed that once it was accomplished anything that had seemed to matter before was no longer relevant, or even the result of my own effort. Ph.D. laudation, promotions, career moves, just water under the bridge.
Looking back, I cannot single out any watershed moment, and yet nothing is the same now. Without noticing I have evolved into the understanding that I am everything I ever wanted to be. That I have everything I will ever need. A flower is growing in micro-millimetres which makes the observation of changes difficult, until one morning the petals unfold. When I released the craving to matter, to belong, and to control, I opened myself to experience the self that has always been there. Releasing my aspiration to ‘change the World’, I found the ability to change myself; releasing the craving to belong, I discovered that I was loved; releasing the need for security, I allowed myself to explore and enjoy the unknown; relinquishing the urge to control my physical circumstances, I felt that I was safe. This book offers an introduction to the paradigm that has helped me move from being fragmented, to a being at peace.

My path to liberation began from the inside out and was nurtured from the outside in. Releasing the need to shape and control the outside has set me free to attempt the becoming of my own best self. The gradual access of an honest relationship with myself was uncomfortable and at times unbearable, until it became like gossamer, smooth and weightless.

Doubts about the efficiency and effectiveness of the current setting of the humanitarian sector in general, and of the United Nations in particular, including my miniscule contribution to it, have been part of me for a while. Witnessing the impact of international assistance in the African, Asian, and Caribbean countries where I have worked forced me to contemplate the status quo. However, like many of us who work in the field of humanitarian action I was, for a long time, neither ready nor willing to think through the whole equation from A to Z, from doubt to evidence to action; as I was not prepared to face the necessary consequences. Too painful was the prospect of realizing that what I had aimed for was questionable. That my law studies, masters in humanitarian assistance and crisis law, Ph.D. on children’s rights, and nearly two decades working in the field had been geared towards a mirage. I had not done any harm but being honest with myself it was doubtful that much tangible benefit derived from my presence for those so-called ‘beneficiaries’ whom I had set out to serve. The more I saw, the more I knew my doubts to be justified, yet I did not have the courage to act in line with the ensuing conclusion. Why did it take me so long to transform those nagging feelings of doubt into action? Did the need for status and stability chain me to my comfort zone, or was it because I saw no alternative identity for myself?
The challenge is that once we own up to our own reality, acknowledging what we truly are, and what we are not, there is no turning back. When everything crumbles there is nothing to turn to, nothing but ourselves. This perspective is frightening until we discover how reassuring the inner realm is. A haven that is always there, ready to receive us.

My transition occurred in stages, gently ushering me along. Like the winter cold passes via the spring’s gradual increase of temperature before the summer heat sets in. I was offered an alternative that allowed me to progressively drop the skins that suited me no longer. I was not left naked in the cold. In October 2017, I was offered a tangible alternative to my humanitarian work persona. Getting me started in the transition from past to present. Being presented with a position to teach and research at the Centre of Humanitarian Leadership, a joint venture of Deakin University and Save the Children, located in Melbourne, Australia, opened a way to translate my contemplations into action. Seeing a path, I finally felt ready to leave the comfort zone that had been my assumed home for so long. I dared to jump from one ship because another ship had approached close enough for me to believe that the gap would not swallow and annihilate me. Even though the decision to leave a generously remunerated career at the United Nations for an academic career at half the pay, and to literally move to the other side of the world, appeared drastic to most of my friends and colleagues, it felt soft as compared to quitting my job cold cut.

Everything is relative, and those who found me audacious didn’t see the alternative that had been lingering in my mind for so long. Transitioning from one bubble to the next is smooth, compared to leave everything for nothing. At the time I still harboured the desire of a derived identity, a protective shield of institutional affiliation; in hindsight the planned move from UN to University appears as a mere exchange; giving up the status of the humanitarian worker in exchange for the status of a researcher. From one stable institutional identity to another one.

But it was not meant to be. Plans are one thing, reality another.

The University position was conditional on a working visa for Australia, which was not granted. A fact that was fortunately unknown to me when I quit my UN job. Looking back, I see the wisdom of this unexpected, and at the time highly undesirable, turn of events. Because at the time I did not have the courage to relinquish my status, income, and career prospects, in exchange for ‘nothing’. Though I had felt for a while that
my daily work was no longer aligned with my long-term dreams and ideals, I did not feel strong enough to relinquish what I knew and cherished. Since I loved what I did, who I did it with, and who I did it for, there was never a powerful enough push factor to trigger me into action. The academic opening offered a pull factor that was sufficiently enticing to draw me out of my chosen slumber; shepherding me from awareness to understanding. As the myriad of unspoken excuses became redundant, my readiness evolved from understanding to action.

But instead of yet another role in the service of yet another organization I was given freedom. As I eased out of my comfort zone its restraining walls dissolved; taking along the need of belonging to an external entity. Never have I felt happier than in this phase of settling within. For the first time in 43 years I find myself free from affiliation, free from attachment, free to be.

1.2 Four Entry Points to Connect

Based on my recent experiences, from institutional affiliation as a means of identity to detachment this subsection introduces concepts that are developed in Chapter 2. Illustrating the continuum of extremes, it shows the transition that can lead an individual to migrate from one side of the spectrum to the other.

How we live in this world is shaped by our aspirations, our emotions, our thoughts, and our sensations. Imagine yourself like a Russian doll, a ‘Matryoshka’; a doll within a doll, within a doll. Each doll is part of the next bigger one. However, unlike the traditional, physical layers of a ‘Matryoshka’, the four dimensions of our being are not separate entities. They continuously interact and influence each other, engaged in an ongoing spiral dynamic, from the centre to the periphery and from the periphery inwards. This internal two-way interaction influences who and how we are, what we do, and how we interact with the outside world.

Starting at the core of our being, the soul represents the essence of who we are. It embodies our aspiration, the desire to find meaning in everyday existence. Whatever we feel, think, and do is rooted in this need for meaning.

The second dimension are our emotions. Schematically and metaphorically speaking, they are located in the heart, determining how we feel in a given situation. Emotions are fundamental in determining attitudes,
decisions, and actions. No matter how much we ‘know’ about a certain issue, an emotional impulse will set the trigger that moves our attitude from information, to understanding, to desire for change, to physical manifestation—action.4

The third dimension of Who we are is the mind. Our thoughts are the result of an intricate mixture of genetic disposition, education, beliefs, memories, upbringing, and environment; they influence our emotions and aspirations, our physical experiences and expressions; and they are influenced by them in turn.

The fourth dimension is the body, which is the outer membrane that connects and separates our internal and external realm. As an interface between the inside and the outside, it is the level on which we experience the world and express ourselves in it.

Nothing happens in a vacuum. The body reflects our internal circumstances. Conversely, our experience of the environment impacts our internal circumstances, shaping our perspective of the world and hereby our reaction to it. Like a stone cast into the water, whatever happens at the centre radiates out. Whichever state our internal realm is in—our emotions and thoughts which are influenced by our aspirations, impacts our interaction with the outside (Fig. 1.1). ‘The first misconception is that it is possible to avoid influencing people’s choices’ (Thaler and Sunstein 2008).

This inside out dynamic is a never-ending loop which, once we have understood it, is a valuable tool in three ways. Firstly, once we are aware how the different dimensions shape each other we can consciously influence this interplay in view of a desired outcome; secondly, knowing how we operate, we gain insights in the operating model of other people, which fosters not only our compassion for them but also our ability to systematically influence them. Finally, it is a dynamic that can help us grow. Because the world is a mirror. The disliking of certain behaviours in others signals traits that we despise or shun in ourselves. Looking at relationships this way, including the red buttons that trigger our anger, makes them a screen to learn from, using everyday experience as a classroom. Everything is connected.
Fig. 1.1 Everything is connected, from the inside out and from the outside in. Our aspirations impact our emotions, which influence our thoughts and hereby our experiences and expressions (sensation). Conversely, the way in which we express ourselves causes certain experiences, which result in physical sensations that trigger thoughts and emotions, which fuel or alter our aspirations; and shape our memories. These memories influence our emotions and thoughts in future situations, and hereby our future expressions and experiences (Source Author)

The above paragraphs summarily describe the POZE paradigm which is further explained in the next chapter. POZE was instrumental in my journey and, hopefully, it will help You.

*Helping others without helping oneself is doomed to fail*

Physical and mental health, emotional and intellectual fulfilment, are part of the same equation. The way in which individuals experience and react to ‘stress’—commonly defined as a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes physical or mental tension, which can be external (from
the environment, psychological, or social situations) or internal (illness or from a medical procedure) (Keil 2004), illustrates this continuum of mind and matter.

While already worrying in the general population, the experience and impact of stress looms even larger among those who live and work in countries where terror, death, and destruction are part of daily routines. It is unrealistic to expect that people can help others if they cannot help themselves. Since a central topic of this book deals with the causes and consequences that lead humanitarian organizations, NGOs as much as the UN, to deliver underneath their potential, let us dwell a moment on the implications of mental health among those individuals whose professional vocation it is to help others. It is a large field and the present pages are only a very brief introduction in an overdue discussion, that should systematically take place in headquarters and in field locations. A connected and equally under-addressed question is the urgent need of providing appropriate quality mental care for local populations in countries affected by humanitarian disaster. It will not be investigated here. COVID-19 illustrates the fragility of the health system, and the heavy emotional toll that disease, loss of loved ones or livelihoods, have on individuals. The mortgages that result from unaddressed mental health requirements fray the social fabric of recovering communities.

Exposure to security threats and human tragedy is frequent for humanitarian professionals. According to psychologists the kind of events that aid workers are likely to witness classifies as traumatic events, which renders a proportion of them vulnerable to a chronic traumatic reaction. In 2015 a survey of humanitarian aid workers on the Global Development Professionals Network, showed that more than three-quarters of the participants had experienced mental health issues (Young 2015). Two-thirds of the respondents who had experienced mental health issues found that this impacted their ability to do their job; and led them to consider leaving. However, the majority (84%) continued working with these untreated mental health issues.

The phenomenon of ‘un-wellbeing’ among humanitarian workers has been known for years, without being addressed systematically by the concerned organizations. Rare are those which have put in place support systems for their staff. Psychological preparation before the deployment of frontline workers, assistance during and after assignments, remain punctual. The consequences are felt. Overwhelmed by the circumstances,
individuals feel that their daily efforts, the way in which they do their professional tasks is insufficient, and as they move forward, they gradually perceive their work as being disconnected from the aspirations that brought them to this line of work in the first place. The realization of this disconnect then further deepens their emotional and physical corrosion. Research shows that humanitarian workers who have lost faith in their mission are the first to suffer from burnout and depression. Physical symptoms such as migraines and stomach cramps set in. Feelings of discouragement, emotional fatigue, and frustration appear. The ability to concentrate and reason diminishes, together with sociability. Many of those who have lost touch with their core values seek to compensate the resulting inner emptiness with coping tactics such as excessive sport, alcohol, drugs, etc. This affects not only their subjective well-being but also their objective actions. Performance declines, as do interpersonal skills. Feelings of anger or sadness find their expression in cynical, erratic, or aggressive behaviour, which further fuels the inner gloom. Personal life and work environment deteriorate. The opposite of the ‘winner effect’ which we will look further in Chapter 2 sets in. It is a downward spiral that begins inside and is cultivated from the outside. Conversely, those who cope the best with extreme stress are those who found meaning in their work and life.

In 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced an interactive database to track possible, probable, and confirmed attacks on health workers in real time. While it is useful to acknowledge the rising threat level that humanitarian workers face daily, and to appreciate the link between external stress factors and internal well-being in high-risk areas, the ability to grasp and track the extent of violence and risk does not equal a response to the needs of those who suffer from the collateral damage of these issues. Knowing what happens to field workers helps to understand the situation but it does not replace action to alleviate its consequences. Easily accessible practical psychological and socio-physiological assistance must follow. We have known for long what is needed and why; the question is to openly acknowledge this need and address it.

The fact that humans can help others only if they are able to help themselves must be faced by all professions in the social field; including non-profit entities, the UN, and public service providers. One can give outside only what is available inside.

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My experience in the field may serve to take this out of the abstract sphere of statistics. Though I have been lucky throughout my life, including the years spent on the frontlines, I know many who were not. In countries where violence is an omnipresent factor, the thinness of the line that separates life and death becomes apparent. In 2008, while working with UNICEF in Eastern Chad I was with colleagues on a field mission. Driving somewhere on the road between Abeche and the border to Darfur we noticed another UNICEF car on the side of the road, seemingly abandoned. As we learned later, a couple of hours before our passing an unidentified person had stopped the convoy; pulled out a staff member from Save the Children who was part of the same joint mission and shot him. Unharmed but traumatized the other passengers were taken to the next town by the second car of the convoy. Until today the exact circumstances remain unclear (Ngarmbassa 2008). Death is part of life, and living in countries afflicted by war made me aware of how much depends on timing—being at the right time at the right place, or not. In 2009, after a slightly delayed landing at the airport of Afghanistan’s capital Kabul, I was told to wait because the only road between the airport and the city was blocked. A road bomb had exploded shortly before, killing five Italian soldiers. Had my plane arrived earlier it could have been me.

* * *

From individuals to institutions

The ongoing interaction of soul, heart, mind, and body is a micro-illustration of the role that we as individuals play in our community, be it workplace, school, or family.

It is well-known that the sum of individuals within a community or an institution, is more than the sum of its parts—however, in some cases, instead of synergy we encounter disfunction. In the positive scenario, the collective thrives due to the complementary nature of its constituents. But often personal interests, competition, and disengagement lead the group, and hereby each member, to stay beneath their individual and collective potential; a dynamic that begins with one member spirals out to affect the others. The causes and consequences of ‘group think’ have been well-documented for the past five decades, which does not prevent groups of falling prey to the risk they are prone to (Janis 1982).8
Although any large institution illustrates this, let us look at the UN as an example of this phenomenon and the related risks, which have far-reaching consequences on interpersonal, inter-departmental and inter-agency cooperation. All three are required to achieve lasting outcomes on the ground. A longstanding question that almost everyone readily agrees upon when sitting at a conference table is the need for synergy. During the almost two decades of my work in country offices around the world, I have repeatedly heard (and spoken) about the need for cross-sectorial collaboration. Convergence, thematic and/or geographic synergy of resources and efforts, makes perfect sense in theory and practice, but the internal hurdles to make it happen de facto are gigantic. Nobody denies that a combination of resources gets the best out of everyone’s contribution, which is particularly relevant in times of limited funding, decreasing donor interest, and an increased requests for accountability. But when it comes to the elaboration of joint work plans and shared budget allocations, the spirit of collaboration often fades. Cooperation is already a thorny topic inside one organization, where experts seclude themselves in their respective sectorial pillars; it becomes nearly impossible to address when several UN agencies are asked to place their eggs in the same basket.

The nexus of Humanitarian assistance, Peacebuilding, and Development aid is another question that has been hotly debated for many years but hampered by negative dynamics. Although few would dispute the complementary nature of these three components, translating the conceptual understanding from theory to practice is yet to be mainstreamed. Personal and institutional agendas and egos are not a good match. When the quest for visibility and funding are paramount, the programmatic substance is at risk of being relegated to the sidelines. Too often the ensuing collective dynamic nurtures the individual’s human propensity of looking out for their own interests first (Janis 1982). The combination of engrained structures, processes, mindsets, and human habits, together with the ever-fiercer competition for donor funding are hard to overcome. Shifting from a narrow, patchwork approach of aid to a holistic understanding of support requires a 360-degree vision of short-term interventions, medium-term investments, and long-term cooperation with at its centre the aspiration of individuals as the core feature of collective resilience. This dimension that embraces aid workers and ‘beneficiaries’ alike is the key for reinjecting passion into the aid sector, and
thereby harness the individual and collective power that it needs to transform society for good. To trigger, nurture, and expand sustainable social change people must *want* to be part of it (Fig. 1.2).

**Fig. 1.2** Everything is connected, from the inside out and the outside in. The social conundrum created by COVID-19 illustrates the interplay between short-term relief (humanitarian action), medium term assistance (development) and long-term building back. The 2020 crises shows that social transformation is not only missing, as a fourth pillar, of the Nexus equation, it is the umbrella that entails the others. Social peace is the counterpart of sustainable transformation; both require the empowerment of and support to individuals. While (long-If lasting) peace is the core aspiration (at the core), the humanitarian action-development assistance bridge needs to be crossed in order to arrive at sustainable social change and transformation. These elements influence each other mutually. Sustainable impact in either of these fields begins with a holistic perspective of individual well-being; and it is nurtured by the mutual complementarity of investments and progress in all dimensions (*Source Author*)
The dynamic of agendas, routines, and human nature that prevails in many non-profit entities is a killing ground for ideas that do not fit the existing boxes and silos within institutions, which prevents the complementarity that can make the whole more than the sum of its parts. Even when a new domain arises with substantive proof of its need and added value, large organizations usually remain slow, if not immutable, to make the necessary shifts in a timely and substantive manner. Linking back to the question that we looked at earlier, mental health can serve as an example. It has been shown over and over for the past decades, that mental well-being impacts the physical frame, and that community resilience requires genuine personal empowerment. And yet, far and few are the aid organizations which have systematically included this thematic in their scope of programmatic action. Even institutions whose mandate invites this type of project remain reluctant to make substantive investments in research, programming, and advocacy in related fields. The mission of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is to help every child survive and thrive, whereas the United Nations Fund for Populations (UNFPA) seeks a world where every birth is wanted, and every woman and young person finds their rights valued. Within these institutions a holistic approach to human well-being would not only fit as an organic umbrella for bringing together traditional programmes like health, youth empowerment, child protection, education, and social protection; easing programmatic synergy along. It could even serve as a binding element for inter-agency planning and implementation. But so far it does not. Too engrained is the current modus operandi, too established are the existing programme and staffing structures. Change is always challenging, both for individuals and for organizations. It becomes even more trying when it not only involves the creation of something novel but the elimination or transformation of existing positions, possessions, and the privileges that are attached to them.

One of the most dramatic illustrations of the consequences that lacking passion, and accountability can have in an organization that is meant to make the world a better place, is the abuse of women and children by peacekeepers in Haiti, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mozambique, and others. Beyond the media scoops that have covered this issue for over a decade, in 2019 two academic studies independently investigated the causes and consequences, and the extent of the issue; showing the interconnected complexity of the issue and the human side of both perpetrators and survivors.
Hardly any of these challenges faced by groups and institutions is rooted in bad intentions. Corruption, maliciousness, or narcissism may occur, yet they are not the norm. The largest damage derives not from dramatic events, but from the slow, subtle, uncovered erosion of individual attitudes. Most people who join an organization like the UN do so with the hope of contributing to make the world a better place. Looking at the almost 110,000 staff, including slightly more than 48,000 females (UN CEB 2019), unity in diversity appears. People join from all continents and countries; between 18 and 65 years all age groups are covered. This is a beautiful illustration of the universal desire, the aspiration of the human being to be part of an entity that exists to make the lives of everyone better. Certainly, some of these people join motivated by salary, diplomatic privileges, status, etc. In the beginning, these aspects are rarely the determining factors though. The orientation from non-material to material pull factors creeps in slowly, on tiptoes; the pension fund, health insurance, etc., evolve from being unexpected perks to a cherished given to an entitlement.

*I joined the UN in the early 2000s, finally fulfilling my dream to be part of this organization which I believed had the power and potential to bring about large-scale social change, due to its multilateral nature, resources, diversity, and mandate. Aged then in my twenties, I was determined to never become one of the stereotypical functionaries. I felt immune to the risk of greed, entitlement, and inertia. Brimming with ideas and fuelled with passion I began in Eastern Chad, working for three years with and for refugees and internally displaced persons affected by the conflict in Darfur. Subsequently, I moved on to Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Haiti to finally end up in Headquarters. I loved what I did, the people I worked with and for, as well as the countries I was in. And maybe that love was the problem. Because I could have stayed and enjoyed thoroughly what I did, being reasonably good at my job. Not only was I well-paid and taken care of in terms of security, I was paid to do what I would have done for free. But there was this little voice at the back of my mind that kept popping up, inquiring about the actual added value of my presence. Did I serve those in need or my own needs?*
As my doubts about the efficiency and impact of our collective efforts were fed by real-time observations and research, I began to increasingly question myself. Though I did nothing wrong or harmful, was that enough? Though I had not joined for the material benefits, was I willing to relinquish them? Trying to pinpoint whether I was in the right place, I kept on concluding that there was no other organization in whose mandate I believed so wholeheartedly. Still, in moments of honesty I saw myself drifting away ever further from the passionate, daring agent of change I had set out to be.

Stepping out of this mental conundrum took time, despite and because of the underpinning doubts and desires. In the process of deliberation that finally led me to take a sabbatical in 2019 I spoke with colleagues at all levels, from top management to administrative clerks, asking for thoughts and advice. It still strikes me that none of them recommended me to stay. Without exception colleagues expressed their envy, the desire to be able to do the same; all the while needing the money to pay their mortgage, the education of their children; to afford their overall lifestyle. For others, retirement was not too far away and they hung in to get the pension. Not one person raised the mandate, our collective mission, as a reason to stay.

1.3 Shifting the Angle

‘Changing the world’ sounds naive at best, and unrealistic if not presumptuous at worst. However, understanding that everything has consequences, small or large, changes the outlook dramatically. It makes transformation tangible and feasible. Entities shape and influence the cultural, socio-economic, political, and interpersonal environment that characterizes the space they exist in; be it a city, country, or region. Combined, the multiple micro- (individual), meso- (family, community), macro- (economy, culture) entities contribute to that what we experience at the meta-level (i.e. globally). Taking this perspective, whereby the individual is a minuscule, yet determining part of a universal dynamic, shifts the scope. Starting with the innermost entity, the aspiration of the individual, which drives and determines the micro-entity that each of us represents. If everything is part of everything else, then everything matters, and yet nothing is decisive in and of itself.

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Looking at the world I had felt superfluous for the better part of my existence. Being young and idealistic I was overwhelmed before I even began; whatever I contemplated to attempt had already been done. Like every adolescent I grew up amid a mixture of personal and global events; from micro-level pain such as the ongoing tension between my parents, to macro-level drama like the atomic catastrophe in Chernobyl and the fall of the Berlin wall in the 1980s, the genocide in Rwanda in the 1990s, and the wars in Balkans in the early 2000s. As I evolved from disoriented youth to determined (though nonetheless disoriented) humanitarian worker, I came to experience human suffering on another level; witnessing a reality that I had learned about merely from books and on TV. However, living and working in countries affected by humanitarian crises for usually three to four years, exposed me not only to the consequences of human cruelty or nature’s power. It also offered me glimpses of something else in these places that often live under the shadow of a murky image. Being there for extended periods of time allowed me to shift every so often from being an outsider to becoming a friend. Like many before me, I discovered what develops underneath the ragged surface that does not jump into the eye of a passing visitor. The kindness, courage, and ingenuity that marks the young and the old, male and female alike. A reality that rarely enters the spotlight of media narratives. It matters not, whether it is Goma, the so-called capital of rape in Eastern Congo, the cradle of terrorism in Kabul or the centre of cholera in Port-au-Prince, I found smiling mouths, warm eyes, helping hands, and stories that reflected an untamed spirit of survival everywhere. In Afghanistan I enjoyed time and tea in a traditional teahouse in Jalalabad, listening to the anecdotes of a seasoned Afghan colleague; hidden in a blue burqa I explored the local market in Herat, chatting with old women selling vegetables while tasting a delightful diversity of nuts and dried fruits. In Congo I shared the university benches with Congolese students, all of us trying to wrap our brains around Spanish for beginners. In Haiti I had countless cups of steaming coffee, sitting at the table of a Haitian neighbour discussing the ups and downs of Haitian society. There are so many more moments that occupy a cherished niche in my heart, changing forever the face of these countries from gloom to glory, at least for me.

Still, amid these treasures of everyday life, there was also all-pervading evidence of injustice, whereby some are lucky in the lottery of life, while others are not. Being exposed to this reality, and the constant reminder that I was one of those lucky ones, was at the same time energizing
and draining, pushing me to invest my entire self. Every day I saw girls and women who could have been me. Women who could have gone to university, gotten a well-paid job, and have not only material but social independence. These women had the brains and the strength to get everything. Yet in the moments when I passed them, walking in the streets or driving through their village in a car, shielded from their reality in an air-conditioned bubble of comfort, they were busy carrying water, nursing babies, cooking or cleaning, begging, or washing the windows of cars at the red light to earn a couple of coins. No matter how much is said or written about effort; the place and circumstances of our birth, determine 95% of the track on which our lives travel.

The following description uses some very broad simplifications and assumptions but may serve to put our general sense of entitlement into perspective. On the one hand, Marie, a girl whom I passed every other morning in Port-au-Prince—she carrying a bucket of water on her head, me on my way to work; on the other hand my cousin’s daughter, Charlotte. The two girls have the same mental and physiological predisposition to become a doctor, a lawyer, or a writer. Yet Marie is likely to leave school (if she ever enters it) after a couple of years because her family cannot afford the school fees and she needs to work to contribute to the household income, or because she gets married and/or pregnant. Charlotte is likely to move smoothly from primary school to high school to university. Growing up as one of several children whose father earns in good times 5 dollars a day, Marie is lucky if she gets enough to eat every day, an important condition to ensure the development of her brain in line with its inherent potential. In low-income countries, children living in poor households are at high risk of dying from preventable causes, including diarrhoea, pneumonia, etc. Being 12, Marie has luckily passed that stage. Still, by the time when Charlotte enters the faculty of medicine Marie will possibly have given already birth to her third child; her everyday life being populated by carrying water, cooking, and child-rearing. Having started with the same physiological set-up, the course and length of their respective lives is very different for the two girls, no matter the effort they make along the way.

However, suffering does not only come from material deprivation. Suppose a child grows up in a stable middle-class family but is beaten every day; whereas her peer has parents who may not be able to afford the latest gadgets or even struggle to bring two meals on the table every
day but do everything they can to nurture, protect, and support her, cherishing her like the apple of their eye. Maybe either of the girls is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, and though one of them has access to the best medical care, she would live through pain and suffering before she dies; for many in Marie’s situation it is likely that the illness would be never properly diagnosed, and if it was discovered in time, she and her family could not afford the necessary treatment; she would simply get thinner and paler every day until there is no more day.

While painting this dark picture of inequality that is displayed around the world—and which, in different shapes and colours, is on display in every single country, I firmly believe that there is hope. Everything changes constantly and this omnipresent uncertainty represents an opportunity. Independently from our external circumstances there is one asset that no one can take away from us, the power that both Marie and Charlotte and every one of us holds. That is the power to choose how we react. Rooted in our aspiration for meaning it determines whether our external circumstances make us suffer or, despite all objective expectations, thrive. The ability to harness this power depends on the level of influence that we have on the four dimensions of our being.

Working on the ground, my job was my life; there was no space for anything else. Though I gave everything, facing the scope and size of the problems at hand I was doomed to fail. While navigating the everyday reminder of my own insignificance I witnessed the extraordinary strength and creativity of individuals under dire conditions; and read about the compassion and generosity that people around the world showed every day. The fact that they practised what I hoped to accomplish, paralyzed me. Moving with the stream of my professional responsibility, the mere thought of not being good enough kept me from exploring what lay beyond it.

On paper it seemed that my efforts went in the right direction. Once I had begun to work in the humanitarian sector my career moved steadily forward. Chained to my comfort zone I did what I had signed up for. Working for an international organization such as the UN is a pleasure and a privilege. And although I questioned myself constantly, helping children to survive and thrive, by promoting health, nutrition, clean water and hygiene, education, and protection services for those who need it the most is the most beautiful mission there is. A perfect mission, maybe. However, something was missing; and deep down I knew it. I invested my time and energy in the collective effort to improve the lives of children
in this world. Yet while nothing was wrong; it was not right either. I saw, felt, and came to understand that the institution, the humanitarian community that I was part of, kept moving along a path of wilful blindness, headed towards chronic underperformance.

A lot of progress has been achieved to the benefit of many millions of children over the past 75 years since the UN has been created. Furthermore, every year millions of people who are affected by violence, poverty, or natural disaster continue to receive assistance because of this institution and the ever-increasing number of non-profit organizations. Every life counts and every smile, every glimmer of rebuilt hope matters. But so much more could be done. Nourishing a system that is subliminally aware of its weaknesses yet avoids facing the double discomfort of honest introspection and substantial internal transformation equals cultivating a challenge rather than addressing it. I was insignificant but part of the status quo. Since I did not bring solutions to address the problem, I was part of the latter; one of many thousands of staff members who unconsciously nurture insufficiency under the umbrella of a beautiful mission, allowing the status quo to persist.

Feeling unable to trigger changes in my environment; I eventually began to start changing myself. This is the part of the story where POZE begins, as we will discover in the next chapter. I have learned that small changes, internal or external, mental or material, can shift the scale. There is power in each of us, mostly untouched.

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Before we continue please take a moment. Once you have read this paragraph, please put the book aside for a moment. Find a quiet place where nobody will disturb you.

Pause. Sit comfortably, with uncrossed legs and arms, relax. Feel your back against the back of the chair and your feet on the floor.

Observe whatever surrounds you; using your senses—what do you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch? Just identify without analysing, without putting the stamp of like or dislike. When you feel you have a complete picture, a sensorial snapshot of your surroundings, close your eyes and take the same objective observer stance inside.

Zoom in. Notice your thoughts, without holding on to any of them; merely observing them arise and pass away. Zoom in further, to your emotions. How do you feel, in this moment?
Express whatever comes to your mind, in writing, by drawing, or sharing with others
You may wish to remember this exercise to recentre when you feel the pressure or dullness of your usual occupation. The more often this exercise is repeated, the easier it becomes to find focus. Throughout this book different variations of it will be introduced. The one above is the prototype. Find a space in your agenda to repeat it regularly; a me-slot that is dedicated to yourself.

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1.4 Transitions, Letting Go of the Old to Find the New

Anchored in the four dimensions of human existence are basic needs and desires that drive individual behaviour. While different, depending on a person’s past and present experience, parallels exist that are independent from culture, context, and upbringing.

Adult existence is not about adding something but about removing add-ons, like pulling back a curtain to unveil what is behind. We must love who we are in order to become what we want to be. Life is a classroom. What enters our path is a lesson. We remain in the same grade, encountering variations of the same type of situation until we change how we address them.

The Self is a combination of the past and the present. What we commonly refer to as ‘I’ is the current expression of our soul (aspiration), heart (emotion), mind (thought), and body (sensation), which is influenced by the imprints that were left behind by past expressions of these four dimensions. Wherever we went in the past influences where we are in the present and hereby where we will go in the future. Choosing to acknowledge and examine these influences is the first step towards a genuine presence.

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Pause a moment here please. Observe your life as it is, from an observer perspective. Now Zoom in. Do you feel held back in any
aspect of your life? If so, what is holding you back? One dimension after the other, what are the ambitions, beliefs, cravings, needs that are keeping you where you no longer want to be, where you no longer belong?

Make a list of your priorities. Zoom into yourself as far as you can and seek to Express why they matter so much. Express whatever passes through your mind; jotting down words or sentences, symbols, or pictures. When you reach a blockage, take a rest and either keep on reading or do something else entirely. You may return to this exercise and your notes anytime. As you have planted the question of identifying your grips, answers will gradually arise.

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To explain more concretely what I mean please allow me to take my own transition as an illustration. Everyone is unique yet looking at my journey may explain why it is helpful to use a four-dimensional prism to look at your life.

Soul – Tackling the aspiration of social change begins by changing oneself. This is maybe why it is commonly assumed to be too great an effort to even try. When I finally saw these two goals (individual and social change) as a continuum, with one side influencing the other I realized what had underpinned my decisions from an early age. When I stopped to hide behind the screen of my profession, I had to face myself; including the many facets that I had always felt needed alteration. Changing others and changing ourselves are not interchangeable. While the second may influence the first, the opposite does not work. (Un-) fortunately the need to justify ourselves for Who and How we are (not) does not cease because of What we do. It stays and grows until we accept Who we are (not). Releasing attachment to the output of our efforts is an age-old principle of Karma yoga (Raju 1954). It activates the power to invest ourselves entirely—free from the inhibitions that derive from fear of failure. Releasing the constant need for external affirmation I found inside the freedom to accept. Softening the grip of the first dimension I rediscovered its actual shape.

Heart – The same dynamic of candid introspection led me to examine the emotions that had been clustered like snowflakes around my heart. Realizing how desperately I had craved to belong somewhere, I found
a home inside. The pursuit of external approval is endless due to the relentless string of new people that enter our lives. As long as we seek to please all of them we are dependent. Longing for autonomy on one side I cultivated my dependency on the other. I shoveled hard to dig a hole that I constantly tried to fill. Opening my eyes to this paradoxical connection enabled me to step out of it; gradually reducing the desire to be liked by others. Stopping to seek appreciation outside opened me to a love that had been present all along. A warm glow intensified as my heart emerged from three decades of deep freeze, melting slowly.

Mind – Distilling what motivates our choices can be painful. The unpleasant step of introspection helped me understand how important status had been in my decision-making processes. Reviewing my past operating model I realized that I had seamlessly transitioned from one ‘status’ to the next, from one institutional affiliation to the other. As mentioned above, I had been a daughter, a student, an actor, a lawyer, and an international civil servant. Slipping smoothly from one role into another one I always managed to avoid the person behind the screen. Had my choices been linked to the images that are attached to professional labels, or to the scope and actual work of these occupations? Did I become an actor after graduation from high school to make others see and feel how the world was, and how it could be, or did I want to be seen and felt? Did I subsequently become a lawyer to promote justice amid social unfairness, or to be treated fairly myself? Did I finally become a humanitarian to help, or to be helpful? Overtime friends and colleagues pointed out my streak of independence, my anarchistic tendency. But while this streak may have been present all along, it paradoxically coexisted with my attachment to labels. Status and stability mattered; though I would have never admitted that.

The unexpected implosion of my carefully charted career transition forced me to face my own thinking. Finally tracing the whole path, from motivation to decision, released the grip of the third dimension; candid introspection into my own mind enabled me to focus on what I was. Which equipped me with the humility to admit and accept what I was not. In combination with a compassion that resulted from the above-mentioned emotional defreeze, this attitude brought me closer to myself, and others.

Body – Finally, the fourth level of letting go involved my physical circumstances. From an early age, and increasingly once I entered adolescence, I sought control over my circumstances. Facing an atmosphere of
lingering domestic unravelling I concentrated on the only domain that was my own, my body. My parents being tall, I decided to be tiny; in no way was I willing to go along with the trend of my genes. Mind was to win over matter (It remains open whether my stubborn determination is the reason or whether I was anyhow genetically programmed not to fit the family mould; I measure 1.63 m). My physical frame served as a platform, to get a grip on the many factors in my environment that were beyond my influence. As I grew older, additional tools to play the delusionary game of control arose. Income security was one of them. The accumulation of savings offered me the transient feel of independence. Once again, the paradox of complementary opposites unfolded. When I released the quest for external security, consciously deciding to quit a secured high profile, high salary position, I found emotional safety, which is independent from material, thus uncontrollable and invariably changing, parameters. For the first time in my professional life, I experienced a lasting feeling of safety.

Responsibility and relationships are treasures; they bring a rich variety of opportunities to grow and find satisfaction. My successive choices were facilitated by independence. I had the relational luxury to step out of the hamster wheel of my current career track in view of an academic pathway. The fact that I was responsible only for myself made it easier to move out and on. I am in good health, single, have no children, and parents who can live on their own; having always been on the move I have no firm point of attachment. The choices that I had made along the way, which came with their own perks and downsides, smoothed the terrain for this latest wave of choices, the choice to go, and to let go. Having any of the aforementioned is no reason to step away from the life that you want though. Nothing can shield you from the existence that you are meant to experience.

Let me be clear—I am not suggesting that you drop everything from one day to the other. My path may appear drastic (I am not good with compromises) but is it just one out of many. There are as many routes as there are people. Letting go does not necessarily entail relinquishing what you have and do, in particular not if you get out of bed in the morning full of joy and excitement for a new day. Stepping away from your material circumstances is a formality, an external manifestation of an internal change process that is well underway. When you are no longer mentally attached to whatever you have, do and are, the external constellation becomes secondary.
The main challenge is not to let go of things, but of the emotional baggage that comes with them and what brought them into our life in the first place. The question is not to quit all your relationships and cut off all connections, but to shift from bondage to compassion, from need to space. Once you have managed to free yourself internally you are no longer dependent externally. The other way around, letting go of what you cherish to then release your inner attachment to those possessions is challenging at best and can be disastrous. One may end up like the prisoner at high sea, who throughs overboard the leadball that is chained to his foot. For some a radical cut from external ties may eliminate distraction and thereby make the transition to inner freedom easier. This is one of the fundamental reasons why monks and nuns take refuge in seclusion, without worldly possessions. But if you are the breadwinner of a family it may be hard to leave from one day to the next. Does this prevent you from a candid assessment of yourself, from identifying what you truly want? If you had to die one year from now—would the justifications that currently chain you to the status quo be valid?

The Present is everything we ever have, and it is perfect before we even start to tamper with it. It is a gift that we are given unconditionally, with every breath. If and how we face it is our choice. This ‘Power of Now’ as Eckhardt Tolle called it, is ours while we are alive; nobody can take it away (Tolle 2004). Drifting down the river of life we have the choice to either grasp for rocks to cling to, hurting ourselves as movement and matter collide, or we can dive in, floating along with the waves. COVID-19 reminded us that everything is connected, individuals and society; physical and social factors of our wellbeing, or body and mind. It also illustrated that everything can change in an instant. No matter how much we have planned and plotted, pull out one single card and the house of cards collapses.

Solidarity may seem at times like a burden that is not in our personal interest (although we will see in the next chapter that it is highly beneficial for our personal health and happiness to act in the interest of others). But when we accept who we are and what we were given, we not only enable ourselves to enjoy the status quo to the fullest. We gradually move closer to our own potential, which conditions our ability to share this biggest gift that we have to offer with others.

We evolve as we live. Though above described mindset feels firmly acquired as I write these lines, I know that my fourfold release is not a permanent fixture. As my environment and situation keep on changing,
I find myself at times gravitating once more to certain attachments from the past, binding myself temporarily to places, possessions, privileges, or people. Although I have tasted and still savour the delight of liberation, I am not kidding myself to believe that I am forever protected from my past cravings. Life is work in progress. The favorable factor is that having even once experienced genuine freedom it leaves an imprint. As our grips dissolve, the periods of faltering gradually become less frequent, less intense; until they are gone.

**Notes**

1. Karma means action, work, or deed; it also refers to the spiritual principle of cause and effect where intent and actions of an individual (cause) influence the future of that individual (effect). Western culture, influenced by Christianity, holds a notion similar to karma, as demonstrated in the phrase ‘what goes around comes around’. Karma Yoga (yoga of action) states that investing one’s best efforts for the good of others is the principal path of developing spirituality (Rastogi and Pati 2015).

2. How do you introduce yourself if you have no job?

3. The term ‘beneficiary’ will be used in this book as referring to individuals targeted by aid programmes. Even though it is a terminology that has made me cringe since I started working, because of the connotation of passivity, I have so far not found a widely recognized replacement term.

4. Large-scale information campaigns, such as national drives to stop smoking, which include graphic illustrations on every cigarette package, may ensure that those who smoke are (intellectually) aware of the physical consequences. However, until the targeted consumers feel why it is time for them to stop, and feel ready and able to do so, the impact of these campaigns usually remains punctual and short-lived (Bicchieri 2016).

5. Findings from disaster mental health have established that emotional distress is ubiquitous in affected populations—a finding echoed in populations affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic; which means in 2020 nearly everyone. Public health emergencies may affect the health, safety, and well-being of individuals (causing, insecurity, confusion, emotional isolation, and stigma) and communities (owing to economic loss, work and school closures, inadequate resources for medical response, and insufficient access to basic necessities). These effects may translate into a range of emotional reactions (from distress over depression to psychiatric conditions), unhealthy behaviors (i.e. excessive substance use), and noncompliance with public health directives (i.e. disregard of home confinement). As for health care providers themselves, the novel nature of SARS-CoV-2, inadequate testing, limited treatment options, insufficient equipment with
protective gear for frontline workers and other medical supplies, massively extended workloads, and other emerging concerns are sources of stress and have the potential to overwhelm individuals and systems alike (Pfefferbaum and North 2020).

6. Indirectly this challenge is addressed when humanitarian workers who are deployed to provide traditional social service projects perform in line with their best intentions and abilities. For more details on potential venues to shift the angle of ‘help’ for individuals affected by crises, in particular young people, please refer to the ‘Purpose for Power’ chapter in ‘Development, Humanitarian Aid and Social Welfare’ (Walther 2020).

7. In 2012, World Health Assembly Resolution 65.20 was adopted, requesting WHO to provide leadership at the global level in collecting and reporting information on attacks on health care. The resulting ‘Attacks on Health Care initiative’ collects evidence through two main work streams: primary data collection in near real time through WHO country offices and partners on the ground using the Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA), and secondary data monitoring at the global level, which is published quarterly. The secondary data complements the primary data collection in countries where primary data collection is not yet fully implemented.

8. Groupthink refers to decision-making groups’ extreme concurrence seeking (conformity) that is hypothesized to result in highly defective judgements and outcomes. According to Irving Janis, the inventor of the groupthink concept, decision-making groups are most likely to experience groupthink when they operate under the following conditions: maintain high cohesion, insulate themselves from experts, perform limited search and appraisal of information, operate under directive leadership, and experience conditions of high stress with low self-esteem and little hope of finding a better solution to a pressing problem than that favoured by the leader or influential members (Pratkanis and Turner 2007).

9. A study by Sabine Lee, University of Birmingham and Susan Bartels, Queen’s University, is the latest to document sexual misconduct by international peacekeeping forces (Lee and Bartels 2019). For example In Haiti girls as young as 11 were sexually abused and impregnated by peacekeepers, who were stationed in the country from 2004 to 2017 as part of The United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (UNSTAMIH) (French: Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en Haiti); the babies that often resulted from these encounters are known today as ‘little minusthas’ and both mothers and children face stigma and shame, on top of the pre-existing abject poverty that led some of these women to sell their bodies in exchange for food or money.

10. You may think this is high as it is above the commonly referred ‘a dollar a day’ (which was updated by the World Bank to PPP US$ 1.90 in
However, this measurement is not about actual dollars but Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) dollars so they cannot be directly compared to the numbers here. Moreover, as the ‘dollar a day’ measure was constructed for international comparisons, it is not a good measure of poverty at the national level. Broader and further criticisms of the ‘dollar a day’ measure can be found in Deaton (2010), Reddy and Minoiu (2007), and Vandemoortele (2002).

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