

PROJECT PROPOSAL

**SOUTHERN AFRICA FOOD SECURITY CHANGE LAB:  
TOWARDS A STRATEGIC ALLIANCE FOR IMPROVED  
FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

23 October 2009

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## 1 APPLICANT AND PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

This proposal is submitted by Ralph Hamann,<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, representing the Southern Africa Food Security Change Lab Steering Group (SG). The SG was established in 2008 through collaboration between a project supported by the *Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ) on the role of the private sector in enhancing food security in South Africa and a concurrent project on food security facilitated by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA). The SG consists of representatives of the following organisations: ActionAid, DBSA, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in the Government of the Republic of South Africa,<sup>2</sup> Green Choice / World Wide Fund for Nature, International Food Policy Research Institute, Reos Partners, South African Human Rights Commission, and the University of Cape Town.<sup>3</sup> (Annex 1 lists the current members of the SG.)

The SG was initially established to facilitate the organisation and facilitation of a multi-stakeholder workshop, which was held on 25 February 2009 at the Gordon Institute of Business Science in Johannesburg. About 60 participants from business, government and civil society attended this workshop, which concluded that improved cross-sector collaboration is vital for dealing with the many 'stuck issues' that impede system-wide improvements to food security in South Africa. A large majority of participants confirmed their commitment to contribute to such a collaborative process.<sup>4</sup>

This proposal is a direct outcome of this workshop. It has been developed on the basis of deliberations within the SG and enjoys the full support of each of the members.

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph.hamann@gsb.uct.ac.za

<sup>2</sup> Other departments with significant bearing on this project include the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development. Note that there has been significant institutional restructuring in the wake of the 2009 elections particularly in the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and in the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

<sup>3</sup> The National Business Initiative was a member of the SG in preparation for the workshop in February 2009, as per prior agreement.

<sup>4</sup> Food Security Change Lab Steering Group, (2009): What will it take to ensure sustainable Food Security? Workshop Report. 25 February 2009. Johannesburg. This detailed workshop report is available on request.

## 2 CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The United Nations identifies the food crisis as one of the primary overarching challenges facing the international community.<sup>5</sup> It is inter-related in complex ways to the current economic crisis and the longer-term environmental / climate crisis.

Nowhere is the food crisis more pressing and disturbing than in southern Africa. The inability of a large proportion of southern African households to reliably access necessary levels of nutrition is a fundamental aspect of their deepening poverty trap. Furthermore, in the context of rapid urbanisation in this region, the character of food insecurity is changing – it is no longer primarily a rural problem. A recent survey of 11 southern African cities found that in many of these cities up to 80% of households in poor neighbourhoods are food insecure.<sup>6</sup>

With the rapid rise in food prices and associated social unrest around the world in 2008, food security has again become a high profile concern. This has also involved greater political awareness and commitment. For instance, in South Africa, food security figured prominently in the election manifestos of all parties, and it was highlighted in the recent State of the Nation Address.<sup>7</sup>

There is also an increasing interest in the role of business in contributing to – or perhaps impeding – food security. A prominent report published by the United Nations (UN) at the end of 2008 argued: “While government leadership is crucial for addressing the implications of the food crisis, business also has a vital role to play in partnership with others to develop and implement innovative responses.”<sup>8</sup> This is also in the context of the international corporate responsibility movement, with corporate responsibility defined by groups such as the World Economic Forum as “the contribution a company makes to society through its core business activities, its social investment and philanthropy programmes, and its engagement in public policy.”<sup>9</sup> Bearing in mind the human right to access to food, there is also increasing portent in the current activities of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary

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<sup>5</sup> For more information, see the website of the Secretary General’s high level task force on the Global Food Security Crisis: <http://www.un.org/issues/food/taskforce>

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Frayne, personal communication. Frayne is Director of the Programme for Urban Food Security, based at the University of Cape Town.

<sup>7</sup> Zuma, JG. 2009. State of the Nation Address  
<http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2009/09060310551001.htm>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, 2008, *Food Sustainability: A Guide for Private Sector Action* (New York: United Nations), page 5.

<sup>9</sup> World Economic Forum, quoted in R. Hamann (2006) ‘Can business make decisive contributions to development? Towards a research agenda on corporate citizenship and beyond’, *Development Southern Africa*, 23(2), page 180.

General on human rights and business, who argues that companies need to develop due diligence on human rights issues that may arise in their activities as “producers, service providers, employers, and neighbours”.<sup>10</sup>

Based on research conducted for the GTZ by the applicant,<sup>11</sup> it is apparent that many companies in the South African food supply chain are recognising these pressures and incentives, and many have put in place particular, company-specific responses.<sup>12</sup> However, it is increasingly recognised – at least internationally – that improving food security and dealing with related challenges, such as diminishing water supply, require collective action among companies in the supply chain, as well as cross-sector collaboration between business, government, and civil society. Hence, for example, the Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, Dr. Jacques Diouf, argues, “The challenge of food security can only be resolved through a global partnership involving national, international, public, private and voluntary sectors.”<sup>13</sup>

According to some analysts, a key objective of such partnerships ought to be the creation of more conducive business environments for food producers: “Assured markets and the expectation of (realistic and realizable) profit margins will almost automatically lead to increased production and rural economic development along hubs and value chains and will in addition create on- and off-farm employment opportunities.”<sup>14</sup> A related goal among such analyses is the need to make value chains more competitive.

Overall, a premise confirmed at the multi-stakeholder workshop mentioned above is that increasing agricultural production is vital, but enhancing food security also requires broader, more systemic interventions in the value chains linking the production, manufacturing, and retail of food.<sup>15</sup> All social partners have important

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations (UN), Protect, Respect and Remedy: A Framework for Business and Human Rights, report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, John Ruggie, UN Document A/HRC/8/5 (New York: UN, 2008), <http://www.business-humanrights.org/Documents/RuggieHRC2008> (accessed 11 March 2009), page 17.

<sup>11</sup> The resulting paper is available on request.

<sup>12</sup> Hamann, R. (2009) ‘On the Role of Business and Cross-Sector Collaboration in Food Security in South Africa’, unpublished document available on request.

<sup>13</sup> ([http://www.fao.org/tc/private/index\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/tc/private/index_en.asp); accessed 24 April 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Hoffmann, R., H. Hoeffler, E. Krain, K. Schuetz, A. Seelaff and M. Will (2008): Is Market Orientation of Agricultural Policy in Africa still Appropriate in Times of Food Shortage and Rising Food Prices? The Kenyan perspective; GTZ-Programme “Promotion of Private Sector Development in Agriculture (PSDA)”, Kenya; unpublished

<sup>15</sup> For a broad overview of the issues and access to diverse resources on the topic, see, for instance, <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation>. For a detailed analysis of global food supply with an emphasis on agricultural production, see IAASTD, 2008, ‘Synthesis Report of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD),’ available via <http://www.agassessment.org>.

roles to play, including the private sector, which faces a compelling business case related to the risks of economic stagnation, social unrest, trade restrictions and impacts on reputation and brand value.<sup>16</sup>

There is also a range of important existing initiatives. For example, many of the large retail companies in South Africa have dedicated programmes in place to support emerging farmers provide agricultural inputs into their supply chains. Another prominent set of initiatives is focused on providing surplus food to low income households.<sup>17</sup> However, it was recognized by diverse stakeholders at the February workshop that these existing efforts are not at the requisite scale to make a difference and furthermore that there is often insufficient coordination between them. The challenge is to identify whether, and if so, how these roles and activities of diverse actors ought to be better coordinated, and what kind of collaboration process would lead to innovations that shift the food supply chain in a manner that provides for long-term, environmentally sustainable food security.

### **3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the proposed project is to build upon the multistakeholder workshop of February 2009 to develop an innovation- and action-oriented strategic alliance between business, government and civil society to enhance food security in southern Africa.

To achieve this aim, we propose the implementation of a tried and tested “Change Lab” methodology. Among other examples, this methodology has been successfully implemented in an international initiative with similar objectives to this proposal – the Sustainable Food Lab.<sup>18</sup> It has also been successfully applied in South Africa in a multi-stakeholder initiative in the children’s sector.<sup>19</sup> Both of these initiatives, and others like them, have resulted in tangible, action-oriented innovations that have addressed particularly important points of leverage in the broader system – for more information please see the specified webpages.

This process will entail the accomplishment of the following objectives by the implementing organisations, with guidance from the SG:

- Convene a group of committed, influential, and engaged leaders across sectors addressing food insecurity. This group will represent a “microcosm” of the broader food system in southern Africa, though an initial focus will be on

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<sup>16</sup> See Hamann, 2009, op cit (see footnote 12)

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.foodbank.org.za>. These initiatives are described in Hamann, 2009, op cit (see footnote 12)

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.sustainablefoodlab.org>

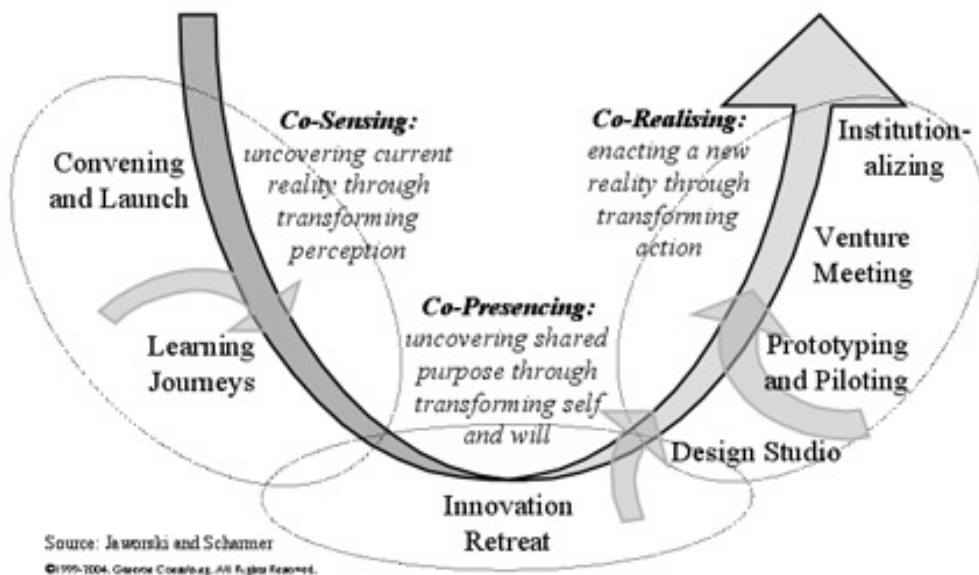
<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.linc.org.za>

South African roleplayers with significant spheres of responsibility in the broader region (such as retailers including Pick'n'Pay and Shoprite);

- Conduct a collective inquiry into the complexity of food insecurity from a whole-systems perspective, building on existing research. This process will not only bring about a shared understanding of system-wide challenges and opportunities, but will also develop individuals' commitment and self-identification as part of the broader system;
- Identify on the basis of creative facilitation techniques a set of particular, action-oriented innovations that encourage sustainable food security in southern Africa;
- Develop dedicated working groups to test, apply and institutionalise these innovations on a broader scale; and
- Use these innovations and deliberations within the change lab to develop a business plan and requisite commitments from key role-players for a larger-scale strategic alliance.

#### **4 PROPOSED PROCESS, TIMEFRAMES AND OUTPUTS**

The proposed project will consist of a 12-month process divided into three phases, broadly in line with the three parts illustrated in the diagram below. Phase one, the convening phase, involves in-depth interviews with approximately 20 members from the different sectors of society (primarily within South Africa, but including neighbouring states) to develop a deep understanding of the issues as seen by the key stakeholders, and ultimately identifying 20 to 30 leaders who would become members of the Change Lab team. In Phase two, participants will move into experiencing the system together, coming to a shared understanding of where challenges lie and what is needed to address those challenges together. Finally, in Phase three, participants will work jointly to implement innovative solutions, to begin to bring about the required change. This process aims to create a "Strategic Alliance", securing an integral regional concept and its implementation to solve the problem of food insecurity in a holistic way. The phases are described in more detail below.



#### 4.1 Phase one: In-depth interviews and desk research

Phase one involves stakeholder engagement through in-depth interviews, as well as desk research to compile a set of basic background materials for use by change lab members. This will make extensive use of existing literature. The three-month phase will result in agreement among key stakeholders on the specific purpose, themes and focus areas of the Food Security Change Lab, and on membership of the Lab. This period will also identify existing initiatives which might not be known across the food security system, and look into whether there is potential to innovate, connect or bring these ideas to scale. Already ongoing initiatives should be included and built on.

##### *In-depth interviews*

Phase one will consist of in-depth interviews with leaders in the public, private and civil society sectors. The initial list of interviewees will be drawn from participants in the February 2009 workshop, as well as other leaders identified by the SG. These interviews are not simply objective diagnostic or data-collecting activities. Often, this is the point where people become enrolled not because they officially sign on the “dotted line,” but because they are drawn to the conversation and the idea of the Change Lab. A sense of shared fundamental intentions begins to develop between the interviewer and the interviewee although there may be divergent opinions about what should be done about the issue. In this way the essential initial conditions for a Change Lab, namely a field of relationships, starts to be created.

Areas for inquiry during interviews include the following:

- Problems, challenges, and obstacles in the current situation of food insecurity;



- Previous efforts to address these problems and what interviewees have learned from these efforts;
- Possible solutions, interventions and leverage points; and interesting and important innovations being tried;
- Interviewees' perspective on what is missing, not being seen, talked about, or done and where the blind spots are to secure sustainable access to food by poor population groups;
- Interviewees' own present and future role in addressing food insecurity; and
- Interviewees' motivation to work towards better food security

Interviewees will be asked to identify the individuals or institutions whose participation would be essential in order to change the situation and to identify the aspects of the problem they have energy for. Finally, interviewees would be invited to recommend other individuals that should be interviewed.

An initial set of dialogues leads to a broader circle, until the interview team has identified and spoken with a critical mass of key stakeholders, who together have the capacity to understand and influence the system. In total, we expect to undertake between 20 and 30 interviews with individuals who will ultimately comprise of the Change Lab team. The interviewees will equally represent the private, public and civil society sectors. The interview process serves to identify those leaders who are deeply committed to the mission of achieving a breakthrough within the food system. In combination, these leaders have the knowledge, skills, passion, influence and the willingness to actively engage to be able to deliver on the Lab objective together. These have acknowledged that their individual efforts have not adequately solved the problem, due to factors within and out of their control. These people will form the Change Lab Team.

Individually, they are:

- People for whom the Lab objective is of paramount importance, both professionally and personally;
- Respected, influential leaders of their organizations and sectors;
- Fully supported by their organizations in terms of committing time to the Lab processes;
- Entrepreneurial and action-oriented; and
- Individuals who think creatively and ask themselves and their organisations questions which address deeper-level change; they are therefore ready to work towards innovation within their institution.

(An initial list of possible interviewees is provided in Annex 2 – note that this is merely for illustration purposes, as this list is likely to be refined on commencement of the project.)

The insights generated during the interviews will be synthesized into a comprehensive report, which is then presented to key stakeholders at the start of Phase two. This synthesis report will assist the SG in assessing whether Phase one has given us some confidence that key role-players in the food security system are willing and able to engage in strategic collaboration with each other on food security. The SG's recommendation will be used by the GTZ to confirm the continuation of funding for the project into the proposed next phase. More particularly, the GTZ will make a decision regarding continued funding for the project on the basis of predetermined criteria. These include the provision of written confirmation from three companies with influence on food security to confirm that they are willing to participate in the learning journeys and to work on issues that are systemic to the food security problem. Note that the GTZ's decision regarding continued funding does not necessarily determine the continuation of the project itself.

#### *Complementary desk research:*

Drawing on recent studies on food security in southern Africa, desk research will be done to inform the design of the Change Lab and to create a set of basic background information for Lab Team members to use during subsequent phases. Areas to be included in the desk research include data on the current food security situation; economical, historical, institutional, political background on food security in southern Africa, stakeholder analysis; existing initiatives; media coverage; and systemic issues.

#### *Outputs to be achieved during Phase one:*

1. Broad agreement among stakeholders on the specific purpose of the FS Lab;
2. Identification of the key themes and focus areas for subsequent phases of the FS Lab;
3. Synthesis report on the interviews and desk research;
4. The SG's recommendation, based on the interviews and the synthesis report, on whether key role-players are willing and able to strategically collaborate with each other on food security;
5. Written confirmation from three companies with influence on food security to confirm that they are willing to participate in the learning journeys and to work on issues that are systemic to the food security problem; and
6. The identification of key individuals to participate in the FS Change Lab.

If Phase one reveals that there is strong interest and commitment to address the systemic blockages which undermine cross sector collaboration in addressing food security, the core team will work with the SG to plan a Change Lab that is appropriate for the context. Several key food retailers, who are actively expanding into southern African countries, have already expressed an interest to engage in the process (Pick n Pay and Woolworths).

## *4.2 Phase two: Learning journeys and collective commitment*

Because each Change Lab is custom-designed, based on the background research and in-depth interviews, the details of Phases two and three outlined here are subject to change. Phase two provides the Change Lab team with a structured process to see the food security system as a whole, and identify where there is the potential, subject to facts and circumstances, and the greatest possibilities, subject to willingness, for change. It would consist of Learning Journeys lasting between one and three days, which are undertaken jointly by the members of the Change Lab, and cover key topics emerging from the interview data and workshop output.

### *Learning journeys*

Learning journeys involve visits to affected communities and organizations which provide change lab members with the opportunity to immerse themselves directly in the field of the problem at hand. Private sector organisations' awareness of their roles and the interdependencies of food insecurity is still relatively unknown. The learning journey serves several purposes:

- To give participants an understanding of different parts of the 'whole food system' and their role within it;
- To enable participants to engage with diverse stakeholders and to map and assess a wide range of stakeholder needs;
- To build more intuitive, holistic and human pictures of the food security system;
- To build a better understanding for the economic implication of food insecurity for society in the long run, and for the private sector in the medium term;
- To train participants to suspend judgment and observe the limitations and possibilities of their own way of seeing a situation;
- For participants to learn from each other, each representing part of the food security system, as well as from external stakeholders;
- For participants to build a network they can draw upon at later stages of the change lab;
- To motivate participants to engage in innovative action; and
- To inform participants about existing initiatives with potential.

Following the learning journeys, the Change Lab members will convene in a workshop to debrief the learning journeys, and share experiences of where they saw seeds of innovation and possibilities of bringing these ideas to scale. These ideas will form initial innovations to be prototyped, which could contribute to better food security, and thereby shift the value-chain of food provision. This is followed by structured opportunities for individual reflection, to clarify intentions and personal commitments, and provide opportunity for new insights to emerge. This may include spending time alone in nature, and reconvening as a team to share experiences and

begin planning the next phase. It is assumed, that there is room for yet not identified options within the private sector and in multi stakeholder partnerships.

The output from Phase two will be a detailed report on the learning journeys and initial broad innovation areas will be identified. The innovation topics will be selected based on their possibilities for encouraging action and innovation across a range of activities and players.

#### *4.3 Phase three: Commitment to selected innovations*

Phase three would consist of an Innovation Workshop to move from broadly shared commitments into specific innovations and actions, among these the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships. The purpose of the Innovation Workshop is to define and start the prototyping and piloting of solutions aligned with what has been learned in previous phases. This phase involves crystallizing and agreeing on a number of innovation areas, clearly defining and re-framing the problem within each focus area, and then moving to hands-on, rapid-cycle creation, evaluation, iteration and implementation of multiple alternative solutions to the problem at hand. These focus areas can include already existing initiatives, as well as ideas created by the change lab group itself. It is important to focus on action in this phase, even if it hasn't been brought to appropriate scale yet. The importance is to actively reflect and learn from frequent activity within a focus area, and involving multiple players within a given food security system or value chain.

These activities and projects, although possibly individually implemented are elements of the overall Change Lab programme. Key to this process is participation of organisations involved to take on some of these tasks. Representatives of the Change Lab will need to involve and ultimately include their respective organisational platforms in order to take this work to scale. The action learning aspect of the Change Lab intensifies as the pilots are being implemented and lessons are learned and shared with the Lab Team on an ongoing basis. These pilots are not merely ideas or policy recommendations but functioning prototypes that are based on lessons learnt and experiences adapted to other initiatives that are ready to be scaled up and institutionalized. The pilots serve to demonstrate what the new system would look like – in Otto Scharmer's words; they become "landing strips for the future".<sup>20</sup>

The output of Phase three will outline selected initiatives emerging from the Change Lab for proposed implementation within participating institutions. These initiatives would have been carefully deliberated, experimented with at various levels, and shown promise of innovation and sustainability. This Project Report will also include recommendations on the institutional arrangements for hosting and facilitating the

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<sup>20</sup> Scharmer, CO. (2007). Theory U. Cambridge, Mass.: Society for Organizational Learning. p. 417.

ongoing action learning process. Host organisations from within the Change Lab will commit to championing these initiatives, and a governance structure is put in place (for example, a secretariat) to share the learnings and results back into the larger food security system on an ongoing basis.

The timeframe for each of the proposed phases is schematically illustrated in the figure below. The contract period commences 15 November 2009, but because of existing commitments and the characteristics of the end-of-year period, it is proposed that interviews will commence only in January 2010. The five weeks in end 2009 will be used for preparations, including desk research and making appointments with interviewees. The final report will be submitted by the end of the contract period on 15 November 2010.

	Dec 2009–Feb 2010			Mar-May 2010			Jun-Aug 2010			Sep-Nov 2010		
Phase 1:												
Desk Research												
Interviews												
Phase 2												
Learning Journeys												
Innovation Retreat												
Phase 3												
Action planning workshop												
Prototyping/ Impl. planning												
Report preparation												

## 5 IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES AND PROFILE OF LEAD PARTNERS

The SG will play a crucial role in guiding and overseeing the project. As a first step in the process, one or more representatives from the business sector will be invited to join the SG. The project will be facilitated by a core team, consisting of Prof Ralph Hamann from UCT, Vanessa Sayers and Colleen Magner from Reos Partners, and an independent consultant, Dr Milla McLachlan. The University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business will serve as convener and grant recipient, and will sub-contract Reos Partners and Milla McLachlan for their

contributions to this project. Brief profiles of the GSB and Reos Partners are provided below, while a detailed profile of Reos Partners and a curriculum vitae of Milla McLachlan are provided in Annex 4 and Annex 5, respectively.

### *UCT – Graduate School of Business (GSB)*

Research at the Graduate School of Business (GSB) is recognised internationally for its focus on emerging markets and transition economies. The contextual focus creates opportunities for an eclectic blend of research that often crosses functional disciplines. The GSB has four NRF rated researchers. GSB researchers work independently, in local and international collaborations and in research centres to explore important managerial issues in human resource management and labour relations, market orientation and strategy, portfolio formation and investment strategies, capital budgeting behaviour, knowledge management, export marketing and management, utility regulation and infrastructure management, labour market dynamics, consumer behaviour, leadership competencies, organisational and national culture, manufacturing strategy, supply chain management, participative organisation structures, social identity, and service quality. Researchers also are active in advertising and media research, innovation, information technology, business strategy, learning theory and performance, social marketing and market segmentation.

The research requires diverse methodological approaches that may include quantitative techniques for inference and assessment (e.g. regression, structural equation modelling, latent class analysis, time series analysis) and qualitative methods of discovery and exploration (e.g. action learning, case studies, projective techniques, depth interviews).

In 2008, the UCT Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the GSB published its sixth *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor* (GEM). Published annually simultaneously in South Africa and 42 other countries around the world as part of a project headquartered at the London Business School, GEM is South Africa's most authoritative report on entrepreneurship and is sponsored by Liberty Life, South African Breweries, The National research Foundation and The Standard Bank. In 2005, the UCT Centre for Leadership and Public Values at the GSB published its first study, which is among the first to explore indigenous forms of community giving, self help and mutual assistance. The Centre continues to receive Ford Foundation support for the ongoing research programme. (For more information, see <http://www.gsb.uct.ac.za>).

### *Reos Partners*

Reos (<http://www.reospartners.com>) is an international consulting and capacity building firm that supports innovation in complex social systems. We facilitate

results-oriented multi-stakeholder collaboration within and across business, government, and civil society organisations. Our projects vary in scale, duration, complexity, and focus. We've led innovation processes in local health care systems and in global sustainable food systems; we've facilitated three-day workshops and three-year innovation processes; we've served community-based groups and worked with some of the largest corporations in the world. We work on every continent, with offices in Cambridge (Massachusetts), London, Sao Paulo and Johannesburg.

## ANNEX 1: CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA FOOD SECURITY CHANGE LAB STEERING GROUP

Name	Affiliation
Scott Drimie	University of the Witwatersrand / International Food Policy Research Institute
Christina Golino	Development Bank of Southern Africa
Ralph Hamann	University of Cape Town
Cameron Jacobs	South African Human Rights Commission
Colleen Magner / Vanessa Sayers	Reos Partners
Milla McLachlan	Independent
Steve Mohlabi / Mathews Madola	Department of Agriculture, Government of the Republic of South Africa <sup>21</sup>
Doris Popp	<i>Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit</i>
Edmore Mangoti / Zanele Twala	Action Aid
Tatjana van Bormann	Green Choice / World Wide Fund for Nature

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<sup>21</sup> See footnote 2 above with regard to recent changes in the South African government.