

THE BRIDGING LEADER

A bridging leader is one whose values compel him/her to own and address societal inequities. This leader likewise convenes and engages other stakeholders toward a shared response to resolve issues and come up with new institutional arrangements to address the inequities.

There are three main steps in the “Bridging Leadership” process. These are ownership, co-ownership and co-creation.

Under ownership, a leader embraces one’s responsibility over a social problem. This includes an understanding of the problem and accepts one’s own role in the issue.

Understanding the complexities of the problem moves the leader to get relevant stakeholders involved in finding solutions. A bridging leader unifies individual stakeholder’s beliefs, values, points of view and insights on the issue. To make this possible, it is important for the leader to hold dialogues with the people. Once differences have been settled, there can be a shared vision and joint response; hence, the problem is not just of the leader’s but of the community’s. This is co-ownership.

Addressing the problem requires strategies that call for new and innovative ways of doing things. A leader facilitates the creation of these new institutional arrangements, which ought to be inclusive and transparent such that they empower the people and make institutions more responsive. This is co-creation.

The bridging leadership approach was developed by the AIM-Mirant Center for Bridging Societal Divides (now the Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership) as an offshoot of its collaboration with the Synergos Institute in New York City.

ZFF president, Ernesto Garilao, is the founding executive director of the AIM-Mirant Center for Bridging Societal Divides. He was part of the Synergos Institute global research initiative on bridging leadership. After this, he led a small team of AIM faculty and staff to develop and teach the bridging leadership approach.