



The Community Foundation Atlas

A snapshot of the global community philanthropy field, north and south

The global community philanthropy field has come of age. Today, there are more than 1,800 community foundations around the world, almost three-quarters of them created in the last 25 years. With a large number of the younger community foundations based in the developing or emerging economies of Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, this is a movement that has spread beyond its original base in North America, finding resonance in a range of different cultural and socio-economic contexts.

The year 2014 marks the centenary of the Cleveland Foundation, the first US community foundation and a forefather of this now global movement. It also marks the launch of the Community Foundation Atlas,¹ an online directory of community foundations and community philanthropy organizations around the world, which paints a picture – both qualitative and quantitative – of the current state of the global community foundation field, drawing on data provided by 478 individual organizations.

The data is rich and wide-reaching, and the Atlas promises to become an important resource in helping to document activities, growth, dimensions of the field, and also to foster relationships and learning between community foundations working on similar issues in different parts of the world.

This summary report focuses specifically on what the Atlas tells us about the current state of play among community foundations within the GFCF's own global grantmaking constituency. It draws on data provided by 110 community foundations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe, as well as on insights derived from the GFCF's grantmaking to 157 organizations in 52 countries.² The report focuses on three core characteristics which together form the backbone of strong, effective community philanthropy and which make them distinct from other parts of civil society. These are **assets, capacities and trust**.³



1 <http://communityfoundationatlas.org>

2 Photos on this page courtesy of the Odorheiu Secuiesc Community Foundation (Romania), Monteverde Community Fund (Costa Rica, ©Selena Avendaño L.) and the LIN Center (Vietnam).

3 The **assets, capacities and trust** framework emerged out of a series of consultations conducted by the Mott Foundation and the Aga Khan Foundation, in conjunction with the GFCF, as part of the planning process for the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy, as well as from indicators used by the GFCF in its grantmaking.

Developing assets

For community foundations, asset development is often associated with endowment funds. Indeed, within the global cohort studied here, 83 of the 96 organizations that responded to the question either have or intend to build an endowment fund. And yet, with the exception of a few more established community foundations with endowments over US \$1 million, most of the existing endowments are very small, with a median of US \$69,700 (and the smallest of US \$200). Clearly, these figures are too small to offer any long-term sustainability to the work of individual community foundations. So what do they tell us? And what else can we learn about how these community foundations are thinking about local assets?

First, many of the community foundations included in the Atlas survey operate in countries whose recent history includes major – and often turbulent – changes to the political and economic landscape. Some of these have experienced crisis, conflict or simply entrenched poverty; many have been on the receiving end of decades of international development aid, the results of which have sometimes been mixed. In such complex, unpredictable environments, it can be hard to think far into the future, and the short-term, project-driven nature of international

development aid can also often constrain any long-term thinking. So when a community foundation decides to establish an endowment fund, no matter how small it might be, it can serve as a powerful statement that it intends to be around for a long time and to stick with its community through thick and thin.

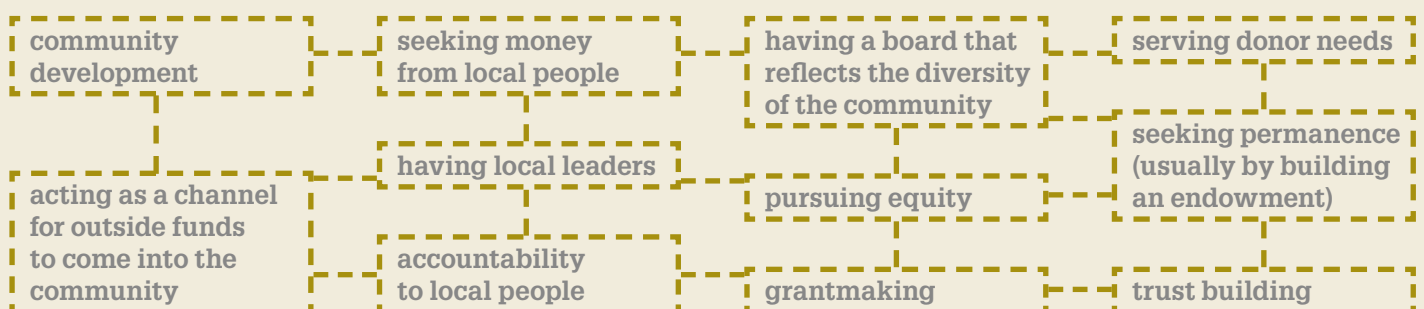
Secondly, despite the many difficulties associated with developing local philanthropy, community foundations are finding new and inventive ways of re-connecting communities with abandoned traditions or establishing new ones, and of valuing other kinds of assets beyond just money.

In Ghana, the **Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation** (est. 2008) uses the mechanism of a community foundation to create a long-term asset in the form of an endowment fund for a local community whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by the operations of a large gold mine. This innovative approach, which has emerged from the extractives sector, ensures that a percentage of income earned by the mine goes into the foundation's endowment, creating a long-term development institution for the community that will exist long beyond the lifetime of the mine.

Defining the territory

The term 'community foundation' is a convenient umbrella term for a number of important shared characteristics. Although it is useful to have agreed language, we need to be aware that the term itself is used by just over 60 per cent of the organizations that are the focus of this report. Many 'community foundations' will call themselves women's funds, environmental funds or something else entirely.

What really matters is what the organizations actually do. In the Atlas, the community foundations in the Global South and Central and Eastern Europe typically share the characteristics given on the right.





The **Monteverde Community Fund** (est. 2012) is based in a part of Costa Rica renowned for its rich biodiversity. Donations from tourism to the region (and, in the medium to long term, from local business and other local donors as well) are channelled to the fund, which is structured in such a way as to ensure participatory decision-making and the involvement of the local community in its grantmaking.



For the **Odorheiu Secuiesc Community Foundation** (est. 2007) local philanthropy development – a rather new concept in Romania – is closely connected to active citizenship. At the moment 13,000 individuals use the foundation's 'community card' as a loyalty card with business partners, thereby allowing this small rural community to make small regular payments that contribute to a community fund. The income generated through the community card currently is US \$5,000 a month. This is local money.



Through its **YouthBank** programme, the **West Coast Community Foundation** (est. 2001) in South Africa has sought to change how young people are seen and how they see themselves. Poverty levels are high in many of the rural farming communities served by the community foundation, and school drop-out rates are high, too. Through YouthBank, WCCF chooses to see the community's youth as an asset and a source of potential, involving them in both raising funds and making decisions about how these are allocated for local initiatives, and instilling in them a sense of community philanthropy and civic participation from an early age.



For **Tewa** (est. 1996) – the Nepal women's fund – a set of offices for NGOs and a residential retreat centre on the edge of Kathmandu constitute its endowment fund, a visible landmark for social justice philanthropy in the community. A fundraising initiative, launched to raise US \$900,000, went on to raise US \$1 million more than that goal, 23 per cent of it from Nepali individuals. Tewa has always placed great emphasis on encouraging local giving to support its programmes. In a country highly dependent on foreign aid, Tewa has built up a network of more than 3,000 individual donors.

Strengthening capacities

By and large, community foundations in emerging markets and developing contexts tend to focus their efforts on strengthening local groups that governments, philanthropy and development aid often overlook – either because they are small or because they tend to get crowded out by larger, more high-profile organizations. In fact, a number of community foundations in this cohort emerged as the product of grassroots activism, often in response to the perceived failure of international development aid or political, economic or environmental change in a community: underlying many of these institutions is the belief that strong local organizations are an essential part of a healthy civil society, that people trust such organizations to represent them and speak on their behalf with other actors and that, if local donors are to be convinced to support them, these groups need to be well-managed. In such a political and civic vacuum, they act to rekindle belief in these communities, developing the capacity of local people to change and improve their community.

The **Guangdong Harmony Foundation** (est. 2009) is one of the very few grantmaking foundations in China, making it a 'precious' resource, according to one of its board members. Operating in a highly complex and often sensitive environment, the foundation provides grants, technical support and advice to local groups working on a number of issues, linking them with each other, as well as highlighting their work and amplifying their voices among government authorities and local Chinese donors.

So how do community foundations build the capacities of the communities that they serve? While grantmaking is understood to be 'normal' community foundation behaviour in more developed parts of the world, among this cohort of organizations it is often regarded by local constituents as an odd activity, even an aberration. Yet, grantmaking is an essential tool in the community foundation tool-kit, an effective and transparent mechanism for devolving resources (and therefore power) to others so that they can organize themselves. It is also a powerful mechanism for demonstrating to local donors how their gifts can reach small, off-the-map groups. Local grantmaking is not, however, always well established or understood in many parts of the world – such as China, Brazil or India – and often it is only community foundations that are doing it. So it is particularly noteworthy that 90 of the 94 organizations that answered the question in the Atlas use grantmaking as part of their toolbox.

Grantmaking is important, but it tends to be just one in a complex set of otherwise non-grantmaking activities that these organizations engage in. In fact, what comes across very strongly from the findings of the Atlas is that what really makes a difference to the effectiveness of a community foundation is not the amount of money that it has or gives out, but how it does so. The non-grantmaking role, in particular, is central to building trust – and a community foundation's own capacity also matters: data shows that having staff is at least as important as having money. Staff groups are typically small: for this cohort the median and the mode – the most commonly occurring value – number of staff is four.

The **Community Foundation for South Sinai** (est. 2006) promotes local, small-scale development among Bedouin communities in Egypt's South Sinai, a marginalized, even 'invisible' group among policy makers. Following the social and political upheaval brought about by the Egyptian uprising, the foundation used a series of local consultations to create new spaces for dialogue and engagement and to promote civic participation – particularly among Bedouin women and youth – which has put many Bedouin on the demographic map for the first time and is likely to have long-term policy implications.





The **Kenya Community Development Foundation** (est. 2001), the first and oldest indigenous public foundation in East Africa, was established by local civil society leaders to offer an alternative kind of development organization in a country overrun by international aid and large NGOs. Its aims are twofold: to build up the capacities of Kenyan organizations as trusted and effective vehicles for local development and to promote a culture of giving among the Kenyan public as a whole. KCDF has built up an endowment fund valued at over US \$6 million (which notably includes local community-level funds to which community members contribute), but it has also attracted significant local and international resources for its grantmaking programmes across a range of issues.

The **Foundation for Social Transformation** (est. 2005) is an indigenous philanthropic organization dedicated to developing civil society in northeast India, a region of the country that has been dramatically neglected by central government, the media and international donors. The only public grantmaking foundation serving seven states in the northeast, FST uses a range of small grants, convenings and trainings for both community organizations and individual society leaders to support their work, while documenting and sharing their stories as a way of encouraging local people to support what they do.

The **Haiti Community Foundation Initiative** (est. 2011) emerged in response to the massive aid interventions following the 2010 earthquake, which favoured large, often international, NGOs, and overlooked local Haitian groups. A two-year process of consultation with local and diaspora Haitians resulted in a vision for a community foundation that can address issues of marginalization and disempowerment by focusing on communities, their organizations and their assets, as well as serving as a focal point for local and international philanthropic contributions.

Building trust

Because community foundations often occupy the middle ground – between those wishing to give and those looking for resources, between international donors and local NGOs and even between different parts of the same community – much of what they do translates as building trust. Indeed, data from the Atlas shows that what really makes community foundations effective is their role as a kind of ‘runny glue’ in building partnerships, connecting different groups in the community while all the time giving highest priority to accountability to local people. Data from the Atlas suggests that this can be done only on the inside of communities, by indigenous organizations. External funding can help, but organizations that have been developed by international aid are often seen as the imposition of someone else’s agenda.

It is hard to place a value on this aspect of local trust; at their best these foundations are trusted to reflect local needs and opportunities, and they see themselves as accountable to the people within their communities. Again, grantmaking offers an effective way of building philanthropy, by modelling the transparent management of a donor’s funds to groups that they might never know of or be prepared to work with without the help of the community foundation, and then in reporting back to both donor and community on each grant.

Building trust is the cornerstone of civil society, the framework for engineering people’s re-engagement in community activity. And the result of community foundation activity is a greater engagement of parts of the community that had previously been detached and disenfranchised.



The **LIN Center for Community Development** (est. 2009) was established to help support the development of a strong, credible and professional non-profit sector in the urban setting of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In recent years, the city has seen growing levels of inequality, linked in part to increased levels of inward migration from rural areas. In its first five years, LIN has set up a diverse programme of work which includes volunteering, corporate and individual philanthropy, building the capacity of local non-profit organizations and mapping local philanthropy. LIN uses public events to highlight the work of NGOs and to introduce middle-class professionals to philanthropy by encouraging them to vote for (and invest in) grant projects. LIN sees the process of raising local Vietnamese contributions for local causes as extremely important in building stronger communities which are better informed, more connected and more trusting of each other – and, in the end, in improving the long-term sustainability of local efforts.



Looking ahead: Growing the global community foundation field

The **Dalia Association** (est. 2007) is the first community foundation in Palestine. It was founded on the belief that international aid often ended up disempowering communities and that, contrary to popular perception, Palestinian communities offered a wealth of local resources – from consulting services to cash contributions. Dalia works to strengthen local communities and to grow a culture of local philanthropy: its ‘Village Decides’ community grantmaking programme offers a unique opportunity for local people to come together to discuss local issues and local projects with each other and to turn decision-making about the allocation of resources into a transparent and participatory process. Dalia is also currently working to establish eight new company funds, and to raise the private sector’s awareness and understanding of philanthropy in order to invest in civil society.



Community foundations represent a different model of development, one that is based on the idea that development outcomes are more lasting when people invest their own resources to address their own issues. They are trying to create new types of philanthropic behaviour and practice by blending local resources and traditions of giving with new forms of organization. While the field is creative and vibrant in many ways (especially in the use of social media to exchange practices and ideas) it is also still a young movement, and individual organizations are often financially vulnerable or lacking in a second level of management.

What is the role of external donors and supporters? Data from the Atlas suggests that this issue needs to be handled carefully. For around half (45 of 93 who answered the question), external aid was an ‘important’ or ‘centrally important’ part of their funding. Looking at those organizations that have been formed from the outside, and of which local people may have limited ownership, the general level of their reported achievements appears to be much lower. The main impetus has been driven by community leadership and grassroots organizing. So the message seems to be that external support – which has proved crucial to many community foundations, particularly in the start-up and early development stages – needs to be delivered in a way that fosters rather than displaces local leadership and the harnessing of local assets.

The **Waqfeyat al Maadi Community Foundation** (est. 2007) in Cairo seeks to revive Egypt’s rich traditions of giving – both secular and religious – and, in doing so, to move local donors away from short-term, charitable giving towards longer-term, more sustainable types of support to local community groups. Again, much of its work is framed around building bridges across different parts of the very diverse community it serves. It even has a programme named TRUST, which helps individuals to think more strategically about their philanthropy by investing in small grants and loans to individuals and community-based organizations.

In Russia, **Civil Unity, the Penza community foundation** (est. 2002) serves a population of 1.5 million living in one of Russia’s poorer, rural regions (where monthly salaries are around US \$100–200 a month). Over the last 12 years, the foundation has sought to overcome a culture of passivity and helplessness within the community, as well as to target specific social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse by using small grants as a way of stimulating civic action. By doing so, it has developed a track record as a credible and transparent local organization (in a part of the world characterized by distrust of the non-profit sector) that fills the gap between local businesses looking to give and local groups with good ideas. The effectiveness of its approach was illustrated in 2013, when ten private donors contributed US \$80,000 to the foundation’s unrestricted endowment.

Atlas Respondents in Numbers

| | Number of respondents in region | Median age | Median number of paid staff | Median annual income | Median grantmaking budget | Median number of board members |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Africa | 19 | 10 | 4 | \$65,500 | \$11,397 | 7 |
| Asia Pacific | 23 | 15 | 6 | \$120,500 | \$40,000 | 9 |
| Central and Eastern Europe and Russia | 45 | 9 | 3.5 | \$74,820 | \$19,231 | 6 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 19 | 12 | 5 | \$525,000 | \$161,300 | 9 |
| Middle East and North Africa | 4 | 5 | 4.5 | \$433,277 | \$90,000 | 6 |

Next steps

This report offers an initial insight into a dataset that promises to yield deeper learnings and to highlight issues for wider research and deeper discussion within both the particular global cohort examined here and the larger field. The GFCF looks forward to working with its community

foundation partners and colleagues around the world – as well as with interested funders – to deepen understanding of the unique role played by community philanthropy organizations and to foster joint learning and collaboration.

Find out more



The Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) is a global grassroots grantmaker working to promote and support institutions of community philanthropy around the world. It works with individual

community foundations and other local grantmakers and their networks on a global basis, with a particular focus on the Global South and the emerging economies of Central and Eastern Europe. Through a combination of small grants, technical support, networking and shared learning, the GFCF supports these local institutions to fulfil their potential as vehicles for local development and as part of the infrastructure for sustainable development, poverty alleviation and citizen participation.

<http://www.globalfundcf.org>

Global Fund for Community Foundations

4th Floor
158 Jan Smuts Avenue
Rosebank
Johannesburg 2196
South Africa

www.globalfundcf.org
info@globalfundcf.org

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The Community Foundation Atlas is an online resource that provides a detailed baseline of information upon which the global community philanthropy field can build to facilitate wider exchange of

best practices and high-impact collaborations aimed at addressing tough problems that span geographical boundaries. Post-launch planning for updated content, additional research and data analysis, and enhanced functionality for the Atlas will be spearheaded by the GFCF and the Foundation Center, the platform's host.

<http://communityfoundationatlas.org>



The Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy is a multi-donor and multi-stakeholder collaborative engaged in a series of joint research and learning activities aimed at advancing the practice of

community philanthropy and at influencing international development actors to better understand, support and promote community philanthropy's role in achieving more lasting development outcomes. It is managed by the GFCF.