



Report of Africa Philanthropy Symposium

12–13 May 2008, Naivasha, Kenya

Overview

The Global Fund for Community Foundations in conjunction with Trust Africa convened a symposium in Naivasha, Kenya, in May 2008, with two purposes. The main purpose was to help the Global Fund develop its framework, underpinning philosophy, and future strategies for funding the development of community foundations and philanthropy in Africa. The secondary purpose was to make a contribution to the debate about the nature of African philanthropy, to understand emerging trends in different regions, and to clarify some of the key issues that need to be addressed in supporting the varied ways in which traditional forms of giving are linking with 'new' forms of organized philanthropy.

The convening involved 21 representatives from different regions of Africa, all experienced reflective practitioners engaged in philanthropy in its many forms, brought together for two days of intellectually rigorous, but creative and visionary debate.

The agenda was structured around three main issues, on each of which, one of the participants was asked to prepare and present a 'provocation'. The three provocations served as the basis for debate and discussion among the group as a whole, with the 'provocateur' effectively becoming the facilitator.

In addition, the Convening provided for smaller groups to reflect and debate by adapting 'emergent learning' methodology. Participants began by identifying the way that assumptions, views and ideas about an issue have been shaped by our own specific experiences and context. The aim was to draw out common insights and truths to serve as a basis for our hypotheses about philanthropy and translated into action plans.

The Symposium – Day 1

Welcoming and Opening Remarks

Director of the Global Fund for Community Foundations, Jenny Hodgson welcomed the participants and reminded them of some of the questions that lay behind the convening:

- Is it feasible or helpful to talk about ‘African philanthropy’? Are there any generic defining characteristics that mark out African philanthropy from that of other regions?
- What have we learnt from efforts over the last 10 years to ‘stimulate’ philanthropy in Africa, to establish new institutions particularly community foundations?
- If ‘community’ is a contested concept in Africa (internal and external Diasporas etc) what does a more flexible definition of ‘community’ mean for the structures and processes normally associated with community foundations?
- In a context of increasing income disparities and economic marginalization and climatic vulnerability for huge numbers of people in Africa, how does community philanthropy respond? Are community foundations capable of grappling with social justice issues?
- Given the ‘reciprocal’ nature of much traditional African giving, is grant-making necessarily the most appropriate mechanism for community foundations? What other roles in resource mobilization and allocation (social support networks, etc) could community foundations play?
- How can local philanthropic foundations in Africa link local action with regional, continental or international issues such as security, climate change adaptation etc?

She said for her, as Director of the GFCF, a small and new global grantmaker, there were three pressing issues: ‘How to build a critical mass of philanthropic players in Africa; how to make philanthropy a force for development, and, finally, how can the GFCF most effectively target its grants to support this work within Africa?’

Hodgson emphasized that the overarching question for the first day’s convening was:

How can we build local ownership for African Philanthropy?

Provocation 1

Philanthropy of Africa – More than Semantics.

Bhekinkosi Moyo

This was a wide-ranging provocation in which Moyo asked what it would take to make philanthropy developmental in Africa in a context of fragility around markets, climate change, the ailing political economy of many African countries, and the rise of ‘philanthro-capitalism’. ‘What will the rise of interest from corporates mean? What would philanthropy from China mean,’ he asked? And the further question that needed asking, and re-asking he said, was ‘Philanthropy for what?’

Among Moyo’s suggestions of issues for consideration by participants were:

- 1 The idea of a ‘philanthropic harvest’ (along the lines of the knowledge harvest of the knowledge economy)

- 2 Strategies for preparedness. Philanthropy needs to be flexible and alert to context
- 3 Timeliness and timelessness. One is a world of practice and the other of theory, concepts and paradigms. How can we bring the two together?
- 4 What kind of leadership will take philanthropy to a higher level? If we don't encourage succession we will fall into the trap of our countries, where it is very difficult to get the founding mothers and fathers to move on.

Discussion of Provocation 1

In the discussion that followed Moyo's presentation, the following were among the issues raised:

- 1 Has the question of how we build local ownership for African philanthropy been defined by an evolutionary sequence?
- 2 A tension between relevance and quality might begin to emerge as a hybrid that isn't necessarily a negative situation. We need to break barriers and some of our dichotomies are not necessarily useful.
- 3 Regarding the idea of most African political economies deteriorating, it used to be that you couldn't challenge governments. Now you don't get away with bad government so easily. Possibly we are operating in an environment that is better for philanthropy.
- 4 Is it possible that the debate around philanthropy leadership is a cop-out rather than addressing the issue of failed states and political leadership? Should the focus of philanthropy be the improvement of governance?

Emergent Learning: Stories, Ground Truths and Insights

After a brief explanation of 'emergent learning' methodology, participants divided into three groups to tell key stories from their lives and, in thinking about them, re-discover what they had learned from these experiences and how they had formed some of their assumptions. In essence, the first task was to look at the past for the 'ground truths' of personal experience and to see if they led to broader insights to be shared with the group.

Initially, a number of people had difficulty telling a story about his or her self without analyzing the experience at the same time. There was also a tendency toward generalization over personal experience. Over the course of the afternoon both stories and insights flowed more freely. Before these were shared with the full convening there was a new theme for the afternoon and another Provocation.

The theme:

Philanthropy is commendable but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice that make it necessary.

Martin Luther King

Provocation 2

African Community Philanthropy is Failing to Address the Challenge of Social Justice.

Christa Kuljian

Christa Kuljian began with the question, 'What is the role of philanthropy in contributing to social justice?' and suggested, provocatively, that she could say that it has had no impact and does not affect social justice.

For the purposes of her Provocation, Kuljian loosely defined philanthropy as 'help' and 'private resources put toward public good'. Social justice, she described as having to do with rights, equality, addressing the root causes of oppression and inequality, and structural change.

She then presented a review of types of philanthropy drawn primarily from research in South Africa:

- local communal giving and solidarity mechanisms
- other forms of individual giving (faith-based, on-line giving)
- corporate social investment (marketing, broader corporate accountability)
- community foundations (endowment building)
- other local foundations (women's funds, Nelson Mandela Children's Fund)
- international private foundations

Kuljian said that the greatest potential for social justice philanthropy probably rested with community foundations and other local foundations. While she proposed that it is helpful to see the various types of philanthropy as being somewhere along a continuum from those rooted in tradition (and need) to those with a primary purpose of building social justice, she added that the continuum may not be particularly smooth and that conflict and points of disjuncture might be productive. Further, Kuljian noted challenges and inhibiting factors related to social justice philanthropy. Challenges were leadership, attitudes, risk aversion and sustainability. Inhibitors were state regulatory and policy frameworks, external donors wanting results, and the absence of a cohesive field of social justice philanthropy.

Kuljian drew extensively on unpublished research by Halima Mohammed, which attempts, through comparing sixteen South African organizations, to analyze what it takes to move along the continuum toward social justice philanthropy (some of which will be presented in the full report and as an appendix).

Discussion of Provocation 2

It was noted that in South Africa there seems generally to be more of a traditional and charitable approach despite South Africa's history of attention to social justice philanthropy.

It was mentioned that there is a risk that community foundations could be formed because there are resources to be had, rather than because of any deep commitment to social justice.

One participant wanted to know what other institutions were addressing social justice issues, and another made the suggestion that there are hundreds of organizations in civil

society doing more cutting-edge work than community foundations and other traditional charities: 'Shouldn't the way be to partner with them as distinct from building a new set of institutions? In South Africa, civil society is weaker than it has been for 30 years. We have to take that into account in philanthropy. Do you look at a select group of social justice philanthropy groups and make them sustainable or do you look at other organizations and make them social justice philanthropists? We're not talking about philanthropy for philanthropy's sake. So we have to get back to the question, 'Philanthropy for what?'

Another participant asked: 'Is there a difference between a social justice agenda and a development agenda. Philanthropists don't put their head on a block like trade unions that are anchored in membership. Isn't there a tension between philanthropy and social justice?'

Jenny Hodgson observed that the experience of Russia and Eastern Europe had shown how the development of community foundations could certainly be an important way of bringing different parts of the community together to connect needs and resources. However, the existence of a community foundation itself was not necessarily a guarantee of social justice outcomes, particularly where the community foundation focused on serving the interests of local donors – who may favour more traditional, charitable, activities - rather than itself highlighting specific issues. 'Where the GFCF can play a role is in providing grantmaking funds to enable community foundations to take on a more active leadership role around particular issues in addition to the softer, feel-good charity type work that some local donors may prefer.'

Emergent Learning: Hypotheses

Through emergent learning methodology, the aim is that a group begins to develop shared hypotheses about the nature of the challenges they are facing (in this case, philanthropy in Africa), and gradually recognizes and articulates the opportunities that arise for both individuals and networks or organizations to make and enact future plans.

From the stories and insights that emerged from the small groups, the full convening came up with a number of hypotheses that were subsequently grouped into thematic categories:

Effectiveness

- 1** If local philanthropic organizations in Africa are to be effective, they need to be more than grantmaking organizations
- 2** If we can collectively make a case for the long-term nature and value of our work, then we will be able to realize our objectives
- 3** If we work at ensuring that emerging African philanthropic institutions have flexible funding then we will enable context-sensitive grantmaking.
- 4** If African philanthropy is to be more effective the sensitive promotion of 'good practice' to address perceived institutional weaknesses needs to be balanced by more focus on outcomes and rationale
- 5** If we wish to challenge regressive practices within the community philanthropy movement we will be more effective if we are persistent in creating opportunities for learning and exposure to other influences over time.

Utilization of Resources

- 6** If we build on existing structures, knowledge, and other local assets (networks, leadership etc), local philanthropic institutions will be more credible, effective, and legitimate
- 7** If we are creative in encouraging and enabling local contributions, philanthropic institutions will better build resilience and reduce dependency.
- 8** If external resources and inputs build on local assets in a spirit of solidarity then philanthropy institutions will be more successful in creating effective community change.
- 9** If we explore, draw on, and utilize local resources and experiences, then African philanthropy will be more sustainable.

Resource Organization/community rooted

- 10** If philanthropic institutions are rooted in communities and shared values, they will be more likely to succeed.
- 11** If resource organizations are to be effective and sustainable, they must be market and demand-driven.

Leadership, Governance and Succession

- 12** If we invest in local philanthropic leadership we will increase the credibility and effectiveness of local philanthropic institutions.
- 13** If we acknowledge that we are all temporary custodians of our foundations we will be able to address issues of governance and succession more honestly.
- 14** If our foundations are stimulated by prominent individuals, we must invest in strengthening those institutions to stand alone.

Networking, Sharing and Documentation

- 15** If we can be more proactive in our networking, documentation, dissemination and knowledge-sharing, we can shape/move the conversation/discourse.
- 16** If we can simplify our language and capture our stories in simple and clear terms we will better communicate our work on philanthropy and development.
- 17** If African philanthropy institutions are to be sustainable their leaders and managers must use networks and personal connections to build interpersonal trust.

Provocation 3

The Threat to African Community Philanthropy from the 'New Wave' of 'Philanthrocapitalism' and Evangelical Charities.

Tade Aina

Tade Aina began by saying we would help each other in this work by building collectivity and a global identity. The prototypical community foundation, often in the sway of international and expatriate influence, needs to take account of this context and the contradictions that arise. The internal contradictions he mentioned were the extent of external input including models, funding, ideas, management, and governance. Then there was, he said, the 'community of place'. This place, this 'where' was not necessarily peaceful or tolerant. What does a community foundation mean to a person who suffers exploitation and exclusion? He added that our structural imperative toward grantmaking versus giving, and our 'key instrument', money, created contradictions.

Furthermore, Aina felt it necessary to look at a chain of philanthropy, its various conduits, and pay attention to the larger regimes in which philanthropic intention might originate. The top multi-billionaires were not just American anymore. He spoke of what he called the new funding regimes, bi-laterals and multi-laterals, the distance of the World Bank from poor people, the 2005 Paris deal which tries for a consensus between donor and recipient countries, the new attempts to find a corrective for the inefficiency of aid. He said that it was important to watch the financial flows from governments and bi-laterals, via ministries. He noted the presence of neo-liberal thinking in philanthropy citing the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and a re-alignment of major American foundations. He talked of the trend toward project-funding rather than institutional funding, of 'celebrification', and of measurement. 'How do we know,' he asked, 'how many girls have been saved from crocodiles and hyenas' when a new well is created or a path diverted from danger?

It was a wide-ranging 'provocation'. The nuances were tonal and ambient and words alone are not a just conveyance of Aina's delivery. His final words though, were, 'Start new partnerships!'

Discussion of Provocation 3

The first response to Aina's provocation was, 'the new aid architecture doesn't change what we do on the ground, but it will change how I record what I do.'

Another said, 'We can't measure what we can't manage. One of the ills of our sector was our reliance on anecdotal evidence. It is important that we develop a culture of measuring things.'

Here are some other comments/responses/questions:

'People already find managing the grant process complicated. Do you see more difficulty?'

'I am worried about the short-term culture and thinking about what it means for institution-building.'

'There seem to be two groupings emerging: one around principles and another around communication and leveraging.'

'I spent seven years with the Carnegie Foundation. One of the things I had to learn was telling the story. I learnt that that doesn't matter. If you have some pictures, that makes the

difference. Telling a story? I really agonized. I am not from a culture . . . I was not educated to portray individuals. If you are doing good, you are doing it for itself. Are we saying we have to get cynical so we can be anointed by the big ones?’

‘Lets look at principles and purpose. We are going to have to begin to have a different way . . . field-building. This is not cynicism but a clarity of purpose built on principles in a world dominated by ‘hybridity’. We might have been brought up in monasteries . . . We don’t know how to lie or to spin’

‘I think about my own son. We have to learn to communicate with our children!’

‘In this whole business, who are the buyers and who are the sellers? Sometimes I look at buyers at two levels . . . both the person from whom money comes, and the community. From a market perspective, if we say philanthropy is a market place, **we** are the seller. Who are our buyers? People who have need and don’t have resources. How can we tie donors with these people? In the whole of the civil society movement, I believe our work should be self-evident. The Cold War resolved in a certain direction. Some things have been settled. The marketplace has overtaken other models. We shouldn’t see this as an imposition but as an essential in our focus on communities.’

‘This is a huge shift in our paradigm. It is not how we think.’

‘Occasionally communities are also the buyers. Stories must respect both the weak buyer and the rich buyer.’

‘How do you get your programme officers to change?’

Emergent Learning: Opportunities

The next phase of both the convening and the emergent learning experiment was to discuss, and attempt to align hypotheses with opportunities. This process was begun in small groups and then brought to the symposium for sharing and agreement.

As you recall, the hypotheses arising from stories and insights were grouped according to themes/ideas. The themes were the following:

- Effectiveness
- Utilization of Resources
- Resource Organization/ Community-rooted
- Leadership, Governance and succession
- Networking, Documentation, and Sharing

Many opportunities were identified and participants recognized many opportunities for themselves and their particular organizations or pursuits. As a group they endorsed the following opportunities in the field of philanthropy and according to the themes identified above:

Effectiveness

Training and convening facilitators of the Global Fund to recognize other forms of community philanthropy

Increase visibility at the global level

Convene more opportunities for networking and dissemination (Trust Africa could facilitate this).

Community Foundations increase their visibility and record their work

Dissemination and documentation of the value/s of our work

Help promote a balanced understanding of what is happening through institutional case studies

Promote training on best practices

Support exchange visits

Encourage research

Encourage more people to write their stories and document their experiences

Look at improving communication and profile through websites, other internet opportunities, and newsletters

Expose people to exchanges at global and regional levels

Ask founders and board members to talk about prior experience including the stifling of our work by donors.

Institutions should not forget to include community philanthropy organizations as they are part of civil society.

Utilization of Resources

Identify local structures (individuals, organizations etc) and review what they are already doing and what they may need to become stronger.

Work with such organizations to add value by providing resources (financial, technical, capacity development, etc).

Facilitate dialogue with community stakeholders and other potential resource providers where possible

Provide fundraising training to enable them to access other resources

Resource organization/community-rooted

Establish criteria for being market and demand driven

Review your organization against these criteria

Develop an implementation plan to strategically realign your organization and ensure that it becomes market and demand driven

Ensure that appropriate systems, processes and methodologies are in place to evaluate against market needs on an ongoing basis

Leadership and Governance

Share the example of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund as a model of succession and link the interview Mandela's interview about succession to this report

Invite CEO's (corporate and philanthropic) past and present to a forum about philanthropy and succession

Do the same with past and present heads of government on the African continent and internationally.

Networking, Documentation, Sharing

Work to give media position and voice to the people who are knowledgeable about philanthropy

Promote and utilize Trust Africa's philanthropy journal as a means of dissemination/spreading the word

Encourage the teaming of academics and practitioners

Look at ways of developing a curriculum about philanthropy (maybe a chair of distance learning)

Invest more time and energy in linking with like-minded actors.

Conclusion

GFCCF director, Jenny Hodgson said she felt that the convening in Naivasha had built a new network. 'How do you build a field and get momentum going. It's about the structure and transparency of systems,' she said, 'But it's also about all of you.'

Narciso Matos concluded, 'If any of you is over seventy you may have the last word. But in the good African tradition I will take it. Thank you.'

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