

# LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

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Paper 2 in PSJP's Defining Key Concepts series

Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace

## About Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP)

Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP) is a network for social change. Its purpose is to support the development and adoption of ideas about what makes a good society, to connect and strengthen the agents of this work and contribute to the infrastructure that supports progressive social change.

## About PSJP's Defining Key Concepts series

For philanthropy and development practices to have a significant impact on root causes of poverty, marginalization and violence, they need to be better aligned with social change agendas that are people led. This involves 'defining key concepts' that are commonly used in development and elucidating their meaning and implications in practice. PSJP is facilitating a peer-learning environment in order to do this and is exploring the following six themes:

1. Dignity and development
2. Building community resilience
3. Measuring change
4. Sustainability
5. Community philanthropy
6. Leadership

These terms are frequently used in development and philanthropy, and they are included in many organizations' mission statements and performance indicators, but often there is no clear understanding of what they mean in practice or how they can be measured. As a first step to develop this understanding we are facilitating discussions among a diverse set of practitioners in the field on these topics and producing papers which will be shared on <http://www.psjp.org>. We hope to engage in wider ranging discussion in response to the papers and invite you to share your perspectives, experience and research on these themes. To contribute a blog write to us at [chandrika@psjp.org](mailto:chandrika@psjp.org)

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper forms part of a Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP) series on 'defining key concepts'. The idea is to take terms commonly used in development such as 'dignity', 'leadership', 'sustainability', 'community philanthropy' and 'measuring social change' and elucidate their meaning through content analysis of discussions by practitioners in the field.

This paper examines the idea of 'leadership'. Although widely used, and viewed as an important ingredient in successful philanthropy and development, there is no common understanding of what people mean by the term or how its value is demonstrated in practice. In March 2018, when PSJP ran an exploratory webinar for civil society practitioners to identify hot topics they wanted to discuss, leadership was identified because people said that they were unclear about its role.

In considering how to develop a clearer understanding of what leadership means, we decided that we would try to approach the topic with as few preconceptions as possible.

We chose three methods to investigate the term. The main one was to hold four webinars with practitioners on the role of leadership in development. These were organized by PSJP on 21 May 2018. A total of 21 people took part in the discussions representing development and philanthropy organizations of various sizes from all over the world.

Participants were asked to answer three questions:

1. Is the concept of 'leadership' important in your organization?
2. If so, how does this contribute to the effectiveness of your work?
3. Should funders scale up their emphasis on leadership development and, if so, what would be helpful to you in your work?

The discussions sought to unpack how and when leadership is important in our work, and how it contributes to the effectiveness of that work. They also explored the learning needs of participants and how emphasis on leadership development can be scaled up in donor and development programmes.

We invite you to share your perspectives, experience and research on the themes in this paper. To contribute a blog, write to us at [chandrika@psjp.org](mailto:chandrika@psjp.org)

Using what is commonly known as 'grounded theory', we listened to what people said without imposing any frameworks. Our questions were open-ended, allowing people to define the term in ways of their choosing, and to

speak about their work and what leadership means to them. This yielded four transcripts of webinars, which we analysed to find patterns in what people said. The bulk of this paper is based on the webinars.

The second method was to examine results from a study conducted by one funder interested in fostering community leadership development as part of a strategy to meet people's basic needs in low-income communities. The research involved 65 organizations in receipt of grants from the foundation filling out a detailed questionnaire about their mission, values and methods. The final section of the report presents the results of this study.

The third method was to examine the literature on leadership. Although this was not a fully-fledged review, we aimed to identify the key texts about leadership in non-profit contexts and to examine some of the ways that other people have thought about leadership in order to give some context to the discussion. Focusing on classic works, this literature is mainly northern based. We are aware that there may be other important work, particularly in the global south, that could increase our understanding of the topic immensely.

From the above, it will be clear that we are not claiming that this work is definitive or comprehensive. Indeed, we are aware that there is much we don't know. Philanthropy and development is full of weighty abstract terms like leadership and our desire through PSJP is to gain greater understanding of these concepts within the field and to make them concrete and practical for practitioners.

We therefore view this paper as work in progress, a starting point for discussion, and invite contributions to develop the work further.

## A LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership, like many terms in the language of philanthropy, civil society and development, is what philosophers identify as a 'thick concept'. This means that it has normative as well as descriptive content. In this respect, it resembles terms like love, hate, hope and despair. To understand such terms, it is important to unravel the denotation from the connotation, because otherwise analysis will conflate facts and values.

Since leadership involves power relationships between people, it is inevitably an emotionally laden idea and one that people will have different views about. To take one example, examining the history of the voluntary and community sector in the UK during the 1970s, leadership was commonly viewed negatively – as part of a bourgeois management science that reduced the equality between people. In *What a way to run a railroad: an analysis of*

*radical failure*, Patrick Wright and Charles Landry showed how ‘alternative’ projects eschewed the idea of leadership because it militates against the philosophy of decentralized collective action based on principles of self-organizing and self-accountability.<sup>1</sup>

In recording the high incidence of failure of organizations due to such attitudes, Wright and Landry’s work led to a recognition that leadership is a necessary condition for the survival of organizations. Wright set up the Management Development Unit to promote the idea and gradually the culture changed, helped by such publications as *Voluntary but not amateur*, which promoted the professionalization of the sector.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, no one seriously questions the value of leadership. However, as we have seen, there is no clear and accepted definition of what it consists of. A useful starting point is given by Max DePree in *Leadership is an art*. He says that leadership is ‘liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible’.<sup>3</sup>

However, DePree stresses that leadership is an art, something to be learned over time, not simply by reading books. He resists defining leadership:

‘Leadership is more tribal than scientific, more a weaving of relationships than an amassing of information, and, in that sense, I don’t know how to pin it down in every detail.’<sup>4</sup>

Although this is an insightful perspective, we perhaps need more clarity. There is in fact a literature on definition that can be traced back to the pioneering work of Kurt Lewin.<sup>5</sup> His scientific study published in 1939 identified three different styles of leadership based on how decisions were made: ‘autocratic’, ‘democratic’ and ‘laissez-faire’.

In the *autocratic* style, the leader takes decisions without consulting with others. An autocratic style works when there is no need for input on the decision, the decision would not change in light of other input, and the motivation of people to carry out subsequent actions would not be affected by whether they were or were not involved in the decision-making. In other

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<sup>1</sup> P Wright and C Landry (1985) *What a way to run a railroad: an analysis of radical failure*, London: Comedia.

<sup>2</sup> R Hayes and J Reason (2009) *Voluntary but not amateur: A guide to the law for voluntary organisations and community groups*, London: London Voluntary Service Council (9th edition).

<sup>3</sup> M DePree (1989) *Leadership is an art*, Dell Trade Paperback, p 1.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p 3.

<sup>5</sup> K Lewin, R Lippitt and R K White (1939) ‘Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created social climates’, *Journal of Social Psychology*, 10, 271-301.

circumstances, however, Lewin found that the autocratic style is counterproductive, causing the highest level of discontent among those on the receiving end.

In the *democratic* style, the leader involves people in the decision-making. The process for the final decision may vary, from the leader having the final say to the leader facilitating consensus in the group. Democratic decision-making is usually appreciated by people, especially if they have been used to autocratic decisions with which they disagreed. It can be problematic, however, when there is a wide range of opinions with no clear way of reaching a final decision.

The *laissez-faire* style is to minimize the leader's involvement in decision-making, allowing people to make their own decisions, although the leader may still be responsible for the outcome. Laissez-faire works best when people are capable and motivated in making their own decisions, and where there is no requirement for central coordination, for example in sharing resources across a range of different people and groups.

In Lewin's experiments, he found that the democratic style is the most effective. Excessive autocratic styles lead to revolution, while a laissez-faire approach means that work is less coherent and people put less effort in than when their work is being actively led.

Since these early experiments, the democratic style of leadership has been developed extensively in the global south through the principles of 'participatory development'. Popularized by the work of Freire (1970) in South America,<sup>6</sup> participatory development in Africa was kick-started at a regional workshop in Tanzania in 1979.<sup>7</sup> In India, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) has built a solid array of methodologies and techniques.<sup>8</sup> Since then, techniques have become popular throughout the global south and have spread to the north.<sup>9</sup>

Recognition of the value of the democratic style has been further boosted by the ground-breaking work of Meredith Belbin.<sup>10</sup> Through extensive research

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<sup>6</sup> P Freire (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Seabury Press, New York.

<sup>7</sup> Y Kassam and M Kemal (eds) (1982) *Participatory research: an emerging alternative methodology in social science research*, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, Delhi.

<sup>8</sup> R Tandon (1997) 'Struggle for knowledge: a personal journey', *Paper given at Fourth World Congress on Action Research*, Colombia, South America, 1-5 June 1997.

<sup>9</sup> R Chambers (1997) *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the first last*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles/>  
<https://www.toolshero.com/toolsheroes/meredith-belbin/>

on teams, Belpin found that success depends on collective leadership. Belpin identified nine necessary team roles (which he called 'resource investigator', 'team-worker', 'co-ordinator', 'plant' or 'ideas generator', 'monitor evaluator', 'specialist', 'shaper', 'implementer' and 'completer finisher'). In this approach, although there may be an overall leader, leadership depends on the interrelationships of roles in which everyone is involved.

Belpin's approach puts into full effect a revolutionary theory of leadership articulated by Mary Parker Follett more than a hundred years ago.<sup>11</sup> Follett distinguished two forms of power: 'power over' and 'power with'.

In the power-over model, leadership is coercive and conflictual. Power is conceived as a finite resource in which people struggle to obtain more than they currently have. In the power-with model, leadership is coactive and based on cooperation. Power is an extensible resource, not only growing with use and benefiting all parties, but also leading to high levels of trust.

Power with is key to what Follett called 'transformational leadership'. This not only causes change in individuals and in social systems, but also develops followers into leaders. Looking at the transcripts from the webinars, it was this type of leadership that most interested people. We now turn to what people said.

## THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

The webinar discussions make clear that 'leadership' is not a homogenous concept. It is a dynamic one, defined by what being 'led' means in a particular context and who is involved. There are at least three approaches to understanding leadership, which are complementary and overlapping, that emerge from the consultations. They are described below.

### Leadership vs authority

One programme (a teaching course on humanitarian leadership) uses a framework in which leadership is an 'act', 'not a position or profession'. It distinguishes between authority and leadership, noting that 'authority figures are typically vested with power to maintain systems, provide order and security; and for them any kind of change could be dangerous'. (Another discussant refers to 'authority' as an 'autocratic leadership' style.) Leaders on the other hand are 'people who lead from any sector in society, who envision new ideas and tackle problems that are not technical in nature'. The

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<sup>11</sup> M P Follett (1918) *The new state*, available from [http://www.channelingreality.com/Education/Mary\\_Parker\\_Follett\\_New\\_State.pdf](http://www.channelingreality.com/Education/Mary_Parker_Follett_New_State.pdf)



framework calls these problems ‘adaptive’, complex problems that require risk taking, innovation and new thinking on the part of leaders. While an authority figure or autocratic leader can lead, the costs of doing so can be quite high. ‘This is because the exercise of leadership, as applied to problems that are adaptive in nature (not simply technical), entails compromise and loss.’ On the other hand, leadership for complex problems requires team work, and greater compassion and respect for people, than authority or autocratic leadership styles. One participant urges that leadership applied to complex ‘adaptive’ problems promotes ‘community harmony, builds dignity and adds value to the lives of marginalized and forgotten minorities’.

Another participant similarly notes that leadership is something ‘separate from supervision’. It is something more. ‘Leadership is about influencing, not imposing.’ It is also noted that leadership inspires greater accountability to the team while an authority figure is not accountable to anyone.

### Levels of leadership

All webinar participants seem to agree that leadership plays an important role in the work of development organizations in two main ways:

- Within organizations
- Outside organizations by promoting leadership in the local communities which the organizations seek to serve

Some organizations do both. For an indigenous feminist fund in Nepal, for example, leadership encompasses all aspects of their work; they foster leadership outside the organization and within. Within organizations, leadership is recognized as important not just at the CEO level but as a critical capacity that must be built at all levels of staff. This will become evident in the sections below. At the level of local communities, another organization appreciates the development of leadership as a three-stage process:

- Leading from the front wherein leaders make decisions for the group and give instructions on activities in which they want to take part
- Leading from the middle wherein the leader is on an equal footing with the rest of the group
- Leading from behind wherein the group has been sufficiently empowered to take the lead on decisions in advocating for rights to power holders in their community

### Leadership values and behaviour

The importance of values as the critical underpinning of leadership in the not-for-profit world emerges clearly from the discussions. There is a general point about core leadership values, which are summed up aptly by one participant:

‘... one important component is having some ethics and core values that you speak and show through your words and action. In our countries, we deal with a lot of corruption and lack of trust so demonstrating transparency and honesty through our action and words is important ... building a community in which people see value in the work we are doing.’

The discussions identify being transformative and being able to share power as two key values associated with leadership in not-for-profit organizations. Participants point to at least two behaviours or practices through which power is shared.

### Transitions

Leadership in not-for-profit organizations does not rest with one person, it is not concentrated and it is not static. It is distributed across the organization and it transitions. ‘You cannot hold onto power; you cannot keep it and say that it is mine.’ The feminist fund in Nepal views this as crucial to the makeup of their organization. Both their board and their staff have seen several leadership transitions over the years involving both the chair of the board and the executive director of the organization. They recognize that ‘every staff member of the organization has leadership capacity’ and therefore the ability to lead.

In similar vein, a Vietnamese organization, when looking for a successor for the CEO, had anyone who was interested in being the CEO in the CEO’s office for a month to test if they had the potential or interest. They did this for six months since six people were interested in trying out for the position. Some mentoring and nurturing was provided to each one before a selection was made. The idea of distributed leadership is also captured through experimental approaches by a Hanoi organization which has five staffers who rotate as leaders, with each getting a two-year tenure. They have now been doing this for about 12 years. While stressing that ‘no succession/leadership strategy is without challenges’, a webinar participant stresses that the organizations mentioned here are ‘two of the strongest organizations in our sector in Vietnam. One transitioned from an NGO to a consulting organization for NGOs and social enterprises and the other is a leading research and operating NGO.’

### Inclusivity and collaboration

A good leader is one who shares power across the organization. ‘I believe that leadership in an NGO is different from other organizations ... it is more participative.’ An organization working in palliative care recognizes the hierarchies in leadership, including the community level where direct care services are provided, and views the sharing of information across the

different levels as essential to delivering the work effectively on the ground. 'We always take everybody on board, including beneficiaries and stakeholders, and build their capacity.' One participant points out how this contrasts with siloed practices in fields such as academia where people are protecting their intellectual property and are worried about sharing what they are thinking and creating.

Good leadership is also about the ability to carry everyone along in a shared vision for the organization and to uphold its core values such as compassion, professionalism and transparency. This ability to be inclusive is seen as crucial for the success of the organization. 'Everyone should feel important. You should share the vision for the organization.'

Another key component of leadership is the ability to collaborate, enabling people to support each other and work together. Leadership is about 'being a chorus of voices rather than pulling to different sides'. In Vietnam, one organization witnesses a high level of collaboration and support across the young leaders in their leadership programme. Another participant's experience working with an association in Manila, Philippines testifies to this. Her experience emphasizes that organizations often work in silos and strong leadership is needed to bring everybody together to create impact and behaviour change.

## LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

Leadership is critical to sustainable social change. First, it is key to the sustainability of development programmes. One participant stresses it is not just about 'being able to bring projects to fruition in a much more community-oriented way. When you are able to identify people who can really make a difference in what you do, you will be able to support them and sustain them. When you are able to do that, projects and programmes can be sustained and supported for the longer term.'

Similarly, another organization working in remote regions of the Himalayas focuses on leadership building at the local level to ensure that their programmes are sustained beyond the tenure of grant cycles. In order to do this, they focus on specific realms of leadership such as youth leadership and women's leadership, particularly in self-help groups.

Leadership development also has ripple effects in social change processes that affect the entire community. To an international NGO based in London and working in sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia on issues of sexual health and reproductive rights, leadership is central to the process of

empowerment in their work with marginalized communities, particularly women and girls:

‘The model we have adopted is of training facilitators from this group through theatre performances on issues related to sexual health and reproductive rights. For us it is the key to sustainability and the ownership of impact. We see leadership as a fundamental part of the process of change at an individual and social level. We have seen from experiences in places like Malawi and Ghana that investing even in a single leader has positive ripple effects for the entire community.’

There are at least three important functions that leadership development serves in ensuring sustainable social change.

#### **It makes organizations and programmes function effectively**

Leadership development within organizations is an important executive function critical to managing and delivering the day-to-day tasks of a not-for-profit effectively – managing and raising funds, implementing different aspects of the work such as programmes, research, evaluation, staff coordination and other aspects of not-for-profit management. As one participant put it, ‘it actually underpins the success of programmes.’

For foreign (typically western/ northern) donors or international NGOs funding or implementing programmes in the global south, leadership training among staff is about developing cultural sensitivities, which several participants view as an essential governance tool to deliver successful programmes. ‘Western philosophies of management often don’t work in other cultural contexts.’ An organization working with the aboriginal community in Australia provides an induction course and cultural sensitivity programme that all their practitioners and staff undertake before they start working with the community. They cite an Australian government project with the Rohingya conflict in the Rakhine state in Myanmar as an example of a project that was ineffective as a result of lack of cultural sensitivities and of context-sensitive leadership training among project staff.

A number of participants mention continuity as an essential ingredient in the effectiveness of organizations and programmes:

‘Sharing of information and other things that are required for good leaders should be built in the succession plan from the grassroots level so that it doesn’t create a vacuum if a leader is incapacitated.’

Many a time, organizations don’t nurture leadership further down the organization and are over dependent on a single individual. Such individuals may run the organization very well but ‘when they want to retire they haven’t raised young leaders’. One participant had come across an example where a

Russian foundation closed down because of the demise of the foundation leader.

### It builds agency

Local leadership is important, especially to those working at the grassroots or community level, as an essential tool for building ownership and agency in communities. A participant from Russia, a country that has over 70 community foundations, emphasizes the importance of local leaders in her work. 'The development of local philanthropy is not possible without local leaders.' Local leadership is seen as the key to building intangible assets fundamental to sustainable and inclusive development, ie local ownership and local solutions:

'Once you have local leaders in place the community will listen to them; also it leads to development of local potential and people being able to express their own ideas.'

Likewise, for another organization working in Bangladesh, community-level leadership is required to enable people to make their choices about their 'cycle of control, circle of interest and circle of influence'. They are supporting the community to take 'initiatives to promote community resource mobilization and community identity issues and to speak out at different forums about community needs and problems in getting support from the government and other development actors'.

### It yields influence

While a lot of emphasis is laid on the development of new leadership in communities, working with existing community leaders is also seen as a strategic advocacy tool that provides leverage and yields influence. An organization working with traditional communities in India, among other strategies, works with local leaders such as village elders and heads of *panchayats*, partly because 'nothing gets done without their say so'. This strategy is also crucial to building trust within the community:

'... once you got them on board the whole community really comes together so bringing them into the project and having them take a leadership role is important in getting a commitment across the community.'

Advocacy with governments requires the recognition of the power of leadership on both sides. It is about the power of existing government leaders who are well positioned to effectively support and address issues affecting marginalized people. It is also about building the leadership capacity of the people you work with so they can advocate effectively with these government leaders and influence them. An organization that works with people with dementia and represents a network sees leadership development among its

members as critical to its mission of empowering people with dementia. Leadership in this regard is also about the ability to advocate effectively:

‘... we work with member associations to ensure that they have influence at the national level. We want to help the members to have a strong leadership so they can advocate to empower people with dementia and empower people with knowledge and provide them with services they need to live well.’

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A number of organizations involved in the discussions are running programmes to develop leadership. These programmes or approaches to leadership development vary depending on their context. In the main, they fall into four categories:

### Peer support

This is about networking and providing peer-to-peer support at sector levels such as in membership associations. A leadership development programme involving organizations working with Alzheimer’s patients asks their established member organizations to work with newer members. ‘We can see from this that just getting people together and giving the opportunity to share some challenges is really helpful.’ Similarly, a community-based organization in Bangladesh encourages people to strengthen their social capital by growing their networks with government agencies, private sector and NGOs.

### Developing resilience in individuals

Developing skills to make people resilient is another strategy. An organization in Romania is working with individuals and teenagers to ensure that they graduate from school and qualify as workers and professionals and so become independent, gaining control over their own lives even if they don’t necessarily become community leaders. ‘Maybe leaders in their own life but not so much in the community.’ However, for another network of independent NGOs working to educate youth for employment in the MENA, individual resilience *is* linked to giving back to the community. This network provides youth with soft skills and training to be employable and views this in turn as providing them with the opportunity to be community leaders. ‘When we provide youth with access to the labour market we ask them to become agents of change and give back by providing support to local communities in terms of volunteering work such as organizing blood donations etc.’

### Developing community voice and agency

Leadership development at community level is about giving voice to the community. The organization working at the grassroots in Bangladesh selects

self-motivated people from communities through community consultation and nurtures them to work as volunteers or active citizens to support people. 'These active citizens have been selected by the people because they have the mentality to work for the community.' The feminist fund in Nepal takes a similar approach, giving women at the grassroots the tools to prioritize their own issues and mobilize resources in their community. 'We are trying to create more and more leaders on the ground.'

Further, in divided societies or instances of extreme marginalization, organizations are specifically using strategies that build capacities for communities to access their rights and build resilient communities. An organization in Colombia working with children and young people who are at risk of sexual violence and armed violence uses leadership 'as a key way to empower children to stand up for their rights, understand what it means to exercise those rights, make people fulfil responsibilities'. The leadership development process moves slowly:

'... the facilitator will start by supporting the person running the activity. The person will then move on to running a session themselves and then running their own trainings. They will learn through activities what being a leader actually means. Often they move on to taking a role in advocacy in spaces where children don't have a chance to have their voices heard.'

#### Developing skills and knowledge within organizations (their own as well as organizations in the community)

It is evident from the discussion above that skill development is viewed as a necessary tool for running effective organizations and programmes:

'If we want our project to be sustainable and ensure local leadership we need to have more developmental skills in the entire organization, not just on the ground, not just further up but also in between.'

We've seen in the discussion on 'inclusivity and collaboration' how one organization stresses the importance of sharing information across the hierarchies within the organization right down to the community level where services are delivered. For an infrastructure support organization in Russia that is helping to develop community philanthropy in the country, this involves 'the chance for leaders of CBOs to go to a study retreat or get the right consultant support to develop their knowledge'. While community leaders are vital to the development of community philanthropy (as mentioned above) because it is they who have the contacts, trust and active communications at community level, 'we have to teach them how to work in NGOs and build supporters'. It is important to mention that motivation is seen as a prerequisite

to such leadership development and a 'strong desire to help people and commitment to community philanthropy'. 'We don't have a ready-made person.'

### Measuring the impact of leadership development

The ability to measure the effectiveness of leadership development is seen as a necessary tool to encourage more funding for it. This will come up again in the next section, which looks at the grants programme study. Organizations that are specifically developing leadership as a key strategy or tool in their work are currently measuring the effectiveness of leadership development from two perspectives.

#### Leadership as an end in itself

Here organizations are looking at individual or group leadership competencies. One organization analyses how a group addresses different scenarios before and after the leadership training, and how they approach similar complex problems. Another organization looks at competencies related to strategic thinking, managing processes, managing people and shared goals.

#### Leadership as a means to an end

Some organizations look at leadership as a strategy and not a goal in itself. In this case, they don't measure individual competencies but other results that would flow from leadership development. For example, one organization develops case studies of leaders created in the projects and links them with other goals they seek to accomplish such as 'have we put them in better employment opportunities?' Another organization uses leadership as a tool to achieve social inclusion of vulnerable children so they are not measuring leadership but the integration of the children into society.

What people say about the measurement of leadership is insightful, though what these accounts cannot do is to provide a systematic account of the added value of an approach that encourages leadership development.

### What is hindering the development of leadership?

Factors that limit appropriate leadership development are also identified in the discussions.

#### Lack of funding

Participants lament the lack of funding for leadership development. It seems that donors expect it to be part of the overall infrastructure of an organization but don't want to invest in it:

'Philanthropists want their money to be spent on the project or the programme itself. They feel it's the responsibility of other funding



institutions to build organizational capacity or leadership. They want the money to be deployed for the project and not on infrastructure.’

There is agreement that funders should be funding leadership development. However, there is a need for ‘donor education’ so that donors learn about the importance of doing so. In order for this to happen, one participant argues, ‘we need to think about how to demonstrate the outcomes of leadership development, show the impact and make the case to donors that this leads to more resilient communities.’ It is also necessary to dismantle misconceptions about what investing in leadership means. ‘People have this belief that organizations spend a lot of money paying their leaders. They (funders) don’t want the money to go into the pockets of leaders.’

### The historical and political setting

The setting in which an organization operates can be at cross-purposes with an organization’s mission. In Vietnam, for example, a participant explains, the education system nurtures a ‘communist style of leadership’ wherein ‘one person decides everything and everyone follows’. But if an organization is working at the grassroots in the country, leadership must be ‘bottom- up’. This is something the organization’s workers have to learn on the job. ‘When we graduate and go to work we need a lot of training to understand and practise leadership.’ It is also noted that political polarization and interference in divided societies can demotivate community leadership.

### A skill gap

A skill gap in the development world is another limiting factor in effective leadership. ‘You can’t give people who have never run an administrative budget lots of money and say now go and administer it.’ Such gaps are more marked in certain regions or countries. One participant working with an Indonesian organization is upfront about the skill gap in the country:

‘Most of my staff do not have a background in development like fundraising and all the different skills that would be needed to manage a non-profit organization. That part would need to be built.’

Another participant from Indonesia brings to light the alarmingly low levels of education in the country, apparently second from last on PISA scores, which could be a reason for this gap.

## What is needed to scale up emphasis on leadership development?

### Interrogating specific aspects of leadership

There is a demand for continuing the conversation and learning more. ‘Leadership is far too big a word. We need to break it down.’ Participants

express the need for targeted discussions (could be more webinars) on specific aspects of leadership:

- At community level:
  - How to build effective local community leadership? ‘Would like to learn and hear about what other organizations are doing to tap into the force of the community.’ How to find/raise/educate leaders? How to sustain grassroots leadership and support leaders to stay motivated? Another participant wants to learn about how to make communities more resilient.
  - How to evaluate the projects and grantees in a way that empowers them rather than controls them?
  - How to support leadership in countries with authoritarian regimes? ‘How does one accommodate the difficult situations people are in?’
  - How do we develop more skilled leadership in civil society to develop and sustain democracy and engage effectively with political leadership?
  
- At organizational level:
  - How to build cultural sensitivity? Some participants would like to develop a syllabus of training for western leaders who are working in the global south
  - How to develop civil society in countries where this is still new such as Romania? Focus on organizational leadership and not-for-profit management is needed
  - How to evaluate and motivate staff? ‘How do you celebrate an organization instead of the founder? How do you celebrate the operational staff?’
  - How to build a culture of learning in the organization? ‘When do you reflect back on what you learn from the grassroots? How do you learn from people you lead?’

### Opportunities and tools for peer learning

Participants appreciate opportunities to connect and learn from one another to discuss their challenges and work out solutions together, to align around shared values and experiences on the ground. ‘What have been the experiences of others? How to avoid holes in the road? What works and what are the difficulties?’ An opportunity to learn from other fields such as ‘how are people working with community philanthropy doing this?’ (The Nepalese feminist fund are happy to offer their space for a meeting as well as to share with the group how they support leadership both within the organization and at the community level.)

The following suggestions are made about ways to connect and share information:

- Forming networks that meet physically or virtually
- Developing training circles
- Face-to-face meetings combined with project visits and a chance to talk to people in different spaces
- Reading material, resources on best practice, case studies

#### A collective case

To close the funding gap for leadership development, participants want to build a collective case for this. The following two issues need to be addressed to make the collective case:

- Demonstrate the impact of leadership development
- Develop a shared perspective on what organizations need from donors and promote that within the donor community

## THE GRANTS PROGRAMME STUDY

The third way of trying to understand the concept of leadership draws on a hitherto unpublished study conducted by one funder interested in fostering community leadership development as part of a strategy to meet people's basic needs in low-income communities. The research involved 65 foundation grantees filling out a detailed questionnaire about their mission, values and methods. The organizations covered a range of purposes including social services, international development, emergency relief, medical intervention, human rights and other purposes in civil society. The fact that different organizations varied in the extent to which they invested in local leadership development gives us an opportunity to compare the effects of doing so with not doing so.

The added value of this method is twofold: it brings an element of precision to people's answers, and it finds patterns in the data that may not be evident from qualitative answers to questions. It does this by investigating the relationships between support for community leadership development and many other organizational characteristics, including mission, values and methods.

The key question asked was: whether the organization made 'significant investment in local leadership (eg through community organizations, national organizations or local leaders)'. People were asked to say whether in their organization this was (a) 'fully practised', (b) 'mostly practised', (c) 'sometimes practised', (d) 'rarely practised', (e) 'never practised' or (f) 'don't know'.

What the survey shows is that organizations that make significant investments in local leadership are different from others in several important respects. Taken together, investment in local community leadership leads to a practice of people-led development, an emphasis on building relationships with people who are marginalized, an emphasis on prevention and a long-term approach. Essentially, this shifts the power away from the organization itself to a group outside it, and the key outcomes can be thought of as adding up to community resilience.

Supporting community leadership was significantly correlated with achieving the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the grants programme. These related to the participation of marginalized people, building community assets, and a sustainable approach to development – the essence of what has become known as the #ShiftThePower movement.

Readers interested in the full analysis are referred to Annex A.

## ANNEX A SURVEY RESULTS

In this annex, we give further information about the answer to the survey question that asked: whether the organization made 'significant investment in local leadership (eg through community organizations, national organizations or local leaders)'. People were asked to say whether in their organization this was (a) 'fully practised', (b) 'mostly practised', (c) 'sometimes practised', (d) 'rarely practised', (e) 'never practised' or (f) 'don't know'.

The distribution of responses is shown in the following histogram.



While the question produced scattered responses, overall it is a right-leaning distribution in which a clear majority opted for 'mostly practised' or 'fully practised'. This can be demonstrated by the positioning of the 'normal curve' whose peak is shown on the right-hand side. In a normal distribution, the peak would be in the middle.

We looked at the relationship between answers to this question and other answers in the survey. Comparing the answers to this question with answers to other questions, it became clear that organizations that invest in local leadership operate significantly differently from others. A table setting out the full results follows:

In our organization, there is significant investment in local leadership (e.g. through community organizations, national organizations, or local leaders)	Correlation Spearman's Rho
<b>Mission</b>	
Reduction of poverty	0.241
Helping people to cope with loss, injury, harm or punishment	0.105
Reduction of discrimination	0.197
Being a catalyst so that people can make the changes in the societies that they want	<b>.460**</b>
Reducing danger or threat from external forces such as war or catastrophe	<b>.258*</b>
Reducing threat due to changes in the environment	<b>.327**</b>
Improving the lives of older people	-0.143
Encouraging the idea that people are competent and can do things for themselves	<b>.286*</b>
Fostering long-term development opportunities, rather than immediate relief of human suffering	<b>.294*</b>
Relieving mental distress	-0.149
Integrating marginalized groups	<b>.402**</b>
Encouraging people who are helped by us to give back to their societies	<b>.287*</b>
Encouraging people to help themselves	0.131
Providing an enabling environment where people can flourish	<b>.308*</b>
Disseminating material about the importance of giving in society	-0.074
Providing relief to people following a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, typhoon or flood	0.115
Improving people's health and wellbeing	0.126
<b>Methods</b>	
To use scientific methods to produce new knowledge	-0.150
To build relationships between different people or groups so that society works better	<b>.253*</b>
To help people participate in society so that they can advocate for a better life for themselves and their families	<b>.389**</b>
To provide educational opportunities for children or adults	0.184
To prevent natural disasters or environmental degradation	<b>.266*</b>
To sustain people through hard times through the provision of direct aid or services	0.085
To build communities in society that prevent the emergence of conflict between different groups	<b>.341**</b>
To support causes or principles that will result in the improvement of groups that are discriminated against	0.224
To provide training opportunities to improve livelihoods	<b>.295*</b>
To provide infrastructure or facilities to develop the building blocks of society	0.103
To provide counseling or personal developmental opportunities for individuals	0.026
<b>Values</b>	
We are consistent in what we say and what we do	0.013
We treat all people similarly, unhampered by artificial barriers or prejudices or preferences	0.019
We aim to ensure the rights of all people and individuals to equal protection before the law	0.136
We provide support "from below" so that people who are helped have the power to use the resources provided as they see fit	<b>.452**</b>
We provide for people who cannot help themselves even when they can give nothing back	-0.015
We possess a feeling of distress and pity for the suffering or misfortune of another	-0.185
We build things to last so that they do not require repeat funding	-0.070
We are a fair mediator but take tough decisions when resources are slim and problems are large	0.010
We ensure that all our actions enable the autonomy of other people so that they can make their own decisions	<b>.366**</b>
We encourage people who benefit from our work to give something back to their societies	0.076
We consider the principle of "first do no harm" in all of our work	0.032
<b>KPIS - Organisational</b>	
Resources are targeting poor or marginalised people	0.175
Our staff structure contains people who are poor or marginalised in leadership positions	<b>.377**</b>
We support people who are poor or marginalised to take leadership positions in other organizations	<b>.335**</b>
Community assets lead in development work (people and communities are investing their own money, time, land, knowledge or other resources)	<b>.560**</b>
People and communities use their resources and assets to support others in their own or other communities	<b>.497**</b>
People who are poor or marginalised are centrally involved in meeting their basic needs	<b>.297*</b>
Investment in sustainable change is central - so that little or no external funding continues to be required	<b>.273*</b>

\*= p < 0.01; \*\*= p < 0.001

The table displays the relationship between answers to the question about significant investment in local leadership and other answers in the questionnaire. The level of agreement between the answers is measured using a correlation coefficient (which measures the amount of agreement on a scale from 0 to 1). The correlation coefficient used is Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (Rho for short), which measures relationships on an ordinal scale. Correlations that are statistically significant are marked with one

or two asterisks depending on the probability value: the more asterisks, the higher the statistical significance. When one asterisk is present, the significance level is below 0.01; when there are two, it is below 0.001.

Looking at the table, a clear pattern emerges. Organizations that invest in local leadership tend to be those concerned with people-led development (for example, the correlation with the statement 'To help people participate in society so that they can advocate for a better life for themselves and their families' is 0.389,  $p < 0.001$ ; 'Being a catalyst so that people can make the changes in the societies that they want' is 0.460,  $p < 0.001$ ; 'Providing an environment where people can flourish' is 0.308,  $p < 0.01$ ; 'We provide support "from below" so that people who are helped have the power to use the resources provided as they see fit' is 0.452,  $p < 0.001$ ). There is a clear pattern here, relating to people's autonomy, competence and capacity to control their communities.

A second strand suggests that investment in leadership is correlated with building relationships (the correlation with 'To build relationships between different people or groups so that society works better' is 0.253,  $p < 0.01$ ; 'Integrating marginalized groups' is 0.402,  $p < 0.001$ ).

A third strand suggests a tendency for being involved in prevention (the correlation with 'To prevent natural disasters or environmental degradation' is 0.266,  $p < 0.01$ ; 'To build communities in society that prevent the emergence of conflict between different groups' is 0.341,  $p < 0.001$ ; 'Reducing danger or threat from external forces such as war or catastrophe' is 0.258,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The final strand suggests a long-term perspective (the correlation with 'Fostering long-term development opportunities, rather than immediate relief of human suffering' is 0.294,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Taken together, investment in local community leadership leads to a practice of people-led development, an emphasis on building relationships with people who are marginalized, an emphasis on prevention and a long-term approach. This seems to add up to a philosophy of community resilience.

This is a key goal of the grants programme, as indicated by the KPIs. 'Investment in community leadership' is significantly correlated with all the other KPIs save for 'Resources are targeting poor or marginalized people', where the correlation coefficient is 0.175 and is not statistically significant. This latter result is explained by the fact that organizations in the grants programme often target poor or marginalized people through other means – notably through service delivery.

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