

How Community Philanthropy Shifts Power



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LEADERSHIP SERIES

What Donors Can Do to
Help Make That Happen

BY JENNY HODGSON AND ANNA POND

#ShiftThePower

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This paper was commissioned by the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP) and the Global Fund for Community Foundations. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of individual GACP members or organizations cited.

Special thanks to all of the GACP members for their guidance and contributions of examples, especially Chris Cardona, David Jacobstein, and Hope Lyons, as well as Wendy Richardson with the Global Fund for Community Foundations, who reviewed multiple drafts and cheered us on throughout the writing process. To additional interviewees—Marinka Wijngaard, Anke van Dam, Wanja Muguongo, and Katharine Pearson Criss—and numerous others we referenced throughout the document, thank you for sharing your policies, practices, and research with the field.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gabriela Boyer, foundation representative, Inter-American Foundation; Chris Cardona, program officer for philanthropy, Ford Foundation; Katharine Pearson Criss, independent consultant, formerly Eastern Africa representative, Ford Foundation; Nick Deychakiwsky, program officer, Civil Society at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; David Jacobstein, democracy specialist, DCHA/DRG Cross-Sectoral Programs Team, United States Agency for International Development; Marcy Kelley, managing director, Grants and Portfolio Management, Inter-American Foundation; Barry Knight, consultant, Global Fund for Community Foundations; Hope Lyons, director of program management, Rockefeller Brothers Fund; Wanja Muguongo, executive director, UHAI-EASHRI—the East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative; Matt Reeves, global lead, Civil Society, Aga Khan Foundation; Wendy Richardson, operations and communications director, Global Fund for Community Foundations; Megan McGlynn Scanlon, senior program officer, Civil Society, Aga Khan Foundation; Anke van Dam, strategic policy advisor, Department of Social Development, Task Force Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands; Marinka Wijngaard, policy officer, Department of Social Development, Task Force Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands; Maryanne Yerkes, senior civil society and youth advisor, Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, U.S. Agency for International Development. And thank you to numerous others who helped in creating this paper.

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doi.org/cm46

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About This Paper

WHO ARE THE AUTHORS?



Jenny Hodgson is the executive director of GFCF. Prior to joining GFCF in January 2007, she worked in the field of local philanthropy development in the former Soviet Union, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia for a decade. From 1998 to 2000, she was co-director of the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) representative office in Moscow. While based in Nairobi, Kenya, she worked as a consultant to CAF, the Ford Foundation office for Eastern Africa, and Allavida. From 2004 to 2006, she worked as a consultant to the Ford Foundation's International Initiative to Strengthen Philanthropy (IISP), the European Foundation Centre, the Singapore National Centre for Volunteering and Philanthropy, the Barrow Cadbury Trust, and WINGS. She is one of the founders of the Olga Alexeeva Memorial Prize for Emerging Markets Philanthropy.



Anna Pond provides management consulting services to help private foundations, higher education institutions, and nonprofits become more effective. An independent consultant for over 15 years, she has worked on a range of projects, from designing and closing out grantmaking portfolios to facilitating institution-wide strategic planning and organizational assessment processes. Recent clients include Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, Cricket Island Foundation, Global Fund for Community Foundations, Ford Foundation, The California Endowment, Foundation Center, and Queens College. Anna works across issue areas and has published on a range of topics, from women's multicultural leadership to capacity building, including Supporting Grantee Capacity: Strengthening Effectiveness Together, a 2015 GrantCraft guide for grantmakers. A former program officer at The California Endowment, Anna started her career in nonprofit leadership development and immigrant rights.

WHY THIS PAPER?

While slogans like “think globally, act locally” have been around for decades, still so much decision making about philanthropy and development aid happens by stakeholders outside them. Even those funders that care deeply about championing local leadership and initiatives often struggle with giving up power. This paper intends to address this struggle with real-world examples. It was commissioned by the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP) and the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF).

GACP is a multi-donor 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. Fundamentally, it's a group of donors interested in exploring how they can support strategies that strengthen local ownership, invest in solutions that will have long-term impacts, and build on assets and resources that already exist (or at least do everything in their power not to undermine them). GFCF works globally to promote and support institutions of community philanthropy around the world by providing small grants, technical support, and spaces for learning and sharing (and it also serves as the secretariat of GACP), and since it was established in 2006 it has built up a network of some 180 community philanthropy organizations in 60 countries.

HOW CAN I USE THIS RESOURCE?

The paper introduces the community philanthropy idea and other associated concepts that can help funders deliberately discuss and apply what we are calling a “community philanthropy approach” or “lens” to their work. The practical examples and advice included provide a diverse sampling of ways other funders have shared and shifted power without losing sight of their institutional interests and strategic imperatives. Donors interested in producing lasting results that are people-owned and -led will find this particularly valuable.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Readers interested in learning more about community philanthropy can visit GFCF's website (globalfundcommunityfoundations.org), contact info@globalfundcf.org, follow GACP on Twitter [#ShiftThePower](https://twitter.com/ShiftThePower), sign up for GFCF's monthly bulletins, and read GFCF blogs. GrantCraft, a service of Foundation Center, offers resources to help funders be more strategic about their work, and has published this paper as part of its leadership series to encourage a conversation about this topic. Explore GrantCraft's resources at grantcraft.org and on Twitter by following [@grantcraft](https://twitter.com/grantcraft). Other services and tools that Foundation Center offers can be accessed at foundationcenter.org.

Community Philanthropy: Context for Sharing and Shifting Power

It's an enduring dilemma for donors: how can we deploy resources in ways that put the people we are meant to be serving in charge of their own destinies, while at the same time ensuring full oversight and accountability when it comes to how our funds are spent and what results they produce?

Today, communities around the world are increasingly finding themselves under new and alarming pressures, making the question of how to build local resilience more and more pressing. Indeed, it is at the community level where some of the most urgent global challenges—climate change, inequality, and migration—are being felt most strongly. Add into the mix protracted economic crises, a resurgence of populist politics, intolerance of minority and marginalized groups, and a weakening of the social ties that have bound people together in the past, and we have a problem. We could be talking downtown Baltimore, Nairobi, or Florianopolis; or rural Nebraska, Siberia, or KwaZulu Natal: different contexts, for sure, but increasingly similar challenges.

“THE MOST RADICAL WAY TO ADVANCE MEANINGFUL CHANGE IS TO SHIFT ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL POWER TO THOSE WHO DON'T HAVE IT.”

Peter and Jennifer Buffett, NoVo Foundation¹

Against this backdrop, what is a donor to do? What role can funding—whether philanthropic or public—play in supporting efforts to overcome fragmentation, to rebuild public trust, and to foster communities that are diverse, inclusive, and vibrant? And, are there aspects of our practices that we can change or “unlearn” so as to facilitate such efforts?

It is in this context that community philanthropy—as a form of, and force for, locally driven development that strengthens community capacity and voice, builds trust,

and, most importantly, taps into and builds on local resources—takes on a particular relevance.

This paper is for donors looking for ways to ensure that our interventions produce lasting results that are owned and directed by the people they are meant to benefit. It offers practical advice and examples based on the experiences of a variety of different donors, as well as some thoughts on how we donors can do more to share and shift power while fulfilling our own institutional oversight and accountability requirements.

We approached this paper through two primary sections. First, we introduce the community philanthropy idea and other associated concepts. Second, we show how different donors have used what we are calling a “community philanthropy approach” or “lens” as a deliberate strategy to deflect power away from themselves and focus instead on dynamics, relationships, and resources at the community level. You will see that we have included donors who are themselves quite diverse, and whose strategies are also quite different, with the intention of showing how this approach can work in any number of contexts. You'll also find discussion questions included at the end of each section. Reflect on them independently and then use them to have conversations with other staff at your institution and within peer networks.

ACTION STEP

Look at your most recent slate of grants. Identify any in which you funded the deployment of resources that help put local people in charge of their own destinies.

We present no silver bullets. In fact, it's important to note that although community foundations have existed in North America for over a hundred years, and community asset-based development has been part of the development parlance since the 1960s, the emergence of community philanthropy as a broader, global phenomenon is much more recent.² Its identity and the evidence base that underpins it still evolving. It is this more recent emergence that is the focus of this paper. The examples we have included come from diverse contexts, but they have often been shaped by similar kinds of concerns, such as shortcomings of traditional funding practices or anxieties around the sense of alienation and disenchantment within communities. Perhaps more important, the set of organizations described have grown out of the belief that without local resources, local leadership, and local buy-in, any externally driven effort to bring about change will never “stick.”

Donors approach the conversation on community philanthropy from different angles. For some, the process of building community philanthropy is an end in itself, an essential strategy for promoting locally owned development and strengthening civic participation. For others, community philanthropy is appealing as a strategy to help deliver on their broader institutional objectives, whether they involve migration, the environment, youth, or any number of different issues. Also, although community philanthropy (and, in particular, the community foundation) has been recognized within the philanthropic sector, it has only recently come to the

attention of broader audiences, particularly donors and other actors in the international development space, who are interested in it as a potential strategy for strengthening development outcomes. This paper is itself the product of this more recent and expanded conversation among a broader cross-section of actors in both philanthropic and development spaces. As a result, and in an effort to acknowledge this diversity of perspectives, we use the language and framing of both philanthropy and international development in the paper.

ABOUT THE EXAMPLES

We have drawn examples from a range of donors and experiences, including each of the members of the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy, a diverse group of private, public, and hybrid funding organizations who have been exploring community philanthropy together. You will see that in some cases, the language of community philanthropy is used very deliberately; in others, while the values and attributes of community philanthropy are in evidence, different language and framings are used, which give prominence to particular issues such as power, voice, agency, and effectiveness. Please share your own examples on GrantCraft through a guest blog; email info@grantcraft.org for next steps.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What contexts do you work in? What issues impact local resilience in those places?
- In what ways do your funding interventions produce lasting results that are owned and directed by local people? Are the organizations you typically work with locally resourced and led? How do they ensure local buy-in so that what they do “sticks”?
- In your organizational context, does the concept of community philanthropy resonate? As a means or an end? Where do you see it present in your values, strategy, or interaction with grantees?



Community Philanthropy as a Concept: Background and Definitions

In this paper, we define community philanthropy as both a form of and a force for building local assets, capacities, and trust—ultimately, as a way to shift power closer to the ground so that local people have greater control over their own destiny.

Although conversations about empowerment, ownership, and sustainability abound in both philanthropy and international development, we would argue that what is different here is the emphasis on pooling and organizing diverse community assets in ways that transform traditional “beneficiaries” into “co-investors” in their own development processes.

Before we continue with examples, let’s explore the underpinnings of this approach.

COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY: WHAT’S THE BASIC HYPOTHESIS?

There is a powerful and simple logic that underpins the basic idea of community philanthropy, which goes something like this:

- Community philanthropy is based on the premise that all communities have their own assets (money, skills, knowledge, networks, etc.). When these are pooled together, they build community power and voice.
- By contributing their own resources, people start to feel like co-investors with a stake in their own development.
- When people feel they have something at stake, they care more about the outcomes, and evidence shows that they become more invested in acting in ways that advance and protect their collective interests.
- When local contributions are brought to the table, a different, flatter kind of power dynamic is created when dealing with external donors, which challenges traditional donor-beneficiary dynamics.
- When local resources are mobilized, new, more horizontal forms of accountability emerge, based on trust and transparency.



So, to recap: Unlocking the agency of local people, their organizations, and their assets is not only the right thing to do—because they should always be the ones in the driver's seat—but it is the effective thing to do too. Whether you are a donor working on climate change, poverty, women's rights, or inequality, studies have shown that a strong local ecosystem for community philanthropy (in which local assets are mobilized and strong and diverse community actors are engaged, with high levels of trust and social capital) will strengthen both outcomes and ownership across the board.^{3,4}

A WORD ON DONORS: WHO IS THE "DONOR" IN COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY?

When most of us think "donor," particularly in an international context, we tend to think about institutions—foundations, bilateral aid agencies, etc. Community philanthropy offers a more expanded and nuanced characterization of the word, which emphasizes the intentional blending of resources from three different kinds of "donors." These are the external donor, the community philanthropy organization, and people in the community.

 **COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY IS BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT ALL COMMUNITIES HAVE THEIR OWN ASSETS (MONEY, SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, NETWORKS, ETC.). WHEN THESE ARE POOLED TOGETHER, THEY BUILD COMMUNITY POWER AND VOICE."**

The external donor. This is the main audience for this paper and, unless otherwise stated, the word "donor" refers to this first category. Here, we are talking about foundations, bilateral donors, and other development agencies based outside or one step removed from the community or context in which they are funding.⁵ For many donors, even when they are interested in supporting initiatives at the very local level, it may simply not be practical, cost-effective, or sensible to make lots of small grants (and we are talking \$200–\$1,500 small, rather than \$10,000–\$25,000 small). Their "problem" is the fixed costs of their grantmaking, which means there is a minimum grant size below which grantmaking becomes impractical and costly. Often working from a distance, these donors need partners with the capacity to manage their funds

MORE THAN INTERMEDIARIES

Working with funding intermediaries—i.e., organizations that have the capacity to give and manage smaller grants on behalf of a donor to help that donor fulfill its grantmaking objectives—is an established philanthropy practice for many larger donors. If you are wondering whether CPOs are essentially "re-granting intermediaries" by any other name, take another look. In fact, for external donors looking for ways to get their money deeply—and effectively—into communities, these organizations possess particular attributes that add value.

Firstly, they make grants because they want to, not because that is what they've been asked to do by someone else, as is often the case with intermediaries that are contracted to do so. Indeed, for CPOs, grantmaking is a deliberate strategy aimed at devolving power and resources to grassroots organizations so that they can do things for themselves (rather than have them "done to them" by others). By reaching and strengthening grassroots groups as they find them, CPOs play an important role in building both the "front lines" of civil society and the relationships and networks that underpin it.

Secondly, and even more importantly, CPOs place great emphasis on the role of local resources as an essential way to grow local ownership and avoid over-dependency on external funding. Grantmaking is an extremely effective way to encourage local giving because it clearly demonstrates flows of smaller funding to specific groups to do concrete things: it turns "development"—which can often seem like a remote multimillion-dollar affair directed from big, faceless institutions—into something tangible that local people can be a part of. This local orientation of CPOs is often built into their own funding base, which may blend big, international grants with varied local resources from wealthy individuals, businesses, and the middle classes, as well as more multi-stakeholder and local.

WHO IS THE 'DONOR'?



efficiently and fulfill the necessary institutional reporting, measurement, and accountability requirements. So, while their goals and values may describe a strong commitment to sharing power and to supporting bottom-up, community-led ways of working, they can be stymied by their own organizational structures and constraints, which can force them to work in more top-down ways (e.g., big grants with fixed outputs and outcomes).

“UNLOCKING THE AGENCY OF LOCAL PEOPLE, THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, AND THEIR ASSETS IS NOT ONLY THE RIGHT THING TO DO—BECAUSE THEY SHOULD ALWAYS BE THE ONES IN THE DRIVER’S SEAT—BUT IT IS THE EFFECTIVE THING TO DO TOO.”

The community philanthropy organization (CPO), a.k.a. the “local funding organization.” Whether they call themselves community foundations, women’s funds, grassroots grantmakers, community development foundations, environmental funds, or national public foundations, these organizations constitute the emerging community philanthropy sector. While—as previously noted—their specific origins may differ, they have often been shaped by similar kinds of factors, which include both critiques of the top-down nature of the development aid system and the potential for developing new ways of working and organizing that unlock local resources, harness civic activism, and challenge existing structures and power. In that sense, CPOs—and here we are talking largely about those in the the Global South and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe—can be understood as both institutional innovators and disruptors

in their local civil society contexts, in that they are neither service delivery nor implementing organizations, nor simply funding conduits.

For example, Tewa—the Nepal Women’s Fund—regularly invites both the community-based organizations that receive its grants and the individual women behind them to give back to the fund. This offer, which is entirely voluntary, is a deliberate strategy for flattening power, challenging as it does the convention of—and power relations behind—typical donor-beneficiary relations.

In Russia, community foundations (over sixty of which have emerged in the last twenty years) have played a critical role in the process of post-Soviet community building, particularly in remote, rural parts of the country. They offer a unique institutional structure that brings together civil society, corporate, and government sectors to work collectively for the community good.

In Brazil, the initial impetus behind the CASA Socio-Environmental Fund was to increase the flow of funding to environmental activists working at the grassroots. However, more recently it has turned its attention to understanding how the existing (but often “unseen”) strategies for local resource mobilization among its grassroots partners can be valued, elevated, and serve as the basis for locally driven development.⁶

ACTION STEP

Ask one of your grantees: how do assets, capacities, and trust get built in your community? What can I, as a donor, do to support their development? See what they say.

HOW CAN DONORS FOSTER COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY?

We've organized the rest of this paper into four sections offering practical advice. They are:

- General pointers for donors
- Using grants to grow community philanthropy and shift power
- Aligning community philanthropy values and practice inside your funding institution
- Building the community philanthropy field

For each one, you'll find stories alongside discussion questions, action steps, and links to additional resources and information.

We include here advice as well as examples from those doing and supporting community philanthropy around the world, and we share them to lift up a range of smart practices. We have learned from our experience that there is no one way of thinking about and doing community philanthropy: context and local circumstances make each of these situations unique. However, you will note some common threads that cut across them, including how to think about power differently.

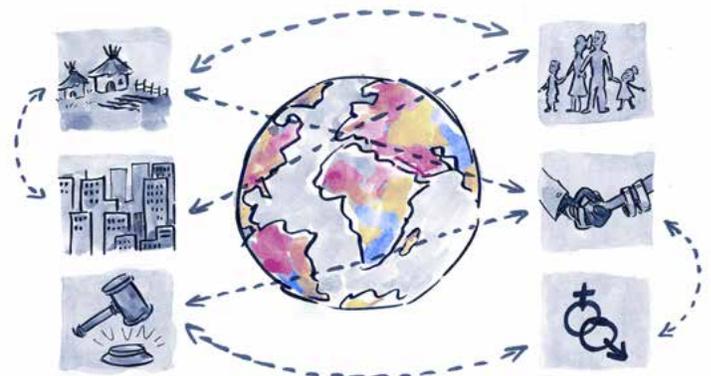
People in the community. In community philanthropy, anyone and everyone can be a donor. We're not just talking about the super wealthy, but rather about a mindset shift that celebrates giving as an act of empathy, of dissent, and of participation, and as an expression of trust. In the context of funding for community development and social change, individual contributions from "ordinary people"—because they care about or believe in a cause or a place—can be a game changer. Individuals comprise the heart and soul of the Valmiera Region Community Foundation in Latvia, for example, most of whose donors are local residents, "ordinary people" who give in the range of 20–100 Euro. Giving by members of the public is also a new concept in Vietnam; nevertheless, in the southern city of Ho Chi Minh, two-

thirds of the LIN Center for Community Development's individual donors are Vietnamese, most of whose contributions are for a participatory community grantmaking fund.

WHO IS THE "COMMUNITY" IN COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY?

The word "community" perhaps suffers from overuse in philanthropy and development, so let's take a moment to unpack what we mean when we say community in this paper. "Community" is most commonly defined by geography, but it can also be defined by identity, interests, and shared values, particularly now with the proliferation of social media groups that allow people to congregate and mobilize electronically. Communities can be messy and complex and far from any romantic ideal; indeed, they are neither static nor harmonious nor homogenous, but rather spaces where different views play out and where different interests and agendas compete for power and resources. Community can also be a network of connections between people, and a shift from the individual to the collective. It has a dual function of both "gluing" people together through a shared sense of belonging and providing an "engine" that can allow the collective to express voice and action in relation to others. In other words, communities create spaces for people to associate, as well as to organize, articulate, and claim their rights.

Related to "community" is the word "local." In community philanthropy, we talk a lot about the power and importance of the local, or internal, and the idea that communities possess assets, resources, knowledge, and relationships that aren't always visible to the external eye but that, when harnessed and deployed, can be transformational.



WHAT ARE THE CORE FEATURES OF A COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY APPROACH?

Local giving and an appreciation of internal community assets are important components, but as a development practice that promotes community-driven processes, there are other important features worth noting.

Through its grantmaking and knowledge-building work, the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) has sought to explore the distinct value of community philanthropy—and, in particular, of CPOs—in transforming the dynamics of local development processes. More recently, GFCF has joined forces in this task with a learning collaborative of donors, the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy. Using data collected through GFCF's grantmaking to CPOs around the world, GFCF has tracked volumes, flows, and types of resources being mobilized across very different contexts. But we have also sought to look beyond just the money, at the larger role of this distinct set of grassroots-grantmaking, philanthropy-building organizations. According to GFCF's analysis of data collected across 20 indicators that measure social capital,⁷ despite differences in other areas of their work,

CPOs commonly identify three core pillars of their work: building assets, strengthening the capacities and agency of communities, and building trust.^{8,9}

These three elements form complex, nonlinear networks of feedback loops: building assets mobilizes different kinds of capital (financial, social, reputational) within a particular community, which in turn can be used to leverage external resources that can also be invested in the community. When local groups secure local contributions and other kinds of internal community support, the size or scale of the assets mobilized matters less than the multiplier or system-level effect that the cumulation of these multiple small interactions creates in building trust and modeling new behaviors. Increased trust creates further opportunities to build different forms of capital and to advance inclusive community-driven development and collective self-determination. When internal resources start to be understood as having importance equal to or greater than external ones, power over the allocation of resources and development decision making long held by donors and others outside of communities then starts to shift closer to the ground.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- How familiar a concept is community philanthropy—to you and your organization? Even if it's new, what elements conceptually resonate?
- How does it relate or not with your organization's grantmaking approach? For example, what do assets, capacities, and trust mean in your context? What are ways you intentionally build them as a donor institution?
- Reflect on the assumptions that local people should be in the driver's seat. Is this a familiar notion? Is it comfortable? If not, why not?
- How could the introduction of a community philanthropy "lens" in your work help strengthen your programs overall? For example, would it bring you closer to the communities you support, give you more confidence in the decisions made, ensure greater local uptake?
- How could a flatter power dynamic contribute to effectiveness of your funding? To greater grantee accountability? For example, how might it create an enabling environment for increasing donations, including from new actors?

Some General Pointers for Donors

We have already said that for some donors, community philanthropy has an appeal in terms of core values and beliefs about the processes of social development (bottom-up, people-led, asset-based, etc.). For others, however, community philanthropy may be more of a tactic or a strategy to achieve specific institutional objectives. For a third group, it will do both.¹⁰

Here are some general pointers that can help you move in a community philanthropy direction, which we unpack below.

- Use power responsibly.
- Consider to what extent assets, capacities, and trust are being built (or not) in the spaces and places you fund.
- Don't be the lone ranger; consider the long view and your contribution to the larger ecosystem.
- Rethink what capacity gets strengthened.
- Value local asset mobilization.
- Use funding to help create new spaces and platforms for collective action.
- Consider introducing different kinds of metrics.

USE POWER RESPONSIBLY

If nothing else, think about how you're practicing the values of community philanthropy and putting people in the lead in your interactions with grantees. Does the way in which you communicate and interact convey an appreciation of the different kinds of assets (networks, expertise, knowledge) that they bring to the table? Does it demonstrate a commitment to sharing power? Do you say you believe in strengthening local control and building community voice and agency, yet you're not comfortable leaving certain decisions to grant partners? As donors, we could all consider ways to build our own self-awareness so that we're not replicating top-down approaches when bottom-up is what we, and often our institutions, say we're seeking. We can be creative in demonstrating ways to share power. Consider borrowing from U.K. donor

USE THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY'S EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS CHECKLIST

This checklist was developed as a discussion document for a session at the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy, held in Johannesburg in December 2016.

- Meet people where they are.
- Be ready to listen, listen, and listen.
- Don't let perfect get in the way of good.
- Start off slow.
- Remember, "nothing about me without me."
- Be flexible with grant requirements—and expectations.
- Prioritize local expertise: If we don't have it, how can we find it?
- Build with, not for.
- Be mindful about raising visibility—is it helpful or harmful?
- Create spaces, networks, and connections to support work on the ground.
- Build trust and relationships, realizing this takes time.
- Be ready to #ShiftThePower.

COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY QUESTIONS DONORS MIGHT ASK...

TRUST: Are there strong connections and trust between people and organizations in the community, or are trust levels low? Do people trust organizations that are meant to be helping them, and do organizations trust the people they are trying to help? Are there general trust issues when it comes to institutions in general—for example, have sociopolitical circumstances eroded faith that institutions act ethically? Are there particular groups between whom trust levels are especially low? Is this a socially cohesive community or a scattered, disconnected one?

ASSETS: Is there an existing culture of giving and solidarity—whether formal or informal? Is there an opportunity to grow or encourage one? Do grantseeking organizations typically rely only on external donors, or are they trying to build up a support base? What role do small donations, in-kind contributions, or volunteer contributions play? If there is a culture of local giving is it only among wealthier elites, or do “ordinary” people give too? Have any of these questions been documented or researched?

CAPACITIES: In terms of the community overall, do people think that power and leadership are accessible to them, that they have agency, or do they feel disempowered and invisible? What kinds of community organizations are there—are they equipped to do their job, or do they lack basic capacity? Does external funding benefit only a handful of organizations, or is it distributed relatively equally?

Comic Relief, which handed its organizational Twitter account over for the day to four individuals—all dementia sufferers—representing some of the 50 dementia support groups that they fund across the U.K.¹¹

CONSIDER TO WHAT EXTENT ASSETS, CAPACITIES, AND TRUST ARE BEING BUILT (OR NOT) IN THE SPACES AND PLACES YOU FUND

Maybe you are starting to work with a new constituency or community, or perhaps a long-term program is still not producing the results you had anticipated. In these circumstances, ask yourself why this might be: what if you applied (or had applied) community philanthropy principles, what specific difference would that have made? Asking some basic community philanthropy questions about local assets, capacities, and trust may help surface valuable insights into the environment or context in which you are working. This may then influence how you choose to work and can ensure greater effectiveness as a result of your interventions.

DON'T BE THE LONE RANGER

Consider the long view and your contribution to the larger ecosystem. It's important to remember that successful and lasting outcomes depend on multiple actors and factors operating within a larger context or “ecosystem.” Take stock of the players, the respective roles they play in driving community-level change, and the extent to

which they are connected to, and collaborating with, each other. What, for example, is the adaptive capacity of your grantees—and their networks? In other words, how would they be able to respond to a sudden external shock, whether due to a key donor's exit or change in strategy or, as is becoming increasingly the case globally, the introduction of new government restrictions on international grant funding?

With its Local Solutions initiative and localworks program, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, has sought to carve out ways of working that emphasize more local ownership and strong local systems. In the words of one USAID representative: “In the localworks program, we focus on how we can nudge agency practice toward incorporating community philanthropy principles and supporting local self-reliance. We will not be able to pursue community philanthropy



in every aspect of what the agency does. But we can take the ideas and link them to mainstream work.”¹² The localworks program “seeks to invest in the creativity and resourcefulness of local communities, enabling them to drive their own development.” It highlights not only the role of local expertise and resources (including domestic philanthropy) but also the importance of a systems lens. “Problems and opportunities exist in a context,” says the localworks website.¹³ “A systems lens helps identify the relevant individuals and entities, how they interact, and the dynamics that influence and govern the system.” At face value, community philanthropy may seem like a difficult fit for an agency such as USAID, which is typically charged with disbursing large grants, with strict accountability systems back to Congress and the U.S. public. However, taking an ecosystem approach becomes a window into this work and a way to help address challenges from within communities. A study on resilient funders by the Global Greengrants Fund describes the strategies of various donors working in different restrictive environments, which includes the critical role of local systems strengthening, particularly in the form of distributed networks that can reorganize in the face of a sudden shock (such as the closure of a major player or the blocking of essential funding). One donor in the study describes its use of capacity-building workshops for its grantees, not only as a way to share information, but also to ensure critical network strengthening.¹⁴ Whether as part of a drive toward increasing greater local ownership and voice or as a strategy for strengthening civil society resilience in restrictive or hostile environments, adopting a systems lens can help donors move beyond a “grant-by-grant” approach toward support for local systems and networks and the relationships that underpin them.

RETHINK WHAT CAPACITY GETS STRENGTHENED

Community philanthropy is about strengthening capacity or agency at the community level. Many donors provide technical assistance and capacity-building support for their partners, but we aren’t always clear what kind of capacity we mean. Is it about introducing tools and techniques that ensure successful delivery, and reporting, of the grant? Or is it about strengthening institutions beyond the grant and helping to plan for a post-grant future? Or, going even further, is it about strengthening institutional and local capacities—and the relationships and systems that underpin them—as a way to strengthen a community? Who delivers the capacity building also matters. Too often, funders bring in outside “experts” who lack local knowledge or whose expertise is rivaled or exceeded by grantees, who may have extensive capacity-building experience. Choices like these not only make grantees feel undervalued, but they also undermine the learning opportunity because grantees then view their participation in whatever training is offered as more of an obligatory exercise in pleasing a funder than as something of value. When donors start to regard their partners as assets and sources of knowledge and expertise, we may need to look no further when it comes to identifying trainers and resource providers. For donors such as Global Fund for Community Foundations, this means supporting regular peer learning exchanges among cohorts of trailblazers who are developing new practices and thinking. Similarly, instead of coming to the table with a preset package of capacity-building tools, donors such as the Segal Family



Foundation,¹⁵ the Inter-American Foundation (IAF),¹⁶ and the Ford Foundation¹⁷ have invested in exchanges or networks where participating leaders shape the dialogue. Bringing grantee partners together for peer learning and exchange—and being prepared not to shape and determine a learning agenda—can demonstrate your institution’s belief in a fundamental community philanthropy principle: that great advances in community-led and community-owned development happen when practitioners and thought leaders on the ground have the space and resources to develop them together. Use of facilitating frameworks such as Open Space¹⁸ or emergent learning,¹⁹ which allow a learning agenda and knowledge to emerge through the convening itself, can also help flatten power dynamics and let conversation follow the energy and interests in a room rather than any preset agenda.

VALUE LOCAL ASSET MOBILIZATION

Building local funding sources can be hard, since local fundraising is as much about constituency building for a cause as it is about money. However, not building local funding sources feeds into the idea that certain issues—particularly the tricky ones such as human rights—are always going to have to be funded from outside. Even if initial amounts of money raised locally are small, value them in terms of not just their financial value but also the trust—and often the mindset shift—that they represent. Local contributions to a cause can’t be equated with grant funding; we should consider them differently and measure them by different means.

Consider the work of the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), a funding institution created by the U.S. Congress to support the organized poor in Latin America and the Caribbean, which it does by cultivating and supporting the development of a robust grassroots civil society. “The foundation’s support is not traditional aid,” says Marcy Kelley at IAF. “Poor and marginalized communities are called upon to create and lead their own organizations, design their own solutions, and mobilize resources.” Groups commit matching resources and a plan for eventual sustainability. By putting resources into the project, the grantees commit to owning local challenges and solutions. Over the past five years, new grantee partners have contributed, on average, \$1.33 for every \$1 invested by IAF.^{20,21}

USE FUNDING TO HELP CREATE NEW SPACES AND PLATFORMS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Even donors who face internal institutional restrictions in the way they work can build connections and capacity that mobilize different forms of local assets and ensure that community voice gets heard, even by those reluctant to hear them.

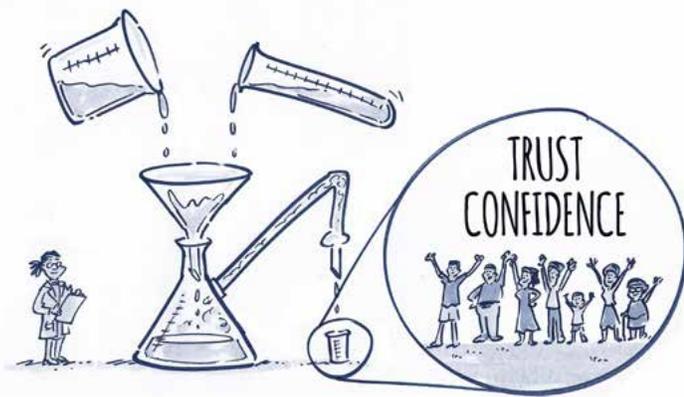
As the USAID mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina was considering its legacy during project planning in 2012, for example, developers in Banja Luca decided to turn a community park into a resort. Community members and civil society organizations were strongly against the idea, but they weren’t sufficiently organized to present a unified response. “This was a lightbulb moment for the mission,” says David Jacobstein at USAID. “It crystallized something mission staff had been observing. USAID’s local partners needed to become more interconnected behind the scenes to support future sustainable action on the ground.”

This realization resulted in a shift in funding focus: to formalize structures that could build interconnectedness. For USAID staff, this meant being creative within its constraints as a bilateral institution. USAID used a competitive process to designate a primary organization as responsible for convening stakeholder groups and identifying community priorities to which participating civil society organizations would hold themselves accountable. “The idea was to build trust and human and institutional connections that would outlast USAID funding, as well as remind civil society organizations they should be accountable to the community, not to the funder, especially since the funder was planning its exit,” says David. Ultimately, USAID sought to reframe competition between civil society organizations and position them to exercise collective leadership on behalf of the community. This shift has also contributed to greater coordination and success of local action campaigns. One notable example: a month-long, grassroots-led action by about 3,000 volunteers demanding that politicians in this region torn by ethnic divisions guard the region’s heritage by reopening The National Museum in Sarajevo after a three-year closure.²² “Reopening the museum is a great example of what can be accomplished when people on the ground engage in a coordinated way, even in places where the bonds of civil society have been greatly strained,” says David.

CONSIDER INTRODUCING DIFFERENT KINDS OF METRICS

Our advice here is best summed up as follows: “What we measure affects what we do, and if our measurements are flawed, decisions may be distorted.”²³

We have already suggested that a few community philanthropy-type questions to your current or potential grant partners may surface valuable insights, reveal hidden assets, and flag underlying internal community dynamics. It may also be worth reflecting on the metrics and measurements that you are using within your own organization. To what extent are they about “cause and effect”—linear outputs and outcomes, or accountability and control? How effective are they at helping to understand complexity, process, and small increments of change? When GFCF started to provide small-grant support to CPOs around the world back in 2006, much of the data it was collecting still seemed to drill down to numbers. The result was a lot of information on, for example, the sizes of annual budgets and staff, how many grants CPOs around the world were making (what size, how often), and how much money had been raised and from whom. What the quantitative data painted was a picture of a group of often very small organizations, mobilizing very small local resources, and making very small grants across all kinds of issues. And yet



ACTION STEP

During an upcoming grantee site visit, bring the lens of power to your interaction. Then during your interaction, watch the dynamic. Are grantee representatives talking and acting as they would with someone they regard as equal? Afterward, make a list of evidence – of what shows how you or the grantee asserted power equitably, or not. Think about how that might influence future interactions with that grantee as well as others.

the narrative information captured in grant applications and reports told a different story: phrases like “building a sense of hope,” “encouraging people to participate in civic life,” “strengthening a sense of community,” or “changing mindsets” came up time and time again, regardless of context of country. So GFCF introduced a new set of measurements that sought to make sense—or tell the story—of what really seemed to be going on at the community level. GFCF grant partners are now consistently asked to rate their organizations and grant activities on a scale of 20 social capital indicators²⁴ that look at three broad areas: their role in the community they serve (however that is defined), their role at the national or regional level, and their role at a global level.

By introducing these indicators, GFCF has started to get a much clearer understanding of the underlying and very deliberate strategies and priorities of its CPO partners, such as building community assets or increasing public trust, information that might otherwise fall between the cracks. But, more importantly, it has enabled a conversation with and among CPOs about their real—and yet often hidden—role as community builders, as a distinct set of organizations thinking and working quite differently from the norm.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What could you do differently to better strengthen community-based assets, capacities, and trust?
- Which of the approaches described above might work best in your organization? For example: How can you help your institution take the long view in thinking about community-level change? What would it take to shift to an ecosystems perspective?
- Do you think that the metrics and outcomes your organization uses help tell the full story behind the grants you make? Are there other ways you could use to do that?



Using Grants to Grow Community Philanthropy and Shift Power

In the end, a grant is just money, right? And different donors will have different kinds of grants (in terms of size, length, restrictions) at their disposal. This section isn't going to talk about standardizing or developing shared grantmaking systems.

In fact, some of the examples we have included may sound like the kinds of grants your organization already makes. Instead, this section considers the larger objectives or purposes—beyond the wire transfer itself—that surround a grant. The idea is that the introduction of a “community philanthropy approach,” which combines the tools of grantmaking with a commitment to growing local agency and shifting power, can bring benefits that will strengthen your programmatic objectives as a whole.

Here are some different ways that donors have used grants to promote community philanthropy and/or shift power.

- Create incentives for local giving and participation via challenge grants
- Cultivate power-sharing grantmaking partnerships
- “Liberate” your partners through general support grants
- Support participatory grantmaking and trust in the decision-making process
- Invest in systems that enable new kinds of community giving and mobilization
- Facilitate the co-creation of organizational game changers—and then step aside

CREATE INCENTIVES FOR LOCAL GIVING AND PARTICIPATION VIA CHALLENGE GRANTS

Using external grant funds in ways that incentivize and recognize the value of local resources and local contributions is a simple and effective way to grow community philanthropy. “Evidence of community

contribution” may be a standard question in grant application processes, but without the right supporting framework or vision underpinning it, it can often just end up as a tokenistic, box-ticking exercise.

“EVIDENCE OF COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION” MAY BE A STANDARD QUESTION IN GRANT APPLICATION PROCESSES, BUT WITHOUT THE RIGHT SUPPORTING FRAMEWORK OR VISION UNDERPINNING IT, IT CAN OFTEN JUST END UP AS A TOKENISTIC, BOX-TICKING EXERCISE.”

When the Inter-American Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation collaborated with Mexican funders in the creation of a challenge grant fund in support of twelve community foundations in Mexico, building broad-based public giving mechanisms was a central dimension of the program. Each foundation invested \$350,000 jointly over a five-year period. The challenge to the community foundations was to raise an additional \$750,000 from within Mexico. “This was a long-term collaborative investment,” says Gabriela Boyer at the IAF. “Our desired end goal was to increase the capacity and assets of organizations acting on behalf of community, but also to get the community engaged in the process.”

The question of managing and sharing power at the local level was something that both donors paid particular attention to. “It was sometimes challenging working with those community foundations where community wasn't really in the driver's seat,” says Nick Deychakiwsky at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. “In some instances, the community foundation leaders are part of the ‘elite.’” The strategy of mobilizing donations from both wealthier

community members and community-based groups was effective in fostering a sense of a collective achievement among the community as a whole and of recognizing the importance of small contributions as much as bigger ones. It also helped to strengthen community foundations when it came to downward, or community-facing, accountability. For example: “We had one community foundation work closely with a community radio project, leveraging that platform to raise awareness about community issues like community violence,” says Gabriela. “In turn, that community radio project used the airwaves to raise matching resources from local residents.”

CULTIVATE POWER-SHARING GRANTMAKING PARTNERSHIPS

Organizations that have grantmaking capacity can bring great value to larger donors looking to reach local actors, particularly when those grantmakers are themselves located within the same movement or sector that the donor wants to fund.

When the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands wanted to resource women’s rights activism in the Global South, it deliberately chose to partner with four southern regional women’s funds²⁵ to devise Leading from the South (LFS), a 40 million Euro program (US \$49.2 million). The underlying idea: to facilitate funding flows to southern-based organizations, including smaller ones, and offer other forms of nonfinancial and network support in ways that both fulfilled the rigorous accountability requirements of a bilateral donor agency and, more importantly, reached organizations deeply immersed in women’s movement building and gender equality in the Global South.

From the start, the Ministry had a strong idea of what it wanted to accomplish and the types of partners it was looking to work with, and the selection of the four LFS partners was a highly strategic choice. In the further development of the program, the women’s funds played an instrumental role in the development of the LFS policy framework, setting their own related goals and strategies, including a shared learning agenda and collaborative monitoring systems. This power-sharing process remains at the heart of the implementation of the program. “We are in constant conversation, but we leave a lot of decisions up to them,” says Marinka Wijngaard at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. That includes the final selection of LFS grantees at the

local, national, and regional level, using the due diligence procedures each of them has in place.

This doesn’t mean accountability procedures aren’t in place. Once a year, the four organizations provide a financial report, share their results, and reflect on what has been accomplished and how that furthers the theory of change laid out in the larger policy framework. Additionally, the women’s funds and the Ministry have a face-to-face meeting once a year and all the funds write an annual plan. However, LFS is part of a broader effort by the Dutch Ministry to work with partner organizations in an equitable fashion. “We accept the fact that we can agree and disagree,” says Anke Van Dam, who works alongside Marinka at the Dutch Ministry. “But we see this way of working as respectful of the expertise organizations like these bring to the table, as well as a way to guarantee partnership and ownership by the women’s funds.” Examples like the Dutch Ministry’s highlight how external donors can work with strong, credible, more locally based funding organizations as true partners in giving.

“LIBERATE” YOUR PARTNERS THROUGH GENERAL SUPPORT GRANTS

By definition, general support grants devolve power to local partners, freeing them up from the constraints of fixed projects and enabling them to exercise their own judgment as to how funds get used. Additionally, they can also be very effective in providing the necessary space in which local leadership can grow too, shifting an organization’s gaze away from the donor toward the priorities and concerns of the community they serve and, in doing so, building public trust and harnessing local energies and assets.

 *IT CAN TAKE TIME TO MOVE TO A POINT WHERE INSIDER PERSPECTIVES AND KNOWLEDGE OF A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY BECOME VALUED AS A SOURCE OF WISDOM THAT INFORMS DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES.”*

General support funding has long been an important strategy in the Rockefeller Brothers Fund’s approach to supporting community philanthropy. “Providing general support gives grantees the flexibility they need, demonstrates trust in the relationship, and makes it easier

on both the grantmaker and the grantee, as you do not have to approve changes to grant purpose every time a grantee faces a local challenge they need to take on," says Hope Lyons at the foundation. "It allows our engagements with the grantees to be of a deeper, more substantive level, and for us to respond as needed to areas of concern that they may have."

Flexible funding in the form of general support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund has allowed grantees such as the Forum for Civic Initiatives ("FIQ" for short) to take up issues of deep community concern and promote civic engagement, as well as increase internal capacity and operating efficiencies. Established by a group of young community activists in 2001 in the aftermath of the Kosovo war, FIQ is a grantmaking foundation that has worked extensively on promoting citizenship, democratic practice, and sustainable development in what is an often unpredictable post-conflict environment in Kosovo.

Kosovo celebrated a decade of independence on February 17, 2018. During this time, FIQ built on its grantmaking programs to encourage civic activism and community engagement, and used its position to amplify issues of local concern to national and international level. "General support funding from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund has strongly contributed toward the strengthening of community foundations as the mechanism demanding transparency, bringing citizens closer to the decision makers, serving as the hub for new ideas, new approaches, and methodologies feeding into national policies," says Dajana Berisha, executive director of FIQ.

SUPPORT PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING AND TRUST IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Participatory grantmaking offers a way to shift power over funding decisions to people within a particular target community. While it has no formal definition, for the purposes of this paper and to inspire more universal understanding we define it here as grantmaking that cedes decision-making power about funding decisions to the very communities that a foundation aims to serve.

UHAI EASHRI—the East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative is Africa's first and largest indigenous activist fund supporting the human rights of sex workers and sexual and gender minorities, with strong staff and board roots in the community. "As sex workers and queer folk ourselves

from East Africa, we at UHAI belong to the movement," says Wanja Muguongo, UHAI's executive director. "Our part is to resource the activists on the ground in the seven East African countries in which we fund."

Established as a participatory grantmaker, UHAI was founded in response to a perceived disconnect between activist work on the ground and how it was getting funded. Previously, funding decisions tended to get made by donor organizations located outside the region and these often created negative collateral effects. "Funding for queer communities consisted basically of emergency support, and this wasn't really helping to solve deeper problems for people who are largely considered criminals in their countries," says Wanja. "Worse, it often fueled competition among activists that contributed to fragmentation of effort. That's when the revolutionaries on the ground thought, wouldn't activists be better at making the decisions?" Thus, in 2007, the idea of UHAI was born.

UHAI's participatory grantmaking approach today involves a peer review committee made up exclusively of thirteen East African sex worker and queer activists. Once a year, UHAI puts out a general call for proposals. While it is the job of the staff to weed out everything that is ineligible, it is groups of committee members who review the proposals and decide on who gets funded. As secretariat, UHAI staff provides additional advice and background information and, given the diversity of languages within the community, also ensures that proposal materials are translated and interpreters are available to support peer reviewers when they come together. Committee funding decisions are, however, final. "Our staff never amends what the committee approves," says Wanja. "And our board just ratifies their decisions."

As interest in participatory grantmaking continues to grow, there is now a real opportunity for it to become established as mainstream practice. However, there is also a risk that what distinguishes it and makes it so powerful gets diluted by all but the most flexible of donors. "There's a danger with participatory becoming a buzzword," says Wanja. "Not all funding institutions are set up to be nimble in the same way we are. But the groups we fund tend to be small and nascent, operating in an environment that shifts a lot, with enemies and issues morphing daily, so what makes UHAI and our participatory grantmaking effective is our flexibility."

Participatory grantmaking can be very labor-intensive, and it requires donors who are willing and able to embrace complexity and risk and to give up their own power as decision makers, and who appreciate the value of the process as an end in itself. This is particularly true when participatory grantmaking decision makers themselves represent marginalized or excluded communities and may have previously felt powerless, distrustful, or unheard in their interactions with donors. It can take time to move to a point where insider perspectives and knowledge of a particular community become valued as a source of wisdom that informs decision-making processes. “This reality is compounded by perceptions that foundation staff ourselves may hold,” notes Chris Cardona at the Ford Foundation. “We are often hired for our content expertise, and arrangements that shift power away from us and position others as the true experts can, consciously or not, feel threatening. It’s important to examine this implicit bias and think in terms of how the best decisions can be made, blending—and centering—local expertise alongside outside perspectives.”²⁶

INVEST IN SYSTEMS THAT ENABLE NEW KINDS OF COMMUNITY GIVING AND MOBILIZATION

In many emerging markets and developing countries, the infrastructure for giving—especially for crowdfunding types of giving—is still relatively undeveloped. However, the combination of innovation in the money transfer space (such as the mobile phone-based M-Pesa system in Kenya) and the emergence of online communities made possible by social media means that there are now more opportunities than ever to mobilize people and resources at scale. Donor investment in the creation of effective systems architecture for giving is one way to ensure lasting returns, by increasing both the flow of funds to civil society and new, flatter, and immediate forms of accountability between civil society and the broader public.

“COMMUNITIES CAN BE MESSY AND COMPLEX AND FAR FROM ANY ROMANTIC IDEAL; INDEED, THEY ARE NEITHER STATIC NOR HARMONIOUS NOR HOMOGENOUS, BUT RATHER SPACES WHERE DIFFERENT VIEWS PLAY OUT.”

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING?

Participatory grantmaking is a way of addressing power imbalances that often arise in conventional funding practices. Instead of external donors or expert panels making decisions about who gets funded, that responsibility is shifted to members of the target constituency itself, who themselves are experts on their own communities, bringing deep knowledge, personal experience, and valuable insights to the process. Not only does participatory grantmaking disrupt the notion of the “passive beneficiary,” but it encourages a culture of peer-to-peer accountability for funding decisions made.^{27,28}

GrantCraft has a comprehensive guide on this topic due out Summer 2018; sign up for updates through the [website](#) to receive updates.

When the Aga Khan Foundation, in partnership with USAID, developed the Yetu Initiative in Kenya, it set out to build community voice and agency through capacity-building support to local community organizations. Yetu (“Ours” in Kiswahili) helps civil society organizations to be able to conduct community campaigns and share their stories with broader audiences in Kenya. Among the tools and approaches is an online platform ([yetu.org](#)) through which Kenyans can support local civil society organizations through crowdfunding. “We’re working closely with Kenyan organizations to learn why Kenyans give, as well as what types of giving programs and appeals they respond to or not,” says Megan McGlynn Scanlon at the Aga Khan Foundation. “The focus technically is on building capacity and assets locally, but our success relies on our capacity to form trusted relationships, to go on this journey of discovery together with these organizations, to get to the heart of what matters to Kenyans.” By the end of 2017, local civil society organizations participating in Yetu had collectively raised almost US \$600,000 in financial and in-kind assets from individuals, Kenyan businesses, and local government. For most of them, this was their first experience of local fundraising.

WHAT ARE GIVING CIRCLES?

Giving circles are another way to encourage giving as a form of participation and collective action. They provide the space for people to come together, pool money, and contribute to a common cause. Although they have “emerged” relatively recently as a particular expression of organized community philanthropy, the essence of giving circles harks back to the cultural and social traditions of altruism, reciprocity, and solidarity that have always existed, in one form or another—in communities around the world.

In the United States, giving circles have had a particular resonance within African-American communities as a way both to acknowledge historic systems of mutual aid and support within that community (often expressed as “neighbors helping neighbors”) and to reframe philanthropy as a more accessible, democratic proposition that can drive social change.²⁹ More recently, and with support from the Funding Network in the U.K. and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, they have also been adopted by CPOs in Central and Eastern Europe and in South Africa as part of the new fabric for organized giving and citizen engagement. “Philanthropy often gets associated with rich people giving money, but we know it’s beyond that,” says Nick Deychakiwsky at the Mott Foundation. “Giving circles...bring people together to consider collectively what to contribute, how much, why it’s important, and that is very powerful.” Echoing that sentiment, a first-timer at a giving circle held for the Romanian diaspora in Brussels (and who herself happens to run a CPO in Palestine) observed: “Giving circles are the philanthropy of the future! It’s not about bigwigs distributing huge checks, but about average citizens coming together around solutions.”³⁰

Not only do giving circles offer ways to demystify philanthropy by making it more accessible to the wider public, but as the space for civil society shrinks in many countries, they may also serve to play a strategic role in providing critical support for organizations working on “uncomfortable” issues. In the context of Hungary, for example, a founder of a CPO there notes that giving circles are potentially more and more important because, “Funds raised at events empower such issues to be addressed and such organizations to work. And while attending an event is normally about engaging with local issues and organizations, it may actually give you a lot more: the awareness that you are a member of a global community of donors who think and act locally.”^{31,32}

FACILITATE THE CO-CREATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL GAME CHANGERS AND THEN STEP ASIDE

Sometimes the right way to help local constituencies establish their own funding voice, agency, and priorities is for donors to partner in the creation of new locally led and funded organizations.

“DONOR INVESTMENT IN THE CREATION OF EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS ARCHITECTURE FOR GIVING IS ONE WAY TO ENSURE LASTING RETURNS.”

In the 1990s, a group of Kenyans came together to dream up a new kind of organization that would put communities in charge of their own development.³³

The original impetus behind the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF) was to explore new and more sustainable community development in Kenya. At the time, and despite considerable flows of international development aid into the country, over half the population still lived below the poverty line. The idea of a public foundation evolved as a way to accumulate permanent financial resources for the long-term benefit of Kenyan communities.

From the start, the foundation's founders and its donors agreed that whatever got created would need to function autonomously, independently, and over the long term; developing a local donor base of Kenyan contributions would be a priority too. This was not going to be just another development project that existed as long as its donors remained interested and involved.

That didn't mean donors weren't deeply engaged at the outset, however. Early on, the Ford Foundation provided opportunities for learning and exposure visits, including specialist advice and participation in various peer learning groups on community philanthropy and community development, both in the U.S. and within Africa. The Nairobi office of the Aga Khan Foundation, meanwhile, provided office space and served as the fiscal agent for this new institution. As "incubating partners," both the Ford Foundation representative at the time, Katharine

Pearson Criss (formerly the director of a U.S. community foundation herself), and Mirza Jahani, then CEO of the Aga Khan Foundation, sat on the initial KCDF board. However, the role of the donors was always time-limited, with both mandated to rotate off the board when KCDF received its legal status and registration from the Kenyan government. "Whenever you help start a new institution, you have to be thoughtful about how much or how little to be involved in the developmental process," says Katharine. "Sometimes stepping away too early can be irresponsible, if the circumstances aren't right for an organization to take root. But with KCDF we always were clear on our long-term purpose: to transfer over knowledge and expertise because it wasn't ours to run."

Twenty years later, KCDF has assets valued at Kshs. 800 million (US \$7.92 million), and it has encouraged the practice of building assets among its partners too, helping

COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: A QUIET WAY TO SHIFT POWER?

As donors, we work on very different issues, some of which are more controversial and harder to grapple with than others, sometimes eliciting direct hostility and opposition among authorities, broader publics, and even mainstream civil society organizations. At the same time, whether we are talking about attitudes toward Dalits in India, LGBTQI groups in Uganda, or refugees in Italy, we know that it is extremely hard for external actors alone to bring about long-term, systemic change—particularly in terms of changing community norms and behaviors. In fact, sometimes even highlighting these issues can end up making things worse for those vulnerable groups, by attracting unwelcome attention.

Throughout 2016 and 2017, GFCF invited CPO partners around the world to participate in a program that focused on burning, unpopular, or divisive issues in their communities. The sense was that many CPOs, while working on and successfully raising local money for softer issues of broader community appeal, were also tuned into and finding ways (often quietly) to address divisions and injustices at the heart of their communities. They were also using their reputational capital, earned as organizations who were seen to be providing broad community benefit, to reach out to and engage with marginalized, excluded, and divided populations, with a greater intention of bringing the larger community with them. An example: In Brazil, Instituto Comunitário Grande Florianópolis (ICom) embarked on a set of activities associated with the growing problem of homelessness in the city, which the larger community had tended to ignore or react against, working with a group of homeless "research fellows" to conduct surveys, determine the root causes of homelessness in the city, and be part of the process to come up with solutions. Although the immediate focus of the project was the homeless themselves, a secondary, more strategic purpose of the project was to overcome the widely held stigma and distrust that homelessness provokes among the broader community by engaging with—and so, humanizing—"the problem."

communities to create their own local funds as a way of taking charge of their futures.³⁴ For funders, supporting these kinds of processes can take time and require a balance of “hands-off” and “hands-on” behaviors. Perhaps most importantly, “once you give, let the money go,” says Katharine. “What gets created, nor the process by which it develops, will never be perfect in everyone’s eyes. The only thing you can control is the way in which you engage.”

ACTION STEP

Pick one of the ways of funding mentioned—like creating incentives for local giving—and explore with peers inside your institution what you could do to use it in a way that fosters community philanthropy—and how you might measure the results.

DON'T GIVE UP POWER... RATHER SHARE IT!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- If and when you fund the establishment of new community institutions, how are you engaged in the development process? What helps you determine how to strike the right balance between being hands-on and being hands-off?
- What would it take for your institution to support participatory grantmaking practices, such as giving circles or local CPOs, to take this approach? How might you manage concerns, potentially from your board, about the risk involved with devolving power to make grantmaking decisions to community people?
- Under which circumstances does your organization make general support grants? Does consideration of the community philanthropy framework of assets, capacities, and trust make you think any differently about those criteria?

Aligning Community Philanthropy Values and Practice Inside Your Funding Institution

It's sometimes good for us as donors to hold a mirror up to our internal practices and reflect on the ways we work with our grantee partners and the extent to which they devolve power, produce true partnerships, and underpin our institutional values.

Here are some ideas on how to do so:

- Talk about community philanthropy inside your organization, what it looks like, whether some of your partners might already be doing it, and why it matters.
- Examine due diligence processes for consistency with a community philanthropy approach.
- Embed a community philanthropy- or people-led approach within your overall organizational strategy.

TALK ABOUT COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY INSIDE YOUR ORGANIZATION, WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE, WHETHER SOME OF YOUR PARTNERS MIGHT ALREADY BE DOING IT, AND WHY IT MATTERS

It's hard to introduce a community philanthropy lens if you don't articulate a specific framework or approach that works in your organization. It's even harder if you don't talk about it at all. "For us, approaches that emphasized community ownership, self-sufficiency, and sustainability have been core to how we work for decades, well before we started calling them community philanthropy," says Megan McGlynn Scanlon at the Aga Khan Foundation. "To help us identify what we really mean by the term and what approaches we've been using that work, we've been doing some deep thinking." Toward that end, the foundation recently developed an internal paper on community philanthropy, what it means to them, and how that fits into its theory of change, and has organized internal webinars across different country offices to discuss the concept and connect it to various parts of the foundation's work.

Bottom line, figure out how to spread the community philanthropy word internally within your organization, at both the staff and board levels, to create broader buy-in and consistency in approach. It may well be that you haven't really given full consideration to that grantee partner who mentioned their local fundraising efforts or the ways that they conduct decision making with local communities. There may be all sorts of examples of practices and strategies aimed at shifting power and growing local resources already at play within your grantee network! Create spaces to talk about it, so that those newer to the conversation can become oriented to the concept and its value. Then, where possible, be transparent about your approach with those outside your funding organization. For example, create a page on your website that describes how you have embedded community philanthropy in your grantmaking. Or share with colleagues at other foundations resources you have developed to catalyze internal discussion, so they can use them to start conversations inside their institutions.

EXAMINE DUE DILIGENCE PROCESSES FOR CONSISTENCY WITH A COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY APPROACH

Donors may talk of local agency, and of having local organizations be accountable and transparent so as to build trust among local people to give. Yet when they consider their own due diligence, it can often be anything but that. Take time to differentiate between what your funding organization really needs to execute its grantmaking, and be willing to change when some element

of the process or documentation requested doesn't really serve a clear purpose. This doesn't mean lower standards or an unclear criteria for giving. On the contrary, having greater intentionality around your due diligence process not only demonstrates better power sharing with grant partners, but it also promotes the kind of transparency and accountability required to attract—and sustain—local giving.

“WHEN INTERNAL RESOURCES START TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS HAVING IMPORTANCE EQUAL TO OR GREATER THAN EXTERNAL ONES, POWER OVER THE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT DECISION MAKING LONG HELD BY DONORS AND OTHERS OUTSIDE OF COMMUNITIES THEN STARTS TO SHIFT CLOSER TO THE GROUND.”

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, for example, conducted a grantmaking process review in 2008 and made some major changes as a result. “We used to ask for lots of information,” says Hope Lyons. “We’ve since pared down what we ask for so everything has a purpose, and so that our due diligence processes embody our commitment to responsible due diligence and trust in our grantees while respecting the time and role of our grantees in carrying out their work.” In the review, foundation staff considered how to minimize what could be onerous aspects to its application and reporting process, especially for grantees outside of the U.S. “We give grants in a global context and we believe that it is our role as a funder to make it as straightforward as possible for our international grantees to meet requirements such as expenditure responsibility that are mandated by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service,” says Hope.

The foundation has since created a webpage where grantees can easily access the information they need to manage their grants, including the four questions for grantees to address in their narrative reports. On the webpage, the foundation encourages grantees to reach out to their program contact for guidance, setting an “open door” tone with grantees. The questions themselves represent general prompts that allow grantees to tell their own stories: about their progress toward goals and grant objectives; about whether grant funds were expended as anticipated; and then about what they have seen as the project’s impact and value, as well as lessons learned along

the way. Financial templates are provided for financial reporting (although they are not required if the grantee has another format they would prefer to use), as well as guidance on how to request a wire transfer of grant funds, giving grantees clear instructions about the information the foundation requires.

Overall, being transparent and clear, and minimizing unnecessary upward and outward reporting, can send an important message about who should be accountable to whom. When external donors think a little less about how grantees should be accountable “up” to them and consider how to support grantees to become accountable “out” to their local constituents (both donors and people served), that represents a significant power shift in itself.

EMBED A COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY OR PEOPLE-LED APPROACH IN YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Another way to align your values and practice around community philanthropy is hardwiring it into your overall approach.

The Big Lottery Fund’s new 2015–2021 strategic framework is only two pages. “It’s more of a statement of intent than a detailed set of directions, a jumping-off point for future choices,” says Dawn Austwick, chief executive of the U.K.’s Big Lottery Fund. “We can boil it down further—in a nutshell it’s: ‘People in the Lead.’ From this everything else flows: we want to start with what people bring to the table, not what they don’t have; and from the belief that people and communities are best placed to solve their problems, take advantage of opportunities, and rise to challenges. Our job is to support them in doing so.”³⁵

Following the massive earthquake in Nepal in 2015, the Big Lottery Fund decided to put its “people in the lead” principles into practice, committing £2 million (US \$2.77 million) to help affected communities in

ACTION STEP

Pick one idea for how your institution could better align with community philanthropy-related values to practice, and raise it at a staff meeting.

Nepal and, additionally, made the deliberate decision to design a process that means smaller, less well-known community-based organizations could more easily apply for the funding. Because it makes grants to U.K. NGOs, the Big Lottery Fund's staff sought out organizations that demonstrated deep and long-term relationships with local partners in Nepal. In terms of the grants process, that meant cutting back on many of the processes used in previous, perhaps more bureaucratic programs. Instead fund staff worked more closely with the organizations shortlisted to develop proposals, discarding or greatly reducing the rules, matrices, criteria, and deadlines that had at times hampered funding. And, instead of

setting specific outcomes and objectives, some loose guidance around principles and the "People in the Lead" vision sufficed to ensure that the projects aligned with aspirations.³⁶ "It felt more like a conversation, where the views of the local organizations were really taken into account," says Jiban Karki, executive director of Phase Nepal of the Big Lottery Fund's application process. That respect for the local, and the need to be flexible to changing needs, extended into the grants themselves. "We had a particularly bad monsoon season this year and had to limit all staff movement," says Jiban. "This will impact on the project, but the flexibility means we have time to recover to ensure impact."³⁷



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How aligned are your community philanthropy-related values to practice in your funding institution? Where is the alignment strongest? Weakest? Why is that?
- What would it take—and what would help—to start a conversation on community philanthropy internally? How could you best raise the topic so that your colleagues see its value—to your institution and as a smart practice overall?
- Are there specific ways you might embed community philanthropy values to practice within your organizational strategy? How and where?

Building the Community Philanthropy Field

Reading this paper, you may think we're saying grantmakers need to give up power. Please don't. Rather, share it and shift it.

Move away from “power over” practices and behaviors with grantees and toward “power with” approaches that transform how donors from outside communities engage them from within. Own your donor power: you bring money to the table and that, for better or for worse, means people will pay attention to what you do and say. Use your donor voice to encourage new and different methods of working in which grant funds are used in ways that unlock local resources. Be part of this new narrative. Use your influence to make community philanthropy the new normal and help build this emerging field.

Here are some ways:

- Tag your social media posts with the #ShiftThePower hashtag.
- Create spaces to talk openly about community philanthropy and power with your peers.
- Invest in strengthening the evidence base.
- Work in partnerships to shift the power.

FOLLOW #SHIFTPROW AND SEE WHERE ELSE THEY TAKE YOU

#ShiftThePower was the rallying cry of the 2016 Global Summit on Community Philanthropy, trending in Canada, Kenya, and South Africa and reaching an estimated 37.5 million users. Since then, GFCF has continued to use the hashtag as a way to maintain and expand both the conversation and the constituency behind it. #ShiftThePower has also been picked up in other parts of the community philanthropy, philanthropy, and development space by those looking both to reform and transform current systems and practices, an indication of the appetite for doing development differently at diverse and multiple levels.

CREATE SPACES TO TALK COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY AND POWER WITH YOUR PEERS

If your institution belongs to a grantmaking association, or you have an opportunity to organize a conference session, think about how you can introduce community philanthropy—as a concept and as practice—to other funders. Sometimes, those funder-only spaces can provide exactly the right kind of environment in which to pose challenging questions (you know, the ones about power, responsibility, and risk) and to share and celebrate experiences of experiments – and of success! And get creative about how you do this! For example, one group of donors at the 2016 Global Summit on Community Philanthropy put together an interactive session called “Effective Interventions,” in which they dramatized good and bad practices for sharing power with local grant partners and then spent time reflecting on what was really going on. Similarly, be ready with your assets-capacities-trust framework, or your examples of expanded metrics that measure numbers as well as less tangible, more nuanced outcomes, when the first hand goes up and someone says “Yes, we’re doing it” (when you are pretty sure they aren’t) or asks “But how do you know whether to trust an organization?” or “How do you monitor and evaluate community philanthropy?”

INVEST IN STRENGTHENING THE EVIDENCE BASE

The academic literature on community philanthropy—and in particular, on community philanthropy as a disruptor and power-shifting device—is still thin on the ground, which is perhaps unsurprising given its relative newness as an organized global field. If it is to be taken seriously, that needs to change. That is slowly

WHAT KIND OF SESSION CAN YOU LEAD?

Some funders got together at the 2016 Global Summit on Community Philanthropy and designed a session where they acted out community philanthropy scenarios and then asked session participants to discuss them.

Here's an excerpt:

ACTOR A: *Playing the role of Ms. Eva Lutionary, Board Chair of the Lutionary Family Foundation, based in the land of Zog.*

ACTOR B: *Playing Mr. Tim Iddity, Programme Officer at the Lutionary Family Foundation.*

A: *So what I'm thinking, Tim, is that we need to set up a new fund, which can support the development of community philanthropy across Zog. We just need to figure out how we go about this.*

B: *As a starting point, I think it would be wise to map the existing ecosystem, figure out what's going on through local consultation, and then make a few small grants to existing community organizations.*

A: *That's an option. But to speed things up, what if we just asked Mr Bags—what's his first name, oh yes, Money—to join our board and direct the fund? He seems to have good knowledge of what's going on in Zog these days.*

B: *What about our existing network of volunteers, that work across Zog? What if we used them to encourage local engagement around this new fund?*

A: *Ugh, sounds like a lot of work. Tim, you've exhausted me again. Shall we take a break and mull over a martini?*

A foundation wants to set up a new fund to support the development of community philanthropy in their region. What is the best way to go about this? [Participants were offered multiple-choice options to consider.]

Feel free to steal this scene and evolve it into a session that you lead as a way to get people thinking and talking about community philanthropy at conferences around the world.

starting to happen—case studies and research reports by practitioners and supporters abound, are often based on scrupulously collected data sets and extensive on-the-ground experience. As a funder, not only ask the questions but also invest in ways to research and answer them. By doing so, you will help to strengthen the intellectual underpinnings of the field as well as the practice.

WORK IN PARTNERSHIPS TO #SHIFTPower

Power is, of course, not just a question of who has the money. Indeed, power can manifest itself in many different ways and need not always be divisive, particularly when nonfinancial assets and resources are acknowledged and valued. GACP itself is a partnership of diverse actors, with different tools and resources at their disposal, brought together by a shared interest not only in advancing community philanthropy within their own institutions, but also in influencing other philanthropy and development actors to do the same.

As GACP members themselves have noted, partnerships can help build the field of actors, but also hold intrinsic value for those engaged. It is a powerful “ego-checking exercise,” says Hope Lyons, for example, in a recent GACP reflections piece on partnerships.³⁸ “A partnering mindset brings a genuine curiosity together with the ability and willingness to explore diverse perspectives and experiences. It establishes equity and respect...and seeds courage to make a difference on issues that are important to those that are involved.”

Bottom line, find partners that have the ambition to think and work differently, see community philanthropy as a potential game changer, and are prepared to hold each other true to this objective.

ACTION STEP

Make a top five list of donor colleagues at different funding institutions to start a conversation on community philanthropy (you can forward this paper to help orient them). Then schedule some meetings.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How can you use your position and influence as a donor to engage and bring in others to the conversation? For example, how might you lead a session or support the writing of a peer-reviewed article on community philanthropy to spread the word?
- What tools and resources do you and your institution have at its disposal to build the field of community philanthropy? For example, how could you connect your or your institution's communications practice to community philanthropy-related social media conversations?
- How else can you and your institution help build the field?

10 TIPS FOR BILATERAL DONORS TO INCORPORATE COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY PRINCIPLES

Bilateral and multilateral organizations operate within a unique set of constraints and opportunities when it comes to cultivating grassroots development and power sharing. We asked the bilateral GACP members what advice they have for peer institutions trying to navigate their circumstances while strengthening their community philanthropy approaches. Here's what they shared:

WITHIN GRANT CONSTRUCTION

- 1 Create space for community control in how grant partners are given funds.
- 2 Ask grant partners early on to plan for how they will use, and exit from, the funding relationship (to orient the investment toward what is built through the relationship, not just what is bought by the big donor).
- 3 Develop a shared understanding with grant partners of the ecosystem (its collective assets, diffuse capacity, state of trust between actors) and how your efforts working with them are expected to change that.
- 4 When you can (and maybe more than once), clarify the boundaries of the funding relationship (especially anticipated endings), so grant partners don't feel strung along.
- 5 Issue a statement of donor values—in calls for proposals and grant awards—that reflects community philanthropy principles and their alignment with your institution's mission.

WITHIN PROJECT DESIGN AND LANGUAGE USED

- 6 Spend time linking grantees with local businesses and other civil society organizations—particularly those addressing issues in the same community (not necessarily on the same topics).
- 7 Invite perspectives and diversity not biased by funding—set up advisory boards of community stakeholders who are not affected by the funding flows to provide input.
- 8 Reserve some support to be responsive to grantee discoveries of what the community needs.
- 9 Consistently situate the expected impact of the effort as beyond the scope of the grant and grounded in what is beneficial to the community.
- 10 Help grantees ground program objectives in achievable community impacts with funds given.

Conclusion

As mentioned right at the start, this paper has been written for funders. Its intended audience is those individuals whose day job involves scanning complex environments (often from afar), considering multiple and diverse factors and environments, and sifting through mountains of grant information—and who must then make judgments (blending the immediate with the more considered) as to what gets funded, why, how, for how long, and on what terms.

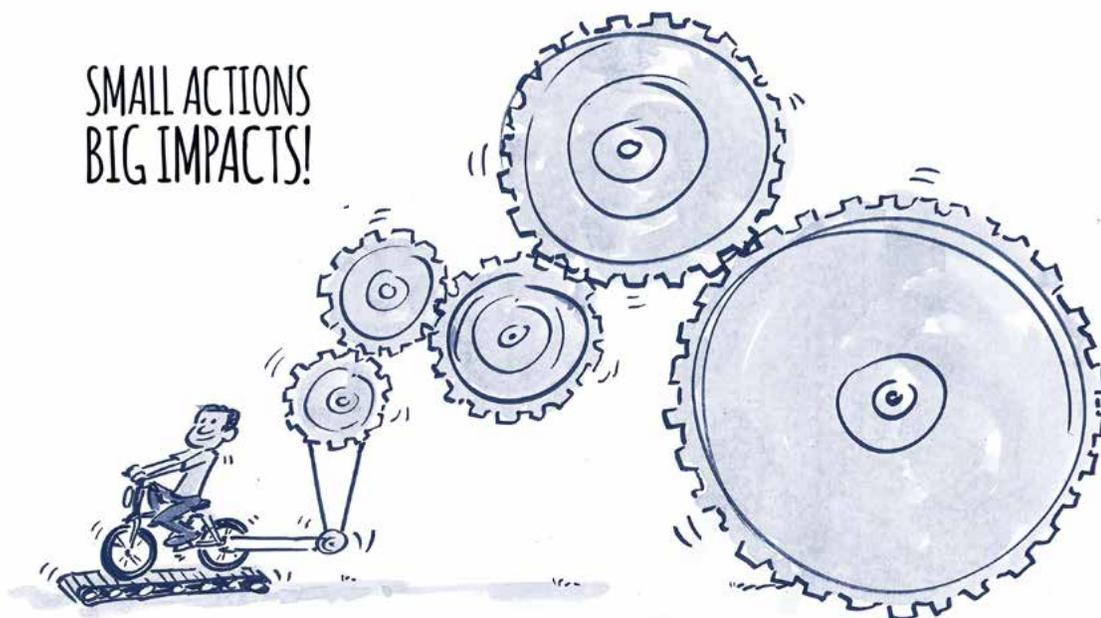
Oh, and then who also need to be ready to account for and explain choices, decisions, and recommendations to their colleagues, peers, boards, and even the wider public. So, it has focused very much on the “how” of funding (tools, tactics, ways of working) while encouraging readers to consider whether there are elements of their current practice that might benefit from a more expansive perspective, which extends beyond what can sometimes be very focused—even narrow?—institutional lenses or imperatives. In that sense, the lens of community philanthropy offers funders a way to do that as an extension—or additional layer—of their existing practice: whether it is by seeking out potential assets and resources that can bring value and authenticity to programs, or by considering larger systems in which individual grants are being made, or by looking ahead toward lasting, durable social change, and toward systems and structures that can ensure that change happens and is sustained.

“A STRONG TREE SHALL ALWAYS GROW FROM THE ROOTS AND NOT THE SEEDS”

African proverb

Finally, the good news for funders is that community philanthropy offers a way to worry less about things like transparency, accountability, sustainability, ownership, and oversight. Not only does it imply new kinds of internal checks and balances that emerge when local people start to give, or when funding decisions are made closer to the ground, but it also assumes a gradual and steady gravitational shift away from dependency on external actors and their resources, toward communities and theirs.

A blending of systems...A loosening of the reins...A shift in power.



Our Top 20 Community Philanthropy Reading List

1. [A Different Kind of Funder? Why and How Funders Support Community Philanthropy](#)
2. [A Different Kind of Wealth: Mapping A Baseline of African Community Foundations](#)
3. [Building Community Philanthropy in Vietnam: Understanding the Experiences and Expectations of Donors to the LIN Centre for Community Development](#)
4. [Charity is Good But Justice is Better—Keynote Address from Ambassador James Joseph to the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy](#)
5. [Community Foundations—The Mott Foundation Experience](#)
6. [Community Philanthropy: A Brave New Model for Development Funding?](#)
7. [Community Philanthropy: A Way Forward for Human Rights?](#)
8. [Community Philanthropy, The Context, Concepts and Challenges—A Literature Review](#)
9. [Durable Development—Time to Do Things Differently](#)
10. [How One Woman Is Challenging the Status Quo in International Aid](#)
11. [It’s Time for Human Rights Organisations to Harness the Power of Local Giving—and for Funders to Support Them to Do So](#)
12. [More than the Poor Cousin—The Emergence of Community Foundations as a New Development Paradigm](#)
13. [**Oxfam Scandal Must Force Aid Sector to Finally Address Its Own Power**](#)
14. [#ShiftThePower: The Rise of Community Philanthropy](#)
15. [The Case for Community Philanthropy](#)
16. [The Little Development Engine That Could](#)
17. [The New Generation of Community Foundations](#)
18. [The Value of Community Philanthropy](#)
19. [When Scarcity Drives Innovation, People Become a Community Foundation’s Biggest Asset: A View From Brazil](#)
20. [When Size Matters: The Phenomenon of Community Foundations in Small Towns and Rural Areas of Russia](#)

Endnotes

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3. Hodgson, J., and Knight, B. (29 November 2016). #ShiftThePower: The Rise of Community Philanthropy. *Alliance Magazine*. Available at: alliancemagazine.org/feature/shiftthepower-rise-community-philanthropy
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5. The Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP) is indicative of the range of donors out there: the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Ford Foundation are private foundations; USAID and the Inter-American Foundation are bilateral funding agencies of the U.S. government; the Aga Khan Foundation is an operating foundation; and the Global Fund for Community Foundations is a public foundation. For more information about GACP go to: globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/about-the-gacp
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18. Doing an Open Space: A Two Page Primer. Available at: openspaceworld.org/files/tmnfiles/2pageos.htm
19. More information on emergent learning is available at: signetconsulting.com/concepts/emergent_learning.php
20. More information about IAF's practice is available at: iaf.gov/about-the-iaf/at-a-glance-3798
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