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Overcoming Development Aid Fatigue, Deciding Together and Shifting Power to Communities in Africa



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- To generate debates and discussions on these issues;
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- To provide recommendations to policy makers.



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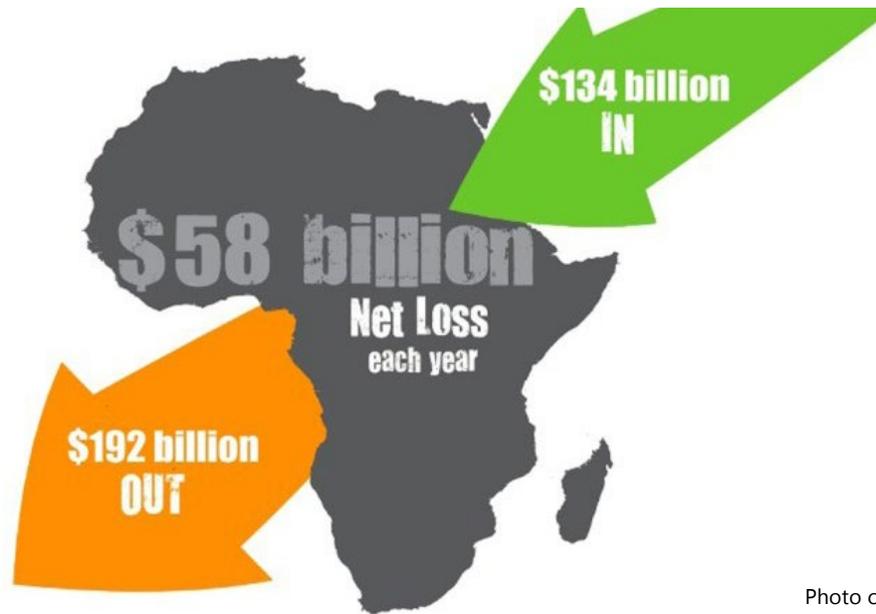


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INTRODUCTION

The growing economic gap between countries in the global south and global north has dominated international relations and diplomacy for a long time. This gap has led to constant capital inflows and investment from the global north to the global south, including Africa, intended to reduce the gap. However, there is evidence that over the last 50 years, development aid has done little in changing the destinies of many African states, only very few Least Developed Countries (LDC) have graduated out of the status. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been given to African governments in the form of grants. In addition, even more billions were lent to these same governments. Yet the state of development in Africa is not significantly better today. Per capita incomes, for most African countries, is either stagnant or declining. This suggests to some extent that there is more to the African challenge than just responding with money as this is not likely to turn things around. Therefore, the global community is challenged to try something different to produce different results.

In general, opponents of the way that development aid programmes have operated argue that aid to Africa has made the poor poorer and growth slower. This insidious aid culture has left African countries debt-laden, inflation-prone, more vulnerable to the vagaries of the currency markets and unattractive to higher-quality investment. Therefore, any attempt to improve the effectiveness of aid thus lies in a complete rethinking of not just the policy agendas associated with aid but in the nature of the relationship between donors and recipients .

The ineffectiveness of development aid (Omotola, and Saliu, 2009) has also led to a sense of development fatigue where funders, beneficiary, and intermediary organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs) especially, are largely dissatisfied with the outcomes and impact of development interventions. In response to this, there continues to be attempts to improve the impact and effectiveness of development aid, with a specific focus on design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

A recurring challenge that continues to be amplified over time is the asymmetry of power between donor, beneficiaries' communities and implementing civil society organisations. These issues have been a key driver of the failure or low effectiveness of development interventions, which have spurred debates, and ideas about innovative ways to shift power to communities. There are common principles which transcend all the approaches towards a power shift: flexibility, inclusivity, diversity, respect, and participation.

Participatory approaches in various development sectors – health, education, philanthropy, governance among others – have increasingly been explored and tested by various civil society organisations in the global south and there are instances of failures and successes (O’Cathain et al., 2019). From the existing participatory methods , community development supported by the deliberate measures to cultivate local philanthropy appears to be the more holistic one, grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination, and collective action (Kenny, 2007).

As a method and process, community development seeks to actively engage communities in making sense of the issues which affect their lives, setting goals for improvement and responding to their problems and needs through empowerment and active participation. With this approach, community members are experts in their lives and communities, and their needs, skills, issues, local wisdom, and assets are prioritised.

This Issue Paper explores community development as an effective participatory approach to overcome development fatigue. The first section focuses on the dynamics of donor fatigue while the second section explores the fatigue experienced by implementing CSOs from the global south and the effect on the communities they serve. Since power imbalances (Hiemstra et al., 2012) is the common trait to all stakeholders' fatigues (donors, CSOs and beneficiaries), this paper will then explore how to streamline and shift power between stakeholders, and move from a top bottom to a bottom up approach where beneficiaries' communities own and decide their development agenda. This paper further presents selected case studies of organisations in the global south that have successful experiences in using participatory approaches for grant making (FRIDA), civic engagement (MIYO), community philanthropy (GFCF) and community led development (NADeF). The lessons learned by each of the selected organisations would enable us to proof recommendations on how to address unhealthy power dynamics and overcome development fatigue by shifting power and using innovative participatory approaches.

This Issue Paper is therefore of importance for development actors including CSOs, academia, private and public sector actors interested to learn how to overcome donor fatigue, recipient and beneficiary fatigue through participatory approaches. The paper argues that, top-down planning and implementation of development projects must give way to bottom-up or active community participation to achieve development through negotiation and fostering effective, equitable and active participation of stakeholders from the global south.

The paper will help to inform researchers, community development practitioners and policymakers to better understand the enterprise of intentional social change at the local level. In addition, the paper holds promise for those scholars engaged in applied research with change initiatives who want to pursue a more critical assessment of community development work.



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1. DONOR FATIGUE

The term "donor fatigue" was espoused by donors and development aid agencies in the late 70s to convey their frustration at the slow pace of change in their recipient countries and communities, despite their huge investments. They were frustrated with the slow progress and impact of their technical and financial investments. Many donors described this phenomenon as the "leaking basket" which dissipates invested resources. This generated "donor apathy" from organisations launching fundraising efforts for ill-conceived projects, with poorly developed cases for support and soliciting gifts from people with whom they have weak or no previous relationships. To spare the feelings of the solicitor, some donors would politely say that they are supporting other campaigns or have other commitments and cannot give. But as David King indicated, "donors are not "fatigued" of giving and they have not likely given away all of their money. What they are saying is that they are not inspired to give to that project – thus apathetic (David, 2013)."



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2. RECIPIENT FATIGUE

According to this paper, 'recipient fatigue is a phenomenon where global south recipients (both communities and organisations) of development aid feel short-changed by the relationship, the lack of community centered prioritisation and impact of the proposed interventions. As intermediaries between donors and beneficiary communities, CSOs have expressed concerns about the tiresome, cumbersome, and burdensome procedures for reporting and auditing to donors.

In a 2010 survey on how Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members work with civil society, CSOs respondents felt that donor requirements for proposals are too complex and onerous (OECD, 2011). Some donors have rigid requirements, such as short-term results-management frameworks, and detailed proposal formats. In these cases, CSOs need extra resources and capacity to prepare successful funding applications. In addition, smaller and start-up organisations find it difficult to access funding through these complicated procedures.

Moreover, there are some African cultural perspectives that are not yet or fully considered by donors in their practices (Andrews, 2009). This cultural perspective of aid is vividly expressed in this Yoruba saying which says,

"when you give a ram with a rope around its neck to someone, you should let go of the rope too".

In Nigeria for example, in some cases, when someone decides out of his/her own volition to give to the poor, he/she does not dictate to the poor person to report on what to do with the money. He/she hopes that the donation will make an impact on the life of the person and does not expect to be rewarded. Also, if the person decides to monitor how the money is spent, he/she does not relocate to the house of the beneficiary and occupy the house. Therefore, excessive administrative demands, restrictions, and reporting requirements have contributed to a certain fatigue among CSOs.

Another example is from Tanzania, where each year, local CSOs prepare averagely 2,400 progress reports per quarter for all its donor partners. A CSO based in Ghana also shared its experience of reporting to a German donor, that insisted that if you rent a car during project implementation, the implementing organisation must indicate the number of kilometres covered, the number and background of people in the car, why they were selected to be in the car, the cost of fuel and the gallons of fuel purchased.

Despite this emerging fatigue from aid beneficiaries, seemingly, donors still cannot do without these complicated procedures and requirements as they are often important to guarantee the legitimacy, credibility, transparency and accountability of the recipient organisation. Many however have started reviewing their approach to make it more flexible and adapt to the realities of their beneficiaries from the global south.

Some started streamlining requirements and arranging multi-year core funding for CSO partners with good track records to help reduce high transaction costs. Others have been integrating cultural factors to better understand how culture influences economic behaviour, political participation, value formation and evolution (Sen, 2004). Finally, more attention was paid to their participatory planning and implementation methods to increase the impact and sustainability of their interventions.

Some donors have found inspiration and guidance from authors like David Wilcox (1994), who in his book *Guide to Effective Participation*, sets out the following as a model of the different possible levels of participation:

- **Information:** Tell people what is planned.
- **Consultation:** Offer several options and listen respectfully to the feedback you get.
- **Decide together:** Encourage others to provide some additional ideas and options and join in deciding the best way forward.
- **Act together:** Build synergies, align interests and decide together on what is best, then, form a partnership to carry implementation.
- **Support independent community initiatives:** You help others do what they want - perhaps within a framework of grants, advice and support.

Each of these levels may be appropriate in different circumstances or with different groups, although only at “deciding together” do they really begin to be fully participatory. David Wilcox further explains that recipient fatigue is often observed when the implementing CSO has a limited participation at the level of information and consultation. Such approaches tend to minimise the differences among community stakeholders in access to and control of resources for effective decision-making, as well as the place-based and social variables that affect decision-making. Information and consultation could therefore be considered as a top down approach, in which, the policies and plans, areas of activities and design of projects, are made on the donors’ terms. Examples include the realisation of the construction of market buildings, libraries, boreholes among others without due consultation of the target beneficiaries. Such facilities may eventually end up not being utilised by communities because of the lack of an agreed strategy to sustain it or based on the inconvenience posed by the use of such facilities possibly due to its position.

Therefore, most beneficiary communities have become disillusioned with little or no impact of the project on the quality of their lives, despite huge resource investments by donors or implementing CSOs over the years. Beneficiaries are also sceptical about CSOs’ inconsistency to honour their engagement. Usually, CSOs present their ideas, implement, then leave forever without regularly returning to document progress and milestones. Communities with such negative experiences often become distant to new CSO partners, feeling that they only want the glory of making a difference.

So, how do we redesign the power dynamics? How could a greater level of inclusion and participation advance equity and the CSO mission? Do the roles for donors, staff, and peers reflect a participatory approach?

3. DECIDING TOGETHER AND SHIFTING POWER

The thrust of deciding together and shifting power is about amplifying the position and participation of communities in deciding their own development agenda. Jennifer Lentfer, communications director at IDEX, explained that aid agencies and social sector actors continue to struggle to make such concepts as “community participation” and “local empowerment” a reality in their interventions. Communities whose lives are most affected by social problems are the best judges of the strategy employed to impact their lives. But the insufficient involvement of local communities (and CSOs in the global south) from the start of a project is a common phenomenon. This goes against the essential need for the recipient community to assume ownership of the project in terms of operation and management.

Therefore, donors are more often expected to find context relevant ways to better implement their projects. While there is a tendency to focus on more pragmatic and results-oriented approaches, there is a need for donors to think more from the viewpoint of recipients’ interests to have a greater impact. However, as the work of aid experts and civil society actors become more routine, their perspective can easily be taken for granted, leading to a misrepresentation of views. Aid specialists who often think they have a good understanding of how communities think and behave could subconsciously consider such elements to be a ‘given’, and hence have low expectations of what can be achieved.



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As demonstrated in the previous sections, this practice of insufficient beneficiary inclusion and participation, contributes to recipient fatigue and the consequences are visible at the level of ownership, sustainability, and the lack of recognition of community assets. There is evidence that in some instances, when project related contract terms expire, followed by handovers and completion of programmes, donors' obligations officially end in communities, and the donors no longer have the contractual basis to be responsible for the long-term impact of the project (Pensulo, 2015).

A typical example is that of a well-known INGO which after working in the Mulanje district in Malawi, East Africa for 15 years, stopped facilitating a project that provided vulnerable children with school materials and basic healthcare, and the local community with low-cost maize. The people entrusted with maintaining the project failed to pay the rent and the landlord evicted them. Unfortunately, only an empty building indicated that the project ever existed after the INGO relocated to another area of the country. From this experience, Fred Movete, the Mulanje District Commissioner at that time (2016), recommended that CSOs must prioritise what the community wants if sustainability is to be achieved. He pointed out that:

"CSOs must follow the district's development agenda so that we can carry on once they leave. But it is also a problem that the CSOs do not implement what the community needs. In the past, a lot of money [from CSOs] has been channelled to HIV/AIDS. Even if we tell them our priority is water and sanitation because a lot of children are dying from waterborne diseases, they never buy into our agenda".

This scenario brings to the fore challenges with investing in a methodology that enables development stakeholders from the global north and global south to decide together and shift power, which comes with certain considerations, complex resourcing and interests to navigate. These considerations could be reached based on the following factors:

- Community led development could be expensive . Funders should engage communities in assessment, design, incorporating metrics and methods that truly allow for those who are to benefit from the project to reflect on their own needs, experiences, and successes. Assessments should capture the more nuanced, relational aspects of this work that occur throughout the course of deliberative decision-making.
- The process is longer. A diverse group always takes longer to make decisions and come to conclusions than an individual or small group. It may be difficult to ensure that all the appropriate stakeholders get to the table. Some key people may simply not want to participate. Factions in the community, ignorance of which groups or individuals are important, or just basic mistrust may complicate the task of creating a participatory planning process . Overcoming this barrier, however, can have profound positive consequences in the community over the long-term. One way to do that is by establishing a series of Vision, Commitment, and Action (VCA). This has been the case with the Hunger Project which institutes series of workshops in the communities they work with. The initial VCA workshop is usually attended by all community members and each participant is asked to formulate a specific plan or project that can be accomplished over three months utilising the participant's own skills and network. In this first workshop, The Hunger Project also recruits and further trains the most committed and motivated

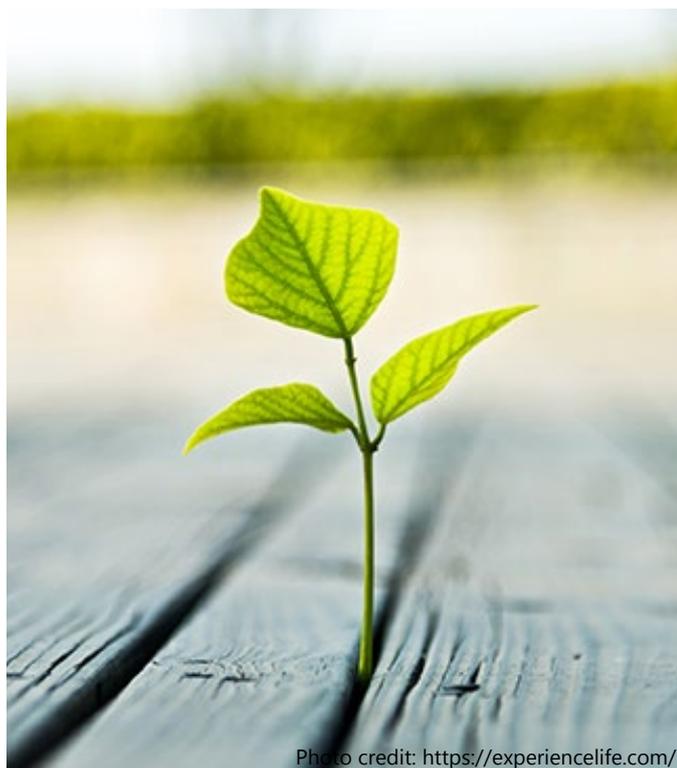


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community members to become animators who later help to empower community members and identify and prioritise activities within the community-held vision established during the initial VCA workshop.

- Disagree to agree. Members of the community may not agree with the “experts” about what is needed and vice versa. A participatory planning process takes patience and commitment. People must maintain their commitment over time, remain polite while discussing issues about which they may have strong feelings, and be willing to compromise. Most importantly, both parties must endeavour to actively listen to one another’s aspirations, fears, preferred approaches as a way of giving all stakeholders an equal voice in the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation stages of the project. Listening actively enables stakeholders to appreciate one another and even though disagreements may arise, parties are more likely to reach win-win agreements that satisfactorily align with the aspirations of all.
- Education may be needed for community members and the implementing organisation. Members of the community may not have important technical knowledge or experience and may need to understand some theory or past practice to understand and appreciate what the CSOs are trying to do. Some may need new skills to participate fully in the planning process. CSOs, on the other hand, may need to learn more about local culture, political issues, and the

community’s history to better tailor their interventions to the real community needs and priorities and avoid repeating past errors. Such education takes time to be effective and generate results.

The extent to which these guideposts are considered would determine the degree of success of a community led approach and increase the possibility of designing and implementing an effective intervention with strong and sustainable impact. The most effective approach is for both parties to understand and acknowledge that the beneficiary community has assets and priorities and to ensure communities are more integrated in the design, development, and implementation of the initiatives. The best decisions and ideas would emerge when both experts and community members are involved in exploring them.

Communities often long for effective and accessible ways to participate in shaping their future. It is noteworthy to state that action is being taken in this regard. Increasingly, CSOs and INGOs are seeking the views of community members in the design and implementation of development projects (Vandyck & Doane, 2020) .

4. SELECTED CASE STUDIES

This paper further presents selected case studies of organisations mostly from the global south that have successful experiences in using participatory approaches for grant making (FRIDA), civic engagement (MIYO), community philanthropy (GFCF) and community led development (NADeF). The lessons learned by each of the selected organisations would enable us to proof recommendations on how to overcome development fatigue by shifting power.

i. Participatory Grant making with Flexibility Resources Inclusivity Diversity Action (FRIDA) | The Young Feminist Fund

According to Jenny Hodgson and Anna Pond, participatory grant making 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, who themselves are experts on their own communities, bringing deep knowledge, personal experiences, and valuable insights to the process. Not only does participatory grant making disrupt the notion of the “passive beneficiary,” but it encourages a culture of peer-to-peer accountability for funding decisions made (Hodgson & Pond, 2018).



COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY



Photo credit: <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/>

In FRIDA's experience, participatory processes enabled clear connections between communities and movements, offering concrete opportunities for mutual learning for grant makers and grant seekers. In their participatory process, beneficiary groups are able to peer review each other's applications and this contributed to an increased accountability between the groups - those who voted and those who received the grant (Gibson & Bokoff, 2018). After each grant's cycle, FRIDA shares with all the groups that were part of the voting process a short report on how the groups they voted are doing and their work. Groups do not only communicate with the funder but with the broader movement that supported their application, which helps to build horizontal accountability.

At the core of this participatory grant making approach, is a commitment to transform power in relationships between those with resources and those without (Saidel, 1991, p544). It enables grant seekers to be actively involved in decisions about their realities rather than passive aid recipients. The changes and innovations in funding and philanthropy are then driven by communities that are demanding to be heard. FRIDA's Participatory grant making approach was driven by the need for representation, transparency, accountability to movements and risk-taking in a changing world; it views legitimate decision makers as those who are personally affected by the outcome of their interventions. Through FRIDA's grant making experience, we understand the importance of having appropriate mechanisms for participation and for flexibility to allow for changes to take place.

ii. Community Philanthropy with the Global Fund for Community Foundations

The Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) is a grassroots grant maker that promotes and supports institutions of community philanthropy around the world, with a focus on the global south. Through small grants, technical support and networking, GFCF helps these local institutions to strengthen and grow so that they can fulfil their potential as vehicles for local development and as part of the infrastructure for sustainable development, poverty alleviation and citizen participation.

The Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF), in partnership with the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy, has sought to explore the distinct value of Community Philanthropy Organisations (CPOs), in transforming the dynamics of local development processes. Using data collected through GFCF's grant making to CPOs around the world, GFCF has tracked volumes, flows, and types of resources being mobilised across very different contexts. GFCF also sought to look beyond just the money, at the larger role of this distinct set of grassroots-grant making, philanthropy building organisations.

According to GFCF's analysis of data collected across 20 indicators that measure social capital, CPOs commonly identify three core pillars of their work: building assets, strengthening the capacities and agency of communities, and building trust (Hodgson & Knight, 2010). These three elements form complex, nonlinear networks of feedback loops: building assets mobilises 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.



Photo by: NADeF

When local groups secure local contributions and other kinds of internal community support, the size or scale of the assets mobilised matters less than the multiplier or system-level effect that the cumulation of these multiple small interactions creates in building trust and modelling new behaviours. 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.

GFCF grant partners are consistently asked to rate their organisations and grant activities on a scale of 20 social capital indicators (Hodgson & Knight, 2010) that look at three broad areas:

- Their role in the community they serve,
- Their role at the national or regional level, and
- Their role at a global level.

By introducing these indicators, GFCF 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 organisations thinking and working quite differently from the norm.

iii. The Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation in Ghana

Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation (NADeF) is a sustainable community development foundation. NADeF that was established in May 2008 through an agreement developed and signed between a goldmining company (Newmont Ghana Gold Limited –NGGL) and local communities (the Ahafo Social Responsibility Forum). These local communities were represented by 10 Ahafo mine communities, local government, regional government and civil society, to share resources granted to the Foundation through an annual contribution from Newmont to support community development programmes in the area of the Ahafo mines' operations. As part of Newmont's annual contributions to NADeF, there is also provision for the creation of an endowment fund to continue supporting development, even after the mine ceases to operate. It is funded from contributions by the NGGL of USD 1 per ounce of gold sold and 1 percent of net pre-tax annual profit from its mining operation in Ahafo. It is upheld as a model of inclusive, responsive, and sustainable community development.

As a result, the NADeF has presided over 7000 infrastructural projects, including the building of classrooms, teachers' quarters, and other facilities in local schools. They provided scholarships to at least 8000 students from Ahafo to attend schools across Ghana. In addition, NADeF has overseen electrification and water supply programmes, microcredit schemes and apprenticeships to enhance employment access. The foundation's board includes both Newmont representatives and community members, although at some point the company sees itself moving off the board completely.

Ahafo is just one of the several localities in Ghana where community led development projects have been undertaken since 1957. In this paper, Gyasi Amakye (2017) presented another community development initiative in Sekyere Central District in Ghana. It assesses how the local communities take part in the siting, planning and implementation of development projects in their communities and explored how projects are financed in the district.



iv. The Hunger Project in Malawi

The Malawi chapter of the Movement for Community-led Development (MCLD) was established in September 2016 by The Hunger Project-Malawi, World Vision-Malawi and Heifer-International Malawi, along with 18 national and international NGOs. The Movement unites a broad range of international development organisations that fundamentally believe integrated and community-led solutions at the local level are critical to the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes.

In Malawi, The Hunger Project works to build sustainable community-based programmes using the Epicentre Strategy. The epicentre strategy enabled the creation of a dynamic centre where communities are mobilised for action to meet their basic needs. This strategy is designed to partner with communities over a period of about eight years after which they graduate to a phase of “sustainable self-reliance,” which means that communities have demonstrated the confidence, capacity and skills to act as agents of their own development. Through those eight-year period, an epicentre should have addressed hunger and poverty and moved along a path toward sustainable self-reliance, at which point it can then fund its own activities and no longer requires financial investment from The Hunger Project. Through the Epicentre Strategy 15,000-25,000 people are brought together as a cluster of rural villages — giving villages more clout with local government than a single village is likely to have and increasing a community’s ability to collectively utilise resources.

Since 1999, The Hunger Project-Malawi empowered community partners in 12 epicentre areas to end their own hunger and poverty. Cumulatively the epicentres serve a population of 183,559 in 304 villages with an average of 25 villages per epicentre as in 2020. Through its integrated approach to rural development, the Epicenter Strategy, The Hunger Project is working with community partners to successfully access the basic services needed to lead lives of self-reliance and achieve internationally agreed-upon markers of success, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For example, The Hunger Project in Malawi reported that, self-reliant communities from two epicentres (Champiti and Ligowe Epicenters) have demonstrated progress in the following eight goals:

1. Mobilised rural communities that continuously set and achieve their own development goals;
2. Empowered women and girls in rural communities;
3. Improved access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities in rural communities;
4. Improved literacy and education in rural communities;
5. Reduced prevalence of hunger and malnutrition in rural communities, especially for women and children;
6. Improved access to and use of health resources in rural communities;
7. Reduced incidence of poverty in rural communities; and
8. Improved land productivity and climate resilience of smallholder farmers.

Community members of these epicentres have affirmed multiple local partnerships, created funding streams from revenue-generating activities and established gender-balanced leadership structures to support sustainable growth. The Hunger Project Malawi has activated its exit strategy, and it is anticipated that there will be no further financial inputs, with the exception of not-as-frequent staff visits and a post-evaluation three to five years later in a select number of epicentres.



Photo credit: <https://www.thp.org.nz/>



Photo by: Adi Goldstein on Unsplash

v. Make It Your Own Awards (MIYO) by the Case Foundation

In 2007, the Case Foundation launched its first public grants programme, the Make It Your Own Awards (MIYO), which challenged people from all walks of life to discuss what matters most to them, decide what kind of community they want and take action together. MIYO was inspired by a novel approach to civic engagement, which suggested a need to place citizens at the centre of creating change by combining meaningful dialogue with collective, hands-on action. Nearly 5,000 applicants and more than 15,000 votes were cast to help name the top 20 projects; the programme also involved the public in nearly every aspect of decision-making and used the latest web 2.0 tools to empower applicants to raise funds and supporters.

Recognising that grant decisions voted on by the public can become popularity contests, the foundation brought in a small group of advisors with experience in community building to help cull the list of finalists selected by non-grant makers. Those proposals were then put forward to the public, who selected the final grantees. This mid-level culling allowed the Case Foundation to balance non-grant makers' creativity and decision making with input from experts—a process that resulted in the public making the final decisions about ultimate recipients.

Since the programme officially ended in 2009, grantees have been working in their communities to implement their projects. MIYO helped to support high-quality citizen-centered work and its research report provides an unprecedented picture of citizen-centered efforts occurring in America, information that had previously been difficult to obtain and that will be of considerable use to the field of participatory grant making.

CONCLUSION

CSOs in the global south are fatigued about the lack of clear policies, the complex conditions for funding and lack of meaningful dialogue with respect to their engagement with donors. Donors are also fatigued with dealing with numerous organisations duplicating interventions that record negligible impact on beneficiary communities. Both parties, donor partners, CSOs and recipient communities have justifiable reasons for feeling fatigued. Therefore, it will be disingenuous for one group to claim to be more fatigued than the other. If development aid as it is structured today has not satisfactorily delivered the desired results on each side, then a different approach needs to be modelled. The challenge for both parties is to redefine the current relationship based on transparency, honesty, and mutual trust.

To shift the power and decide together, all parties should invest in participatory planning processes, which are often the most effective and inclusive ways to plan community interventions as they provide ownership, sustainability, and support. It takes time, care, mutual respect, and commitment to see the benefits of such processes. Donors, CSOs and beneficiary communities must carefully consider what level of participation is most appropriate. They must also identify the right stakeholders using appropriate community entry and communication techniques. Finally, there must be the acceptance that the process must be maintained over time, so that momentum will not be lost. It is imperative to state that deciding together and shifting power is not about the source of the resources, but it is about communities driving their agenda and whether their assets and resources have been acknowledged and valued. It is instructive to recognise that localised empowerment at the grassroots level is imperative to the global development process. The most marginalised groups of people know what their communities need most but are unable to implement these measures due to the systemic challenges that economic and socio-political barriers create.

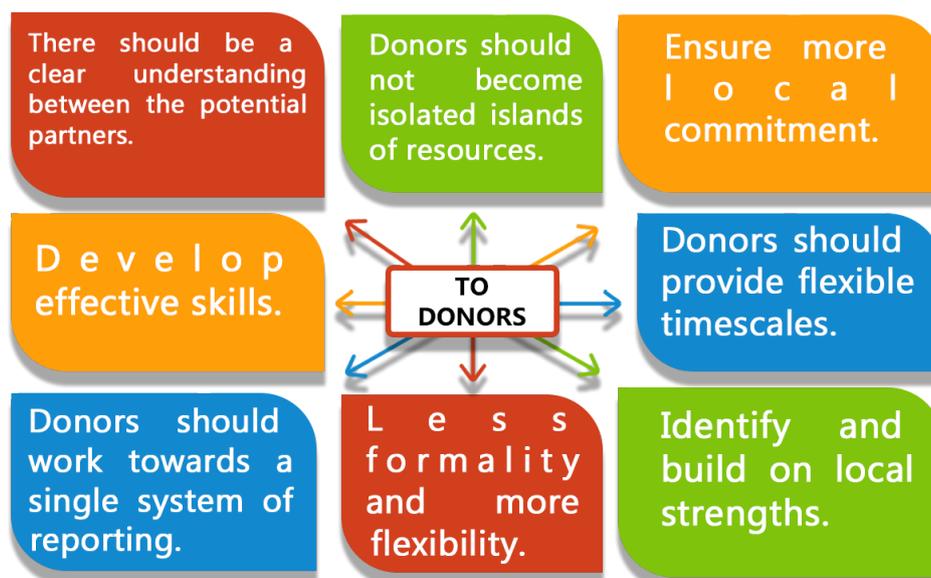


RECOMMENDATIONS

To CSOs



- **Build more social capital:** successful partnerships are often those in which strong personal relationships had developed (Dichter, 1989). The stronger the personal relationship between donors and CSOs leaders, the higher the levels of social capital available for cooperative problem-solving and the more easily gaps created by different levels of power and knowledge can be bridged.
- CSOs interventions should also consider **partnering with a range of different implementing agents** rather than trying to implement all activities internally. Care must however be taken to increase the capacity of partners and participants, rather than just increasing their responsibilities and duties.
- **Involve line staff, not only leaders.** Some CSOs leaders manage all communications with the donors. Line staff usually know more about what is really happening than the executive director and can provide richer insights. CSOs leaders should empower relevant staff in their organisation to work directly with donors and develop a strong team of lieutenants. If all relationships are simply managed by organisational leaders, the [partnership is vulnerable](#) to changes in individuals and patterns of organisational leadership'. Moreover, partnerships are strongest if there are multiple linkages that connect the organisations involved.
- CSOs projects and programmes must **account for their legitimacy** and impact in an increasingly self-critical way.



- There should be a **clear understanding between the potential partners** of what this entails and its implications for practice. This may help donors and recipients to confront the gap between what they say they are doing and what they do. Creative negotiation of power relationships in these partnerships is essential.
- Donors should **not become isolated islands of resources** operating independently of local realities. Significant impact cannot be made by an intervention unless it is sustainably integrated within the [local institutional context](#).
- **Ensure more local commitment.** Funding should leverage local resources in a meaningful way and fewer resources can be more effective, as it encourages commitment by partners. The case study on the Hunger Project showed that sustained impacts require nurturing through long-term support.
- **Develop effective skills** for listening and learning, working in partnership, understanding power dynamics, process facilitation and cross-cultural team building.
- Donors should **provide flexible timescales** to stimulate effective learning processes. Longer timeframes for intervention provide more opportunity to develop partnerships, institutionalise systems and assess impact.
- Donors should **work towards a single system of reporting** based on existing systems, rather than multiple or complex reporting procedures. Where possible, the outputs of M&E processes should be available in local languages.
- **Less formality and more flexibility** about the use of specific tools and reporting requirements (such as logical frameworks) and more openness to different tools and types of information and M&E.
- When designing interventions, donors must include consideration of how to effectively **identify and build on local strengths** to stimulate sustainable change but without seeking to control it. An effective design of interventions will require an understanding of power relationships and how the intervention will seek to address this.

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