



# HOW DONORS CAN SUPPORT COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SYSTEMS CHANGE WITH FIRELIGHT'S RESEARCH

Report and tools from the Firelight Foundation elevate the experiences of community-based organizations in shifting systems and provide practical guidance for donors

## THE PROBLEM:

*Traditional approaches to aid and funding are standing in the way of sustainable development*

- Despite substantial investments, many of the large projects initiated by traditional, top-down Global North funders and INGOs have not resulted in meaningful and lasting change at the community level.
- Traditional Global North funders and INGOs have tended to define the agendas from the outside, and design approaches that focus on symptoms or isolated issues rather than address root causes and systemic factors.
- Traditional Global North philanthropy and development actors have perpetuated neo-colonial approaches, white saviourism, and white supremacy.

## THE PATH FORWARD:

*Support community-driven systems change for impact and sustainability*

- Community members determine, own, and drive the change process; and
- Change actions focus on addressing the underlying systems and root causes of concern – rather than only reacting to symptoms.

This is **community-driven systems change**.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SYSTEMS CHANGE IS...	COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SYSTEMS CHANGE IS NOT...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing actions or interventions, with community stakeholders, in response to the issues and root causes identified in the community – drawing on available experiences, indigenous knowledge and practices, and internal and external tools and resources as appropriate to respond to the need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting with the premise of replicating/scaling a program or rolling out a pre-packaged model or tool.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being open and sensitive to both expected and unexpected outcomes, and looking for intermediate as well as long term indicators of progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing an isolated intervention.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuing change agents such as community-based organizations as powerful systems actors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treating community members as just beneficiaries or community-based organizations as just implementing partners.</li> </ul>

## HOW CAN YOUR ORGANIZATION START SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SYSTEMS CHANGE?

Firelight’s report and tools aim to help donors to foster genuine partnerships with community-based organizations in support of community-driven systems change.

No one has to give up impact, analysis, evaluation and success but there are ways to do it better.

Tools and frameworks include:

- Top five indicators of a community-based organization’s effectiveness
- Designing a new initiative for community-driven systems change
- How to think differently about what “effective” programming means for lasting systems change
- How to think differently about - and still achieve - impact, scale, sustainability and success
- Grantmaking for community-driven systems change
- Learning and evaluation for community-driven systems change
- And more.