



Inspiring Hope and Joy

Reflections from the #ShiftThePower Global Summit
Bogotá, 5th – 7th December 2023

The context

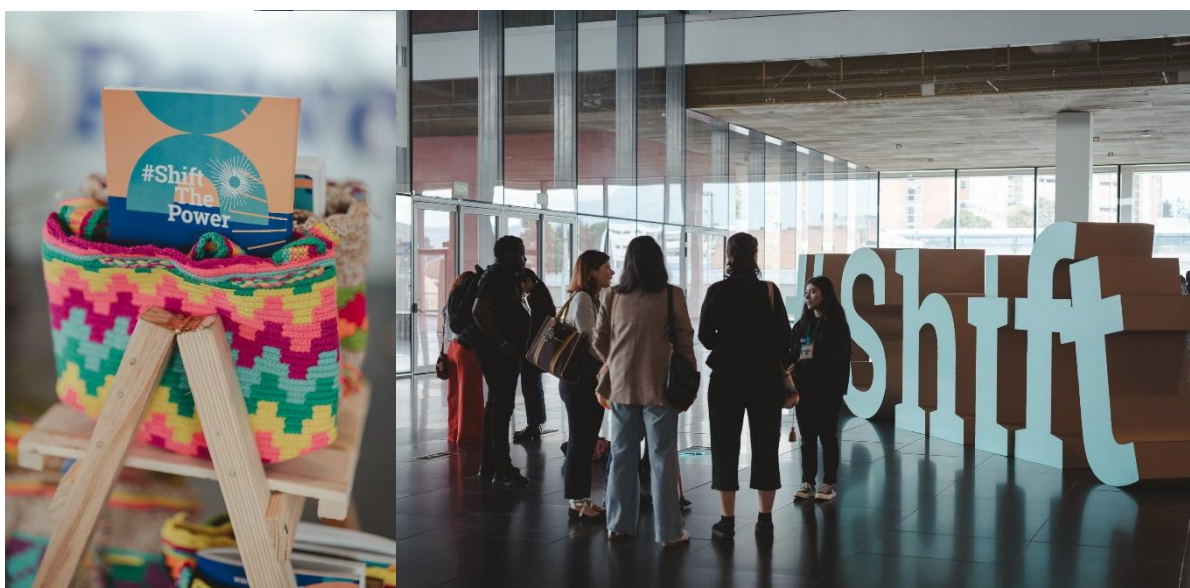
In a world increasingly consumed by gloom and despair, is another world possible? Can we find a way to develop systems that enable people to live flourishing lives? These were the kinds of questions that inspired the [#ShiftThePower Global Summit](#) held in Bogotá in December 2023.

The context for the meeting was the ever-gathering crises across the world, including [widespread and pervasive violence](#), [increased prevalence of extreme weather events](#), and a [dramatic increase in humanitarian disasters](#). Taken together with the legacy of COVID-19, these factors add to the rising poverty and inequality that push the most marginalized further to the edges, fuel public anger and threaten the prospect of resilient, peaceful and democratic societies everywhere.

Current efforts to address these problems are falling badly short. Governments have run out of ideas, development aid is dysfunctional, and philanthropy is too diffuse to address the multiple problems we face. The result is that a far-right revolution is sweeping across the world as distressed populations seek hope by supporting authoritarian leaders whose real goal is uncontrolled power.

As progressives, we suffer a failure of imagination and lack effective strategies to make progress. We are losing ground rapidly because we are not joined up, organized, or able to work together and because funding is still not conducive to the kind of strategic approach required. We know we need to do things differently, but what? There is endless talk of systems change among funders, while little of significance finds its way into their programmes.

At times like this, we need to dig deep into our imaginations to find a way through. This means going deep to examine what we are doing and question whether it is working to deliver the kinds of societies we want. If we are to make progress, we need a new way to discover what really matters in our communities and to our sense of humanity.



A bold venture

This was the setting for the Summit. The invitation asked three questions:

1. Do you want to be part of a global conversation that puts communities in charge of their own development and that produces flourishing lives for all?
2. Do you believe that the current international funding system can and must be re-shaped to be more locally-owned and locally-led?
3. Do you want to be inspired by new ways of deciding and doing that are emerging around the world, that centre dignity, equity and trust – and that recognize the resources and inherent power of communities?

A systematic reflection on the meeting

An opportunity for reflection on the meeting was sent out to the 730 Summit participants in February 2024. It was available in English and Spanish. 215 individuals (29.4% of all participants) replied by mid-March.

The questions in the reflection survey were open ended. They included:

- Describe your feelings about the Summit in three words.
- What did you expect?
- What happened?
- What went well?
- What could have been improved and how?
- What changes have you made since as an individual?
- What changes have you made in your organization?
- What changes have you made in relation to the field in which you work?
- What would you like to do next as part of the #ShiftThePower movement?
- What supports might you need for this?

The transcript of the survey results yielded 35,000 words in a mixture of English and Spanish.

Did the meeting work?

The answer is yes. However, the structured reflection was not necessary to reach this conclusion. The [numerous blogs](#) written by participants described how the meeting unleashed a mass of positive energy. One reviewer spoke for many when she described the event as “glorious.” It was full of:

“...open sessions where people could convene on topics such as ‘moving beyond logoi, egos, silos and halos’, ‘measurement is political’, joyful ones like ‘what’s the point in revolution if we can’t dance?’ and identifying ways of ‘building our collective dreams.’”

It was clear that the Summit has worked to strengthen #ShiftThePower as a cohesive force for change, laying the groundwork for an alternative system that prioritizes flourishing lives for all. As one participant noted:

“I was amazed by the growth of the movement and realized that many of us are interested in approaching development differently. There is a whole community out there that shares our vision of how development must work for the most marginalized.”

Another found it:

“Exciting and baffling to discover that I’d spent 20 years in humanitarian and development contexts and had such little contact with civil society movements that make up the [#ShiftThePower movement](#).”

She continued:

“At the Summit, I realized that there are movements – feminist movements, queer movements, indigenous movements – that are already occupying a new paradigm, a space much more informed by possibility and a kind of abundance narrative than the scarcity, conflict and competition that is the norm where I sit.”



So, what does the reflection survey add?

With so many blogs and so many positive opinions already published, the question arises about whether the survey results add anything of value to the information already out there. The answer is yes. The main value is that the structured questions enable a systematic reflection from a wide range of participants. The results give insights both into why it was so successful and what this might mean for its significance in supporting the #ShiftThePower movement in the longer-term.

Inspiring hope and joy

Participants were asked to summarize their feelings about the Summit in three words. The following word cloud shows the results:



The three stand-out words are used in the title for this report because they sum up the atmosphere and energy of the meeting: **inspiring hope and joy**. Looking at the full list of words, almost all of them are positive. To take some random examples:

- Motivated
- Energized
- Humbling
- Challenging
- Bold
- Agency
- Solidarity
- Uplifted
- Connected
- Decolonization
- Excitement
- Gratitude
- Opening
- Powerful
- Commitment
- Love
- Freeing
- Reaffirming

What is striking about all the words used is that they are what philosophers call [thick concepts](#). This means that they contain both factual and normative content, so that they both describe and evaluate at the same time.

Taking an example from the list above, consider the idea of “excitement.” Excitement not only describes a biological change in energy in the body and mind, but is also generally seen as a good thing because of attendant positive feelings such as eagerness and exhilaration.

Thick concepts are the gateway to social change because positive feelings tend to produce positive action. How we think and feel determines what we do. In this way, thick concepts such as love, openness and solidarity bridge the gap between the world we have and the world we want. They provide the energy we need to pursue the change we need. Here is an example of one participant’s reflection that expresses this:

“The conference galvanized people across the globe to commit to working together for change through well-chosen examples of grassroots action to strategic challenges with storytelling at the heart sharing how people are and want to work together to shift and share power.”

Another example shows how positive feelings counter the lethargy that often accompanies the sense that nothing will ever change:

“In January, we launched a report on progress towards localization and locally-led development, called [Where do we go from here?](#) Unsurprisingly, it found that progress was slow, tentative and Northern-led. When we were asked, ‘But I don’t see how we can do better than this, how can we achieve it?’, it was so good to point towards the enthusiasm, appetite and commitment of the #ShiftThePower Global Summit and point out that we need to bring other voices to the centre of the table.”

So, the dominant ideas to emerge from the Summit – inspiring hope and joy – have prophetic power. They make it possible to imagine that “another world is possible.” The following quotation from one participant puts this in a nutshell:

“For me, this event was inspiring and hopeful. It would be important to continue to learn from the experiences that achieved change and to share good, concrete practices to achieve it.”

It was all there in the moment

One of the reasons why the Summit was able to inspire hope and joy was that it was quite unlike any international meeting that participants had attended before. Most large international gatherings have an impersonal quality in which the size of the event tends to overawe people such that they don’t feel that they quite belong. The Summit was quite different because people immediately felt it was their space. As one participant put it:

“The venue was wonderful. The food, the coffee, the gathering areas were wonderful. The programme was well balanced. The speakers were inspirational. The facilitators of the main sessions were gifted and a joy to engage with. The sense of togetherness was palpable.”

Similarly, another commented:

“The vision of the design and the thoughtfulness in curating supportive elements like abundant coffee / tea / hot chocolate, a quiet space, and different activities to engage different parts of ourselves.”



Talking to other people was easy:

“We were able to talk on the buses, at the venues, and during all the great activities. The activities were also really fun!”

“...significant opportunities to talk to other people, in ways that felt supported and organic.”

“Enough time and spaces to mingle, network and talk to new people.”

The lack of pomp and ceremony was an important feature. One participant admired:

“The ‘unconference’ style of the conference.”

“The emphasis on interactive, facilitated sessions.”

“The diversity of sessions led by the participants themselves.”

Diversity was a central feature:

“The diversity of people was amazing.”

“I liked the diverse ways of culture being celebrated from dance to food. It gave an exposure to Colombian culture.”

But with a common purpose:

“We had the glue of #ShiftThePower.”

“A global call with complete respect to every unique voice.”

The content of the sessions was also well regarded:

“The lightning talks were inspiring and well curated to capture a good mix.”

“The programme went well, and the momentum was sustained till the end.”

The logistics were good too:

“I really appreciated the amazing, amazing organization and logistics that went into the event.”

“It was very well organized, I loved that everything was very accessible.”

“What a challenge to provide such an inspiring experience for so many people and the translators were awesome. I liked that we honoured the local language by dual presentations.”

Finally, one participant noted that the Summit was:

“An achievement so rare that we all need to learn how to do it.”



A sensory experience

Quotations in the earlier section show that people thought that the Summit was as much an emotional experience as a cognitive one. It was a space where people felt they belonged and so were able to connect with one another in an atmosphere of warmth and cultural sensitivity. There was an overwhelming sense of solidarity, which is the building block of movement generosity, in which they feel the meaning of #ShiftThePower in their hearts as well as their minds. In this way, #ShiftThePower becomes part of who we are as human beings and energizes our being, thinking, deciding and doing. As systems theorist [Donella Meadows understood](#), transformation of systems begins with how we see who we are in the world.

So, there was much to really celebrate here and some participants suggested that the Summit set a new standard for international conferences. It is hard to disentangle the different components of the meeting that made it work because it's clear that it was the whole experience that seemed to generate delight at the meeting, rather than the individual components. As one participant put it:

“I loved it all – the details were all so thoughtful and the space had been designed around people, connection and inclusivity rather than 'outputs' and activities. This is so unlike any other large formal event I have been to, and it was the perfect mix. It felt a deeply personal event despite being huge – so many ways that we were all brought together around the conference days and social activities. It was incredible.”

At the same time, there were some criticisms of the meeting. For example, some people would have liked more meat options in the food and others described problems with the acoustics in the breakout rooms and the difficulty of working with large numbers in a confined space. Such criticisms were small in number and tended to be about specific aspects of the logistics. Overall, they did not dent the overall impression of the Summit as a wonderful experience. Judging from the recorded feedback, there was no person who left the meeting unhappy with their experience.

Changes flowing from the Summit

In thinking about what the Summit achieved, it is important to think in two categories: short and long-term. Clearly, at this point we only have short-term data, though we can make reasoned assessments on whether the changes are likely to have long-term effects.

We asked about changes people had made since the Summit as an individual, in their organization, and in the wider field that they were involved with.

Individual changes

Reflections from the Summit suggest that people were profoundly affected by what one participant called the “opportunity for personal and collective reflection.” Another participant said, “I see everything differently now.” Here are a selection of typical comments:

“I am changing the way I am – more confident in myself and in my power.”

“I continue my work in personal decolonization, healing and listening.”

“I’m more apt to tell people how magnificent they are.”

“I reflect on power dynamics of myself and others.”

“I constantly reflect on how I ensure that I shift power in my personal life or my personal relationships, questioning myself about the concept of how I fit within philanthropy.”

“I’ve begun thinking more about my transition out of the leadership role.”

The many comments like this suggest that a deep reflection about the role of individual agency took place as a result of the Summit. Many people asked themselves a basic question about what is it to be human, wondering whether we have lost our way in terms of who we are and why we are on this planet. Many people appeared to question the role of the transactional or “egoic” self that is involved in pursuing jobs and careers to consider the role of the “transformational” or “transcendental” self that exists in harmony with other people and other life forms on this planet. An overall conclusion was that we need to see ourselves as part of a movement rather than as the manifestation of some organizational goal.



As a consequence of this, people reflected on how the structure and language of the international development system that programmes individual behaviour in accord with a limited development paradigm can be alienating – with the consequence that their work diminishes them as people. People saw that they were good people in bad systems often self-exploiting themselves. They saw that the way to address this was to take better care of themselves and emancipate themselves from the continual round of bureaucratic endeavours. The work should be about inspiring joy and hope, not about drafting another funding application, filling out another log-frame, or filing yet another donor report. This realization meant that self-care emerged triumphant from the Summit.

Organizational changes

Respondents were asked to reflect on what organizational actions or changes they had made since the Summit.

The question was open-ended to encourage people to describe what they had done, free from the limits of a coding frame for answers. Qualitative responses were subsequently coded in accord with a framework that emerged from the data, rather than being pre-coded in advance. Almost two-thirds (135 of 215) gave a clear positive description of what they had done. The distribution of the 135 responses into six main categories is shown in the following chart:



It is evident from the above chart that the meeting produced an impressive set of outcomes. The biggest category, involving 43 participants (37% of the 115 who reported changes) involved the implementation of a different kind of practice to put community philanthropy and community power at the heart of development. Here are some of the examples of what people said:

“What we learned from the Summit is now embedded into our programming framework and we have enhanced our capacity development modules integrating community philanthropy and shifting the power.”

“We are now choreographing participatory methods with communities.”

“We are more than ever convinced about our liberatory dreams on reimagining philanthropy and exploring effective strategies to build power within communities.”

“Integrated the concept in project implementation and are brainstorming on a whole idea on how we can have a #ShiftThePower project.”

“We use the [#ShiftThePower Manifesto for Change](#) and the videos to explain who we are and to guide our work.”

In implementing their strategy, several participants mentioned that they were joining the [Pledge for Change](#), which envisages a new role for INGOs:

“We have joined and begun coordinating efforts with Pledge for Change.”

“I’ve shared a deepened knowledge of Global South and community-based development work and been committed to active inclusion of these voices in our work. I got my organization to sign as a supporter of Pledge for Change.”

The second most common reported outcome (24%) was to connect with other people and organizations to work together. In many cases, this followed the realization that a single organization is rarely sufficient to bring about significant change and that organized networks are required, particularly if the target is to change systems. Here are some examples of the kind of change that people reported:

“We have been following up with each other internally to encourage those of us who attended the Summit to reach out to connections that we made and follow up with any interesting opportunities for collaboration or discussion that may arise.”

“We are more open to alliances and teamwork with other organizations, to share information and to get feedback from our experiences in the development of projects.”

“As an organization we are facilitating the formation of a network of community foundations for movement building.”

“We are linking with the Latin American cohort who are working on a similar agenda to [RINGO](#).”

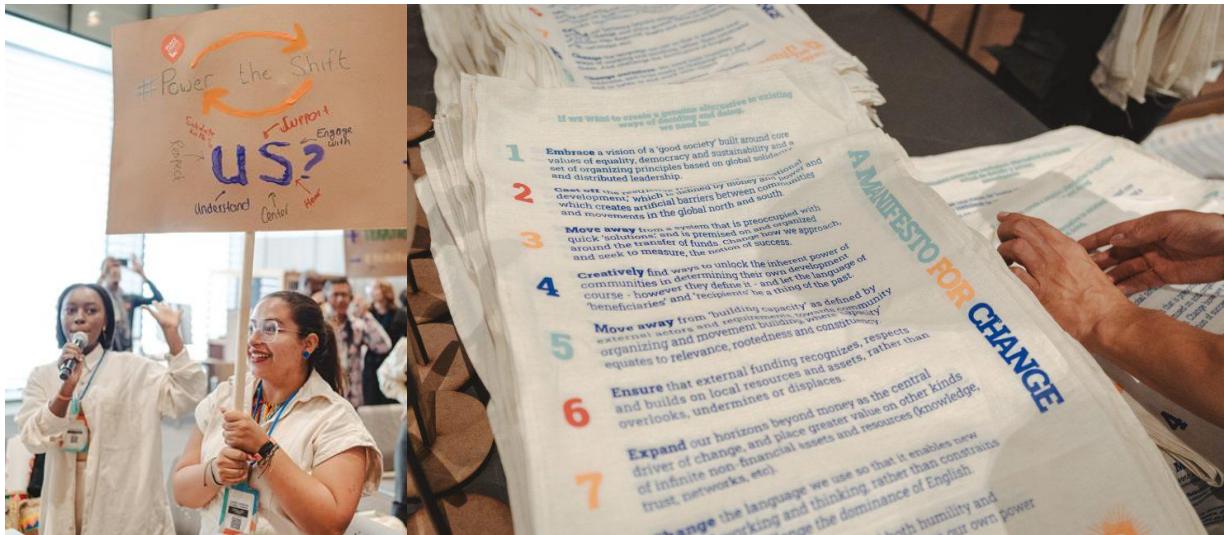
“We are convening online spaces with the peacebuilder cohort from the Summit to reflect on commitments and how we take this forward.”

“Take the [#ShiftThePower Manifesto for Change](#) as the basis for the movement in Colombia.”

A third category (17%) was to communicate results from the Summit. This covered a range of different behaviours, from sharing insights with colleagues to using the findings from the Summit as part of a programme of advocacy:

“I confidently talk about [#ShiftThePower](#) on communication platforms.”

“I have shared the conversations we had about decoloniality.”



“I have passed on much of the information received during the #ShiftThePower Summit, with a strong emphasis on the phrase: ‘How can I help you, what can I do for you?’ as the basis for the review of project activities.”

“A series of discussions with colleagues about the topic, welcoming perspectives, documenting these ideas and locating them in our organizational ways of working to institute a ‘shift’ as appropriate.”

“Published a blog and incorporated lessons learned into project work and ways of working.”

“Started a conversation with the executive team and with colleagues in the network of community foundations about trust-based funding, participatory grantmaking, de-bureaucratization of grantmaking processes, invitations to participate in international conferences and workshops on a different way of doing philanthropy, of intervening in communities, of generating change in the mind-set of funders.”

“Continue the shifting the power conversation at the national level and engage more with international like-minded development actors to shape our understanding of the #ShiftThePower concept with emerging concepts.”

“Share Summit materials among members of local teams in communities, organized related discussions. Particularly about importance of women leadership.”

The fourth category (16%) involved changing governance or other internal processes. Some representative responses in this regard include:

“I am challenging our organization to be more inclusive and to prioritize diversity of voice and thinking across the entire organization.”

“Taken lead of a decolonization working group.”

“Developing a strategy to support the next line of workers.”

“Create space for rest and diverse forms of knowledge.”

“Our organization became a territorial foundation with diverse governance.”

“Clearer and more defined projections, being clear about what you want and not falling into the commonplace.”

The fifth most common change concerned funding (13%). The topic of finance is never far away when issues of civil society are under discussion. While this issue was not a prominent topic during the Summit, it had an effect on some of the funders present who determined that they would change their behaviour:

“We (continue to) have conversations about how we should not be one of ‘those donors.’ Now with more examples from around the world of what could be done.”

“Influenced the non-profit that I work for to consider grant-giving with no strings attached to the people we serve through a collaborative effort with another non-profit.”

“We have embarked on a process of reforming our grant set-up to ensure more locally-led development.”

“Greater intention to support the decolonization agenda and to find alternatives to current financing.”

“Be more conscious on the #ShiftThePower spirit in maintaining our partnership with funding partners.”

The final category identified by 8% described changes to measurement. Widespread evidence from civil society suggests that current practices fail to measure what matters. The Summit offered space to consider alternatives:

“We are working hard at measuring what matters – and figuring out how to support other organizations in the process.”

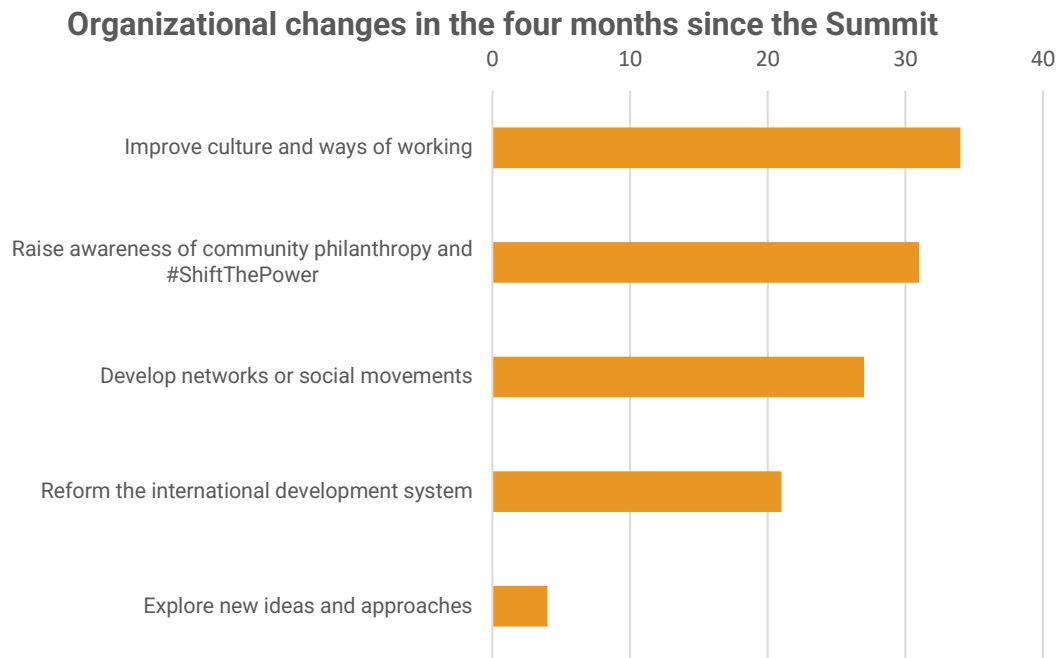
“We have been looking at issues around measuring changes in a deeper way.”

“We are questioning whether what we do really contributes to the improvement of the community.”

“I’m continuing to explore ACT [the assets, capacities and trust framework] as a practice in my new role.”

Sectoral changes

People were next asked to reflect on what actions or changes they had made since the Summit in the field in which they work. Once again, the question was open-ended, and responses were coded using a framework that emerged from the data. The distribution of the 117 contributions are shown in the following chart:



The most common change, identified by 34 participants (29%) was about changes to the culture of the field. Here are some examples of responses:

“Visibility and activism must be transformed through teamwork and power relations that have beautiful processes.”

“We have included mental health and well-being of local peacebuilders in our team objectives for 2025.”

“Language is becoming more inclusive and transformative of change.”

“Start thinking about well-being as an imperative need in our sector.”

“Work towards co-creating processes instead of straight jacket templates.”

Part of reforming the culture of the sector involves opening up different kinds of spaces for discussion and development:

“Generation of spaces for alternative dialogues for decision-making.”

“To dialogue more with the community and together contribute to our development.”

The second largest group (26%) was committed to raising awareness of community philanthropy and #ShiftThePower:

"I am challenging the wider philanthropy sector in Aotearoa, New Zealand to think more strategically about the potential of philanthropy to really shift the dial in communities."

"Being more outspoken and addressing things when I sense we're moving in the wrong direction or not considering our ambition to work intentionally with decolonization in decision-making and contributions to organizational changes taking place and that I'm co-creating."

"Our bucket group worked to get out the [letter to COP28](#)."

"Communicating with the organizations I work with about the courageous efforts to confront oppression and inequality in their places, to encourage organizations in positions of privilege to take more risks and utilize their position in the community to advocate for true change, even if they may lose some donors along the way."



"I am now embracing the communications network that has come out of the Summit – sharing our resources and reports, successes and so on with each other to continue sharing and pushing the message further in our sector – our voices are stronger together."

"To exchange and bring to the table decolonization issues."

"Engaging stakeholders to collaboratively change the narrative."

"I advocate for the adoption of #ShiftThePower as an approach in key project and programming."

"Leaned into bolder language and felt more confident around the movement and momentum built across the sector."

"I am an evangelist for #ShiftThePower and I tell everyone that I meet about the importance of this movement: donors, funders, colleagues."

"We share messages from the #ShiftThePower Global Summit during events, which we organized for civil society actors and public authorities in Ukraine."

The next most popular category (23%) involved developing networks and social movements:

"We are continuing to work together to create a #ShiftThePower Climate Network."

"Committed to build further the #ShiftThePower movement in the U.K., aligning with the global movement."

"We would like to convene a group of children's local organizations to engage in this movement. Children's organizations tend to be technical but not political and the sector is dominated by some very large INGOs – this needs to change."

"We are strengthening a learning network on philanthropy and systemic translation among ten municipalities in the department of Cauca, Colombia."

"I am now participating in a network on localization and trust-based grantmaking."

Reforming international development was the next most popular item (18%):

"Making more connections between #ShiftThePower allies across the peacebuilding / development / humanitarian nexus."

"Reflecting on how much of our innovation is centred on contributions from the beneficiaries."

"We have made our grantmaking processes more flexible and have had more courageous conversations with our partners."

"Efforts to include more horizontal forms of work and the promotion of grassroots organizations' own ideas and projects to build their own destiny."

"To continue reflecting on the role of international organizations in these processes, and how we can continue to contribute to local development."

"Seek and involve the organization in spaces where philanthropy can be reversed towards decisions, initiatives and control of the Global South."

"We let groups from the communities that work with us, design and set their own outputs and outcomes scenario. We as a larger organization with more

financial and labour resources, have to learn to stand up for these values and accept these aspirations that community groups have, and translate these ideas to the funders.”

”Highlighted the importance of developing working groups for INGOs to openly discuss challenges and opportunities towards achieving local leadership commitments in humanitarian response environments.”

”We are broadening the conversation to key actors in the territory as decision-makers and making concrete proposals to include dynamics that allow the communities to speak for themselves and be the protagonists of their own development.”



Finally, four people (3%) said that they wanted to explore new ideas, for example:

”The idea of colonization and sexuality that I have long wanted to explore is slowly shaping up.”

”Reflecting on strategies from other territories that can be applied in our own territory.”

Producing lasting change

The question arises whether these effects are part of the immediate afterglow of the Summit, or whether they presage changes in attitudes and behaviours that will lead to lasting change in the way that the sector organizes itself. Some participants wondered about this at the time of the Summit and asked whether follow-up should be planned during the event itself:

”I would have appreciated more deliverables from the meeting or focus on next steps / action planning among participants on the final day of the Summit.”

”I left the Summit wondering, 'what next?' Next steps after the Summit were unclear to me and I wasn't sure the best way to continue some of the conversations that had been started during the smaller breakout meetings.”

However, detailed follow-up action planning was not part of the purpose of the Summit. Such an approach would reproduce a top-down model that we know doesn't work because there are no clear levers to make the kinds of changes needed and there is no clear set of actors who can do so. One participant gave a very clear account of the approach the Summit took to producing lasting change that involves the whole sector:

"The Summit did not result in a set of actions or next steps – but then that's not what the Summit was aiming to do. Rather, we were all stimulated to think of what could be possible, and it pushed us to think outside of the box by connecting us and having conversations. I remember changing the system and shifting power was referred to as 'flying a plane and trying to fix it at the same time.' It'll take all of us, outside of the sector and within institutions and organizations, to create change. First in our own sphere of influence, in our areas of work, and then to take it up a gear and spark change within our organizations, changing the way we work outwardly and inwardly."

She continues that direct vision will drive the necessary changes:

"When the veil is lifted, and we understand the power dynamics happening in front of us, we cannot hide from the injustices and disparities that we see, and the onus comes on us as individuals to raise these issues and co-create spaces and ways for us to change our organizations. Through this, we will hopefully influence the whole sector and, eventually, society as a whole. It'll take us working on an individual, one-to-one basis to start moving forward, and in this way, perhaps we'll inspire and challenge others to do the same."

These quotations give the essential insights into the value of the Summit. The meeting makes best sense in terms of a long-term journey towards systems change. This involves a multifaceted process to build a new model of development in line with the #ShiftThePower Manifesto for Change. Even the Summit itself cannot be seen as a single event since it was preceded by countless¹ in-person and online [weaving activities](#) that took place over 2023 on the #RoadToBogotá at the local, national, regional and international levels. The purpose of these was to make new connections and stimulate different kinds of conversations, beyond those who would just be in Bogotá. The content of these weaving activities also surfaced the key issues that shaped the eight "buckets" that would form the backbone of the [Summit programme](#). Similarly, many of those conversations have continued under the general heading of the #RoadFromBogotá.

¹ The Global Fund for Community Foundations (the lead organization behind the Summit) supported, participated in, and helped to organize 34 weaving conversations between March and November 2023 which brought together more than 1,750 participants. Though we can be sure that more weaving conversations were organized, and more individuals were reached through additional events.



The Summit needs to be placed in the context of a long-term journey. The #ShiftThePower process began in earnest with the [Global Summit on Community Philanthropy](#), held in Johannesburg in December 2016. A first evaluation of this meeting was conducted [four months later](#), in March 2017, and a second was conducted [a year later](#). Results showed that there was an immediate positive effect such that people came away full of energy, though the effects were also magnified over time. The short-term effects, recorded in the first evaluation, were that the 2016 Summit sent a powerful message to the field as the hashtag #ShiftThePower, which was introduced during the meeting, reached 37.5 million people on Twitter (now X), and trended in three countries.

Those present said that they had the opportunity to reflect on who they were as development actors and concluded that a different model of power is required. The later evaluation showed that the 2016 Summit inspired a new global understanding of what durable development looks like, and the effects of that Summit were widely felt and not restricted to those who attended. A key dimension of this was the widespread recognition that individual organizations are very limited in what they can achieve alone and need to join forces to build [a new model of society](#). We must downplay self and the role of our organization to develop the ecosystem we want.

Overall, the two evaluations concluded that while few international meetings achieve much change, the 2016 Summit did. It was a watershed moment in the field, opening it up to a perspective that would challenge top-down approaches to development, with its model of “power over”, and to replace it with a model based on “power with.”² “Power with”, with its promise of participatory intimacy, allows different organizations to join together as equals to build a global movement.

² Follett, M.P. (2013). *Dynamic administration: The collected papers of Mary Parker Follett*. Mansfield Centre, Ct: Martino Publishing. P. 101. Early feminist writer Mary Parker Follett highlighted the immense differences between “power over” and “power with.” “Power over” assumes that power is a fixed resource which people compete for; “power with”, on the other hand, sees power as an extensible resource in which people collaborate to help each other to gain more power. While “power over” compels people to act in certain ways as specified by a defined hierarchy, “power with” engages people to work together as equals to achieve shared goals. “Power over” is inherently unstable because it is coercive and builds resentment; whereas “power with” is more stable because it fosters unity and builds trust.

Since 2016, the [#ShiftThePower movement](#) has gained in strength and become a central part of the discourse in international philanthropy and development. It is also fast becoming the new common sense. While size is not always a reliable indicator of strength, the 2023 Summit in Bogotá attracted twice the number of participants as the 2016 Summit in Johannesburg did.

These perspectives highlight the fact that the Bogotá Summit was a key part of a long-term journey that began seven years ago. The event in Bogotá can therefore be seen as part of a seven-year follow-up evaluation of the event in Johannesburg. One year on from Bogotá, we will begin to trace the longer-term effects of the 2023 Summit.

What's next for participants?

To set the scene for the follow-up evaluation in 2025, it is useful to look at participants' intentions. A question in the current evaluation asked: "What would you like to do next as part of the #ShiftThePower movement?"

There were 64 clear action plans described as a result of this question. Grouping them into rough categories based on people's descriptions of what they want to do, produces the following distribution:



Going into more detail about the actions that people wanted to take following the Summit, the most common desire (27% of 64) was for more dialogue. Here is a selection of representative comments:

“Crossroads and exchanges of experiences with other allies from other countries.”

“Organize a session where we can share and learn about our dilemmas of dancing with the devil while also seeking to #ShiftThePower.”

“Exchange meetings with stakeholders to keep us active and implement the ideas that have emerged from the event.”

“Open the discussion on shifting power to other individuals, groups and networks.”

“I want to connect further with the community. I'm looking for ways to contribute – with my core experience working in an institution funding 'development', I know there is a specific space where I would be ideally suited to contribute to shifting power. I also am interested in building women's leadership and I'd like to learn more what others in this community are doing in that area.”

“Facilitating collaboration and dialogue: connecting and facilitating dialogue between different stakeholders, such as local communities, under conditions of vulnerability with other members of the #ShiftThePower movement in Colombia and strategic countries. Participating in discussion groups and online forums on the power transfer discourse. Organize events and workshops for people to learn about the established #ShiftThePower stream of thought.”

“Facilitate dialogue between actors in the Global South, and between the Global North and South.”

“Would love to be part of the discussed continued efforts to build on the session on self-care.”

“Continue to take up spaces locally and internationally to influence discussions.”

The next most popular activity (mentioned by 25%) was to develop a network. Here are some of the comments:

“Resume some contacts, reconnect, identify common ground and possible alliances with other organizations to avoid making this yet another approach and / or matter of expertise.”

“Continue discussions and establish a network for funder organizations wanting to challenge themselves.”

“Strengthen the solidarity of the networks of communities working on specific climate challenges and bridging the gap between those with power and money and where the climate action is happening in communities.”

“In the working group that I was part of, we committed to taking the discussion further and building a community of story-tellers to tell our own stories in our own way.”

“I would like to generate a regional network in Latin America.”

“To be part of a working group to bring to my region this new vision.”

“Connect colleagues in the U.S. with some of the leaders we met in Bogotá to further expand and enhance efforts.”



Related to building networks, 12% said they saw themselves building the movement. Here are some of the comments:

“Explore how we can support the movement and stay connected, including collaborative advocacy and influencing efforts.”

“To be part of the movement, to continue participating, getting to know and contributing with my abilities.”

“Build the movement toward healing and justice at the centre while continuing with the practices we have at hand.”

“I would like to explore what the movement needs to do next so it expands, builds momentum and increases the strength of its demands. This certainly requires us moving from our echo chamber and, amongst other things, thinking how we can better demonstrate ways to #ShiftThePower, and ways and language to 'evidence' the broader benefits of shifting the power – beyond the moral argument and beyond the old way isn't working. It really is critical that we secure far more funding to support different ways of thinking, being and doing so the emergent becomes more mainstream. This will require hard(er) data to get money flowing and to help change hearts and minds.

Without this there is tinkering around the edges which I fear complements the co-opting of language and vision – and this is only ever the system repositioning itself to maintain its control. While I appreciate that people make a movement, I think we need to stop thinking as 'I' and start thinking as 'we.' 'I' erodes movement generosity and helps perpetuate silos. Work on internal organizational transformation as it will lead to ripple effects. If we as a very large organization can achieve some success, it would be important for the sector.”

“We want to consolidate the ranks that we've reached and reach out to more. We will do this by gathering civil society and peoples' organizations in various parts of our country.”

“Continue engaging with the people I met during the Summit and finding common ground with other organizations to work together to spread more #ShiftThePower practices and mentality across the field.”

“As an organization, we plan to advance the movement through knowledge sharing, hosting convenings and advocating for collaborative engagement of local organizations.”

“Bringing outbreaks of the movement to regions far from the centre.”

Some 16% of action plans involved in taking action together. Here are some comments:

“I would be happy to support any kind of movement / conversations about engaging with existing power holders – holding them to account / supporting them to change, etc.”

“We are currently working in three areas: at the national level we are promoting #ShiftThePower by taking the posters to the territories. At the Latin American level, we are in two processes. One arose from a visit of colleagues from Mexico and Argentina to Colombian experiences in which community savings and credit systems work, which generated an agreement for an exchange of experiences between Mexican, Colombian, Argentinean and recently Ecuadorian processes. The meeting should take place in May at the latest. The other process is the continuity of the climate change bucket in which we are maintaining the dynamics of meetings and joint work, with a meeting with organizations that participated in the COP on climate pending. A process that is moving forward is the alliance with Kujalink where we are going to hold two webinars, one for Latin America and the other for Africa in relation to climate finance.”

“Continue working on measuring what matters to change the way evaluation works – moving beyond quantifying numbers to recognizing differences made to be at the forefront of funders' requirements. Continue pressure to change funder / donors' approaches to be more needs-led that emanate from

grassroots – the people who know – to promote equitable relational approaches to funding for donors and funders to recognize that starting with needs means more ownership and as such greater impact and sustainability will be developed.”

“Promote the Territorial Regeneration Fund decided by the movement in Colombia. We seek to territorialize direct resources to local actors who are working for regeneration in Colombia. This could be an inspiration for the movement at a global level. Another idea: To create a national map of actors and assets that promote philanthropy in Colombia. We see the value of making visible all types of actors that forge development and that this can be a mechanism to direct resources to the territories, as well as to position community philanthropy as a bet for change in the country's philanthropy.”



Six plans (9%) involved searching for new ideas. Here are some examples of what people said:

“Facilitate a thought process session on innovation, scale, and designing for the future.”

“I would like to work on two major issues: the first is the generation of tools based on #ShiftThePower for the mobilization of local resources and the creation of resource maps in the territories, and the second is to start reflecting on care and burn out in the social sector, which is very visible and does not have so many tools.”

Three plans (5%) involved developing stories and narratives:

“Contribution in telling and sharing everyday stories of grassroots women’s philanthropy. Making visible the women’s movement that is not visible, because the small is very important even if not visible.”

“Some more workshops to release a white paper / blog that can be co-created about our ideas on #ShiftThePower.”

Reflections on the data

In all my years of evaluating large international meetings, I have never experienced one as successful as the #ShiftThePower Global Summit in Bogotá. With its leitmotif of **inspiring hope and joy**, it has set a new standard for such meetings.

The deep dive into the data on the preceding pages explain why this is so. The central achievement was the Summit's sense of intimacy and connection – no small feat for a conference of 730 people from 77 countries. Participants felt that it was “their space”, while the content and the process gave them the opportunity to reflect on their role in systems change. For many, there was a profound awakening from an “egoic self”, motivated by a career in the development industry, to a “transcendental self”, motivated by being part of an ecosystem to make another world possible.

Such a shift in identity is required if we are to #ShiftThePower. As people take this wider perspective, they see their organizations differently. Almost all outcomes from the meeting were about developing relationships with others to change the system, rather than amending the goals of individual organizations to be more effective in meeting their specific missions. In this way, organizations shift from transactional relationships with donors to transformational ones focussing on the wider system. This involves different ways of being and doing, free from the restrictive and ineffective framework of international development. An overall conclusion was that we need to see ourselves as part of a movement rather than as the manifestation of some organizational goal.

As people continue to work together on the Road from Bogotá, it is clear that the discourse of #ShiftThePower has not only become well-established but is also gathering pace. In the eight years since the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy in Johannesburg, it is clear that funders are beginning to see it as a way forward. For example, in a [recent interview](#), Hilary Pennington, Executive Vice President of the Ford Foundation, welcomed the: “...interesting models emerging at scale like the #ShiftThePower movement.” There is now a significant platform to develop the idea behind the Summit, namely that “another world is possible.”

Barry Knight, Adviser to the Global Fund for Community Foundations
October 2024

