

Responsive Philanthropy

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MIMAT leadership in Puerto Lempira, Honduras. Photo courtesy of Global Greengrants Fund.



Redirecting International Environmental Grantmaking

Whether grassroots groups and communities are sorting trash as an alternative to garbage incineration, establishing seed banks instead of planting GMOs, or managing the forests where they live instead of working on biofuel plantations, we know that 99 percent in the Global South have the most, and probably the best, solutions for our planet's

future. Sustained advocacy, organizing and networks focusing on a range of issues are building strong social movements and creating change around the world. Yet, the U.S. funding community largely ignores these efforts.

China is the world's largest manufacturer of paraquat – a highly poisonous weed killer. The chemical is responsible for thousands of deaths among Chinese farmers and their families each year, and tenfold more across the globe.

Pesticide Eco-Alternatives Center (PEAC) is a grassroots organization in the Yunnan province of southern China that began advocating in the early 2000s for improved safety and educa-

By Terry Odendahl and Peter Kostishack

tion around pesticide usage. PEAC received its first grant of \$5,000 in 2003 from Global Greengrants Fund. In 2005, the group launched an investigation into the production, use and health risks of paraquat. PEAC distributed its findings to farmers, local organizations and policymakers, and then launched an Internet-based advocacy campaign aimed at securing a ban on the use of paraquat. Just this past April, the Chinese government released an official announcement stating that the country will phase out paraquat "in order to protect the health and safety of the people." The chemical will be banned by 2016. *(continued on page 13)*



challenging grantmakers to strengthen communities

A Message From the Executive Director



Dear Readers,

I've been feeling a sense of gratitude lately. I was out of the office and on vacation for three weeks straight earlier this summer – the longest break I've taken since I came to NCRP nearly six years ago. In addition to the obvious benefits of a vacation, I also was reminded of the fantastic staff here. They're rarely in the spotlight, but the work of this organization wouldn't be possible without them, and it continued seamlessly in my absence.

So, if you appreciate this publication and our blog, web site, electronic newsletter and social media outreach, you've got Yna Moore and Meredith Brodbeck to thank for that. And if you value the cutting-edge research NCRP puts out, it's because of the great work of Niki Jagpal, Lisa Ranghelli and Kevin Laszkowski. If you value our webinars and conference presentations, our *Philanthropy's Promise* initiative, or the personalized outreach to our members, know that Sean Dobson, Christine Reeves and Samantha Davis make it happen. If you're a funder of ours and you appreciate getting well-crafted proposals and reports on time, you can thank Kevin Faria. And supporting all of us with the behind-the-scenes administrative work that is so vitally important to a nonprofit is Beverley Samuda-Wylder.

I'm also grateful for current and former board members of NCRP. And in this issue of *Responsive Philanthropy*, former board chair Terry Odendahl of Global Greengrants Fund discusses international environmental grassroots philanthropy with coauthor Peter Kostishack. They make the case to grantmakers that funding grassroots groups brings "innovation and creativity to solving the world's most pressing and complex issues."

Deborah Ellwood, executive director of CFLeads, looks at community foundations engaging in policy work and the unique attributes that make community foundations particularly helpful to the policy process.

In "5 Principles of Global Feminist Philanthropy," Kellea Miller, Caitlin Stanton and Esther Lever share their collective wisdom about best practices for global grantmaking for women's rights.

Stefan Lanfer of the Barr Foundation describes how the Barr Fellowship's recognition of great leaders and their relationships with each other builds a strong connectivity network. He writes, "When you have a network of gifted leaders bridging across all kinds of differences, powerful change will emerge."

Finally, our member spotlight highlights the work of the Consumer Health Foundation, a grantmaker that strives to achieve health justice in the Washington, D.C. region.

Our hardworking staff and board could not be as productive without the engagement of hundreds of members, allies and supporters like you, and we want *Responsive Philanthropy* to be as useful to you as possible. Please email us at readers@ncrp.org to share your comments, suggestions or story ideas.

Thank you for your involvement with and support of NCRP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "A. Dorfman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Responsive Philanthropy

Community Foundations as Partners in the Public Policy Process: What it Takes

By Deborah A. Ellwood

In the city of Dubuque, Iowa, youth aging out of foster care have been put at the top of the list for subsidized housing.

Students in Massachusetts will have the opportunity to participate in a high-quality community college system that meets their needs and is better aligned with the needs of the modern economy and the available jobs.

Families in Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas are receiving parent support services that have been proven to reduce child abuse.

Parents in the Fresno Unified School District are learning the importance of attendance to school success, and school administrators are developing innovative ways to help families overcome the barriers that lead to excessive absences.

The City of San Jose passed an ordinance that may serve as the "gold standard" for payday loan regulation by California municipalities that are concerned with protecting the most vulnerable of residents living in very-low income neighborhoods where these businesses are concentrated. In Montana, the interest people can be charged by pay day lenders has been capped.

High school students in Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Buffalo, Kalamazoo, New Haven and a number of other communities have access to financial support for college.

All of these policy changes – affecting the lives of millions – were won with the support and/or leadership of community foundations. Whether



Deborah A. Ellwood

it is the creation of a strategic plan at a school district that leads to better teacher training, the implementation of a regional business development program or the marshaling of federal funding for specific programs that bolster vulnerable families, community foundations across the country have been at the table as key partners and welcome allies. As Thomas Glynn, former chief operating officer at Partners Health-Care remarked, "In a town loaded with health care experts, the Boston Foundation has succeeded in changing the conversation about health care, making prevention, wellness and obesity central to our community dialogue."

AN IMPORTANT PART OF A COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

The community foundations doing policy work are different sizes, have different asset mixes and use varying business models, but they are all engaged with the public sector because they recog-

nize that the challenges their communities face are too large to be solved alone. They believe that pursuing a public policy agenda is an important part of an overall community leadership strategy because it can lead to bigger advances than grantmaking alone.

UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES AND A RANGE OF TACTICS POSITION COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS WELL

Community foundations have unique attributes that make them particularly helpful to the policy process, including political independence, flexible resources, permanence, local relationships as well as a public charity tax status that allows them lobbying flexibility and helps ensure local accountability. National funders have found that community foundations can be important partners on local policy issues. “The Annie E. Casey Foundation is working closely with community foundations across the country on the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading,” said Ralph Smith, senior vice president. “We have found them to be perfectly positioned to help shepherd needed changes to education policy and practice.”

Because of their unique position, community foundations are able to employ a number of tactics at different points in the policy process – support for research that documents needs and possible solutions, stakeholder engagement, direct communication with policymakers, public information campaigns, opinion pieces in local media outlets, lobbying and long-term community conversations that support broad resident participation in community problem-solving. Each of these demands varying levels of staff and grantmaking resources.

INTERNAL PRACTICES SUPPORT SUCCESS

While the public policy strategies employed by community foundations can take many forms, there are some under-

lying internal practices that help ensure that community foundations are effective in working with the public sector.

A board of directors that is committed to public policy as a strategy

Community foundations that are engaged in public policy work usually have boards that are committed to it as a core strategy. According to Tom Wilcox, President of the Baltimore Community Foundation, his board understands the importance of this approach. “When thinking through how we could make the biggest difference in building a better Baltimore,” he says, “our board recognized that we couldn’t do it without doing more policy work. Now our all of our strategies include a policy component, with the board, including people with views all along the political spectrum, fully committed.”

Boards most aligned around policy work are very comfortable working with the public sector and have a nuanced understanding of the risks and benefits of trying to influence public policy at varying levels of government. They are willing to allocate significant resources for this work, particularly for the CEO’s time. In addition, they allow the CEO and staff the leeway they need to make quick decisions within a particular policy strategy. They also recognize the need to be publicly tied to policy work when necessary and understand when it is more appropriate to play a quieter role.

Boards that are very committed to working with the public sector also look for CEOs who are experienced with government and even hire people directly from senior elected or appointed positions. The Seattle Foundation hired the former mayor, the Minneapolis Foundation brought on the former county administrator and the San Francisco Foundation hired the former director of public health for the city and county. Boards from foundations as di-

verse as The Nebraska Foundation, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, The Pittsburgh Foundation the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo and the Denver Foundation all brought in CEOs who have worked directly in government at various levels. Meanwhile, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, The Boston Foundation and the California Community Foundation hired people with visible track records in the policy sphere who have aggressively carried that forward into their work with the community foundation. The Chicago Community Trust’s board shared their CEO with the public sector from November 2010 to May 2011 when he served as the interim superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools until a new superintendent was named.

For those boards that are not comfortable working with the public sector, CEOs can work with them to create a better appreciation and understanding of the role of public policy in building healthy, productive communities. Often, when boards examine the range of strategies to maximize community impact, the issue of the foundation’s role in policy emerges. If they choose to engage the organization more deeply in the public sector, they can then adopt the appropriate policies and practices.

Staff have expertise influencing policy

Those community foundations that are most aggressively pursuing a policy agenda often have a CEO with significant experience shaping public policy and those CEOs often hire staff with expertise in law, communications, or community organizing.

If the CEO does not have a policy background or the foundation is just entering the policy realm, the CEO might bring on another senior manager with relevant skills. At the Arkansas Community Foundation, for example, Heather Larkin, president & CEO, hired a vice president of community

investment with a background in law, who was a former staff assistant for the United States Senate Committee on Small Business, when the board determined that it wanted the organization to do more work with the public sector. “Hiring someone with experience in government and policy expertise has been invaluable in helping ARCF and our partners advance significant, long-term improvements in our communities,” said Larkin. “We are more sophisticated and our impact is much greater.”

In either case, it’s important that there are staff that understand how the policy process works, have a mechanism to intelligently analyze issues, are able to communicate clearly to the right audiences and have the sophistication and sensitivity to work with a range of community members to shape policies that affect the community.

Board and staff have relationships with a range of policymakers and community members

Whether it’s a board member who has close relationships with legislative leaders, a CEO who knows the deputy mayor, a communications officer who worked in state government or a senior program officer who worked in the external affairs office at a local hospital, relationships with the public sector matter. These relationships help open doors for a community foundation, assist staff in accessing information quickly and provide insights that are critical to all aspects of policy strategy.

Community foundations also need relationships with a number of partners – content experts, the media, other funders and not-for-profit leaders in order to advance a policy agenda. In addition, a growing number of community foundations are emphasizing the importance of building trusting relationships and creating safe spaces for

community members who are most affected by government policies to come together to address their concerns. They argue that it’s not enough to get “input” on issues; people need to be able to identify their needs and work together to craft solutions. In the end, this will lead to more effective and sustainable public policies and practices.

The community foundation has the infrastructure to legally and effectively engage in policy

Because work with the public sector carries a significant amount of risk, community foundations are wise to

have some basic internal policies and procedures in place around policy, advocacy and lobbying. Most importantly, they need to know and abide by basic IRS rules about lobbying as well as the state lobbying laws. A number of useful resources are available for community foundations engaging in this work, including *Foundations for Civic Impact: Advocacy and Civic Engagement Toolkit for Community Foundations* by the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, Council on Foundations, CFLeads and Rockefeller Brothers Fund. In addition, the Council on Foundations’ Center for Community Foundation Excellence offers a course, *Public Policy for Community Foundations*. The curriculum for this course was prepared by CFLeads.

In addition, there need to be well-understood processes by which policy issues are chosen and acted upon. It is helpful to articulate when a board should get involved, which will vary depending on the organization’s current level of policy involvement and experience. In addition to adopting internal policies, committing grantmaking and general operating resources for an extended period of time is important because few policy victories are won quickly.

While the practices articulated here are important to any work with the public sector, it takes time to get a community foundation to a point where it is comfortable taking on a policy agenda at the local, state or federal level. No community foundation has undertaken these approaches overnight. They usually pursue a deliberate process that takes them in that direction. Once they do, though, they can be important partners in bringing about the public policies and practices that are critical to healthy, thriving communities. ■

Deborah A. Ellwood is the executive director of CFLeads.

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5 Principles of Global Feminist Philanthropy

By Kellea Miller and Caitlin Stanton, with Esther Lever

The year 2012 marks some big birthdays in the world of feminist philanthropy. Global Fund for Women and the New York Women's Foundation each celebrate their 25th. Mama Cash, the oldest international women's fund, turns 30. And our big sis here in the U.S., the venerable Ms. Foundation, is approaching the big "four-oh."

Before blowing out the candles, we gather the collective wisdom about best practice and look forward to the next generation of global grantmaking for women's rights.

1. OWN THE "HOW"

Global Fund for Women's founder, Anne Firth Murray, writes, "The medium is the message: the way you do your work is more important than what you do." But that vital medium of *how* we do our work is often the least visible and the hardest to measure.

Our grantmaking – from how we seek and review applications to how we interact with grantees – makes the difference between top-down, one-off investments and long-standing social transformation. Many of us can cite best practices by heart, but we rarely set them down in print. We share our list here:

- **Be accessible.** This might mean accepting applications in multiple languages, ensuring that your web site is compatible with screen readers for the blind, or prioritizing funding for emerging issues.
- **Listen to grantees.** Involve the voices of those closest to the work

you fund in your decision making on grants and grant strategy. Listen to the strategies and solutions they propose.

- **Don't waste busy people's time:** publicize your funding priorities, application process and timelines.
- **Provide flexible funding.**
- **Provide long-term funding.**
- **Think beyond projects.** Look at networks, movements and systems of change.
- **Set goals and evaluate progress jointly with grantees.**
- **Share your challenges:** learn with and from grantees.

For the next generation of feminist philanthropy, the practice of flexible grants is a must. Too many funds for women and girls still follow project-by-project approaches, despite compelling evidence that short-term, project-based funding is unlikely to produce the changes we seek. NCRP was a pioneer in this research, and publications from Blue Shield of California Foundation, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations and MIT's Sloan School further link flexible funding with higher impact.

High-quality funding is also long-term. In particular, multi-year grants provide predictable resources and free organizations to do important programmatic work rather than constantly seek funds. Owen Barder's research at the Center for Global Development has found that the costs of one-time funding decrease its value to an organization by 15–20 percent.

We need to share, discuss and evaluate what it takes to enact our principles in not just what we do, but how we do it.

2. KNOW YOUR POWER. USE IT.

The best feminist philanthropies don't just work for the rights of women and girls; they understand their strategic power as donors.

First, they challenge traditional donor-grantee relationships. They acknowledge the power they have as philanthropists, then give some of that power away. They support grantees' decisions on strategy, work to build respectful partnerships and jointly set goals and evaluate progress.

Second, they engage donors in a movement for women's rights. That movement includes philanthropists of all kinds: over 25 years, 93 percent of gifts to Global Fund for Women have been in amounts of less than \$1,000 – a grassroots movement of donors supporting women's choices and leadership. But getting big impact will take big money. The \$100 million in grants provided by Global Fund since 1987 is just 10 percent of the more than \$1 billion in qualified requests received by Global Fund from women's groups worldwide. That gap represents untapped potential for change.

Recently, the levels of funding needed to fill that gap have begun to emerge. The Women Moving Millions campaign has motivated more than \$200 million in giving. Jennifer Buffet's Novo Foundation is a billion-dollar philanthropy benefiting women and girls. Public and



Photos by Paula Gianturco.

collective approaches to philanthropy, many pioneered by women's funds such as donor circles, build community while increasing resources.

At the fulcrum between resources and action, feminist philanthropies can leverage more than funding. We also have networks, access to influential people and media, and a public voice. We should use this power to change not only the terms of the conversation, but also who has a chance to participate in it.

3. FUND CONNECTED ACTIVISM

In February, NCRP released a report by Sarah Hansen, former executive director of the Environmental Grantmakers Association, blasting funders for approaches that "favored top-down elite strategies and neglected to support a robust grassroots infrastructure. Environmental funders spent a whopping \$10 billion between 2000 and 2009 but achieved relatively little because they failed to underwrite grassroots groups that are essential for any large-scale change."

This example calls to mind the distinction between broad funding and social justice philanthropy for women and girls. The latter can continue to offer a different approach, one that prioritizes grassroots and marginalized communities and supports their visions of change. This takes an in-it-for-the-long-haul commitment and relationship building, even when it might feel less efficient. It means thinking differently about concepts like "impact" and "sustainability." What is sustainability for an LGBT rights

group in a country that criminalizes homosexuality? Or for a girls' group led by youth? What is impact when the most realistic outcome is merely holding the line against further retrenchment?

One deep thinker in U.S.-based philanthropy, Katherine Fulton of the Monitor Institute, rejects both top-down and bottom-up strategies, favoring instead approaches that build networks between the two. The seeds of this approach already exist at many feminist philanthropies, but they can become intentional strategies, funding the grassroots and building connections with powerful and non-traditional allies. One recent example, the Red Umbrella Fund, launched in April 2012 and hosted at Mama Cash, is the result of a three-year collaboration between sex workers' rights activists and donors, who came together to develop resources to protect the human rights of sex workers.

4. MAKE A BIGGER PIE. OR BAKE A WHOLE NEW ONE.

The language of gender equality is finally on the global development agenda. The Foundation Center and Mama Cash's recent study found that 90 percent of European foundations express interest in funding women and girls. However, it also documents that the median percentage of *total grant monies allocated by European foundations in support of women and girls was just 4.8 percent*. This year, the African Development Bank published a meta-evaluation of gender policies at devel-

opment institutions. Their finding: leadership of bilaterals and multilaterals like the World Bank, UNICEF and UNDP "has not consistently supported or prioritized the mainstreaming of gender equality ..." Making a bigger pie means getting past rhetoric to action.

At the same time, new opportunities are opening unforeseen spaces to access large-scale development monies while maintaining feminist grantmaking principles.

The UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality is recent innovative partnership that prioritizes women's rights organizations and leverages the United Nation's relationships with government donors. Since its founding in 2009, the fund has delivered \$70 million to women's rights organizations and government agencies working to advance women's economic and political rights. One of the most substantial resources for gender equality globally, the fund follows a competitive grantmaking process that upholds feminist principles from application to review to monitoring and evaluation.

We also need to know when to say no. Scholar Gita Sen has said, "If development currently is a poisoned pie, then why would women want a larger share of it?"

Fundraising often requires compromise and negotiation from different positions of power. At its worst, this can mean co-option of social movements. So, do we grow the pie? Bake a new one? We expect this debate will continue. It should.

New and Renewing Members

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Arca Foundation
Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.
CalNonprofits
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Consumer Health Foundation
Daphne Foundation
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
East Bay Community Foundation
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Korean American Community Foundation
Melville Charitable Trust
Mertz Gilmore Foundation
Nathan Cummings Foundation
National Partnership for Women and Families
Needmor Fund
Retirement Research Foundation
Robert Bowne Foundation
Rosenberg Foundation
Scherman Foundation, Inc.
Stewart R. Mott Foundation
Surdna Foundation, Inc.
Tides Foundation
UM School of Social Work
United Way of Greater Los Angeles
United Way of the Bay Area
Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation
Walter and Elise Haas Fund
YWCA USA
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation



Schoolgirls in Memuna Mahama Yahaya's electoral area. Photo by Paula Stromberg.

5. LEARN AND SHARE

Donors – in all shapes and forms – are movement actors. We have a responsibility to share learning and refine our contributions.

How can foundations hold up their end of the deal?

First, we can apply feminist monitoring, evaluation and research practices. As activist and scholar Srilatha Batliwala has stated, “Organizations are responsible to their causes to learn through monitoring and evaluation.” We extend the same to grantmakers.

Good evaluation not only helps us improve our work but makes us better advocates for women’s and girl’s rights. To do this well, we need high quality data, feminist evaluation processes and a commitment to transparently share our learning. The International Network of Women’s Funds has launched a promising initiative on evaluation and feminist philanthropy. Global Fund for Women’s evaluation partnership with Dr. Brooke Ackerly at Vanderbilt University yielded learning on the connection between rights-based approaches to change and tangible results for gender equality.

Second, we can reflect back the strategies and priorities we hear from women’s movements and *learn from the feedback we get*. (What issues matter most to you? What are we missing? What is new?)

Third, we can continually refine our own practices and processes to become

even more effective, responsive and accessible. For example, Kellea Miller’s academic analysis of the Fund for Gender Equality’s grant pool spurred the fund to adopt new requirements that increased its accessibility to feminist organizations around the world.

CONCLUSION

Looking to the next milestones, we hope to spark debate of how feminist philanthropy deals with money, power, access and understanding and communicating our impact. We will be more effective, responsive and respectful grantmakers for laying bare our assumptions and our vision for the future. ■

Caitlin Stanton is the senior program officer for learning, monitoring and evaluation at Global Fund for Women. She has worked in international women’s rights grantmaking since 2001.

Kellea Miller has worked with a range of organizations, including Global Fund for Women and the UN’s Fund for Gender Equality over the past decade. She is currently an independent consultant and is completing her Ph.D. in sociology with a focus on development financing for women’s rights globally.

Esther Lever works as the officer for philanthropic partnerships in the Netherlands for Mama Cash.

First Relationships. Then Results.

By Stefan Lanfer

MIA IN THE “EFFECTIVENESS” DEBATE – LEADERS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

There is a lively debate in the nonprofit sector about effectiveness. This has led some to focus on finding and scaling effective organizations. Others are looking to new kinds of cross-sector collaborations with potential for “collective impact.” Both approaches seek to rewrite a familiar story line of isolated gains failing to deliver large-scale change. Yet, both often gloss over a vital ingredient of effective organizations and collaborations – namely, great leaders. As a result, we pay a lot of attention to program models, collaborative processes or ways to measure impact. We pay a lot less attention to what it takes to help great leaders deepen their individual and collective potential.

One recent exception is a case study, “Networking a City,” from the Summer 2012 Stanford Social Innovation Review. Coauthored by Marianne Hughes of Interaction Institute for Social Change and Didi Goldenhar, “Networking a City” argues that great leaders are rejuvenated and collaborative efforts sparked by strong relationships – what is more commonly called social capital. Their focus is the Barr Fellowship. Created by the Boston-based Barr Foundation in 2005, the fellowship aims to celebrate and connect extraordinary leaders in Boston. It includes a three-month sabbatical, group travel to the global south (for example, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Brazil and Haiti) and

the opportunity to join a remarkably diverse network. The authors describe the impact on Boston this way:

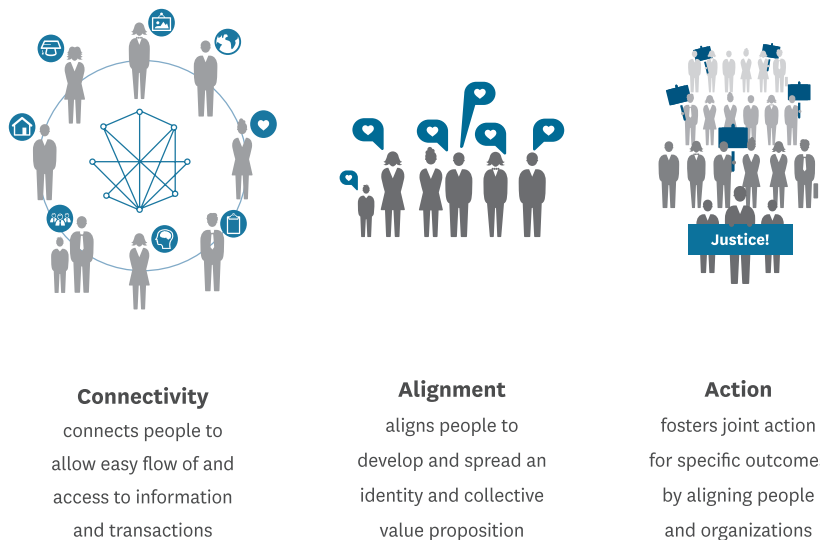
After eight years, the Barr Fellows Network has been the force behind an unexpected series of cooperative efforts among leaders of local nonprofits. It also has confirmed that social change networks are animated not by organizations, but by people. The foundation and its partner in this effort, the Interaction Institute for Social Change, thus shun centralized goals and top-down strategies and have encouraged Barr Fellows to identify and solve problems themselves. The network now numbers 48 fellows. As personal relationships have evolved within and across the first four cohorts, turf-bound com-

petition has given way to what *The Boston Globe* has called “a web of collaboration rippling through the nonprofit community with increasing effect.”

INVESTING IN RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUSTING IN EMERGENCE

The Barr Fellowship recognizes great leaders for their contributions to Boston. It is also an investment in their relationships with each other, without set expectations about results. Barr’s decision to focus on weaving a strong network and to be responsive, not directive, about outcomes was grounded in a body of research on networks, including work by Peter Plastrik and Madeleine Taylor, Jane Wei-Skillern and others. Networks come in three types – connectivity, alignment and ac-

FIGURE 1 - Types of Networks

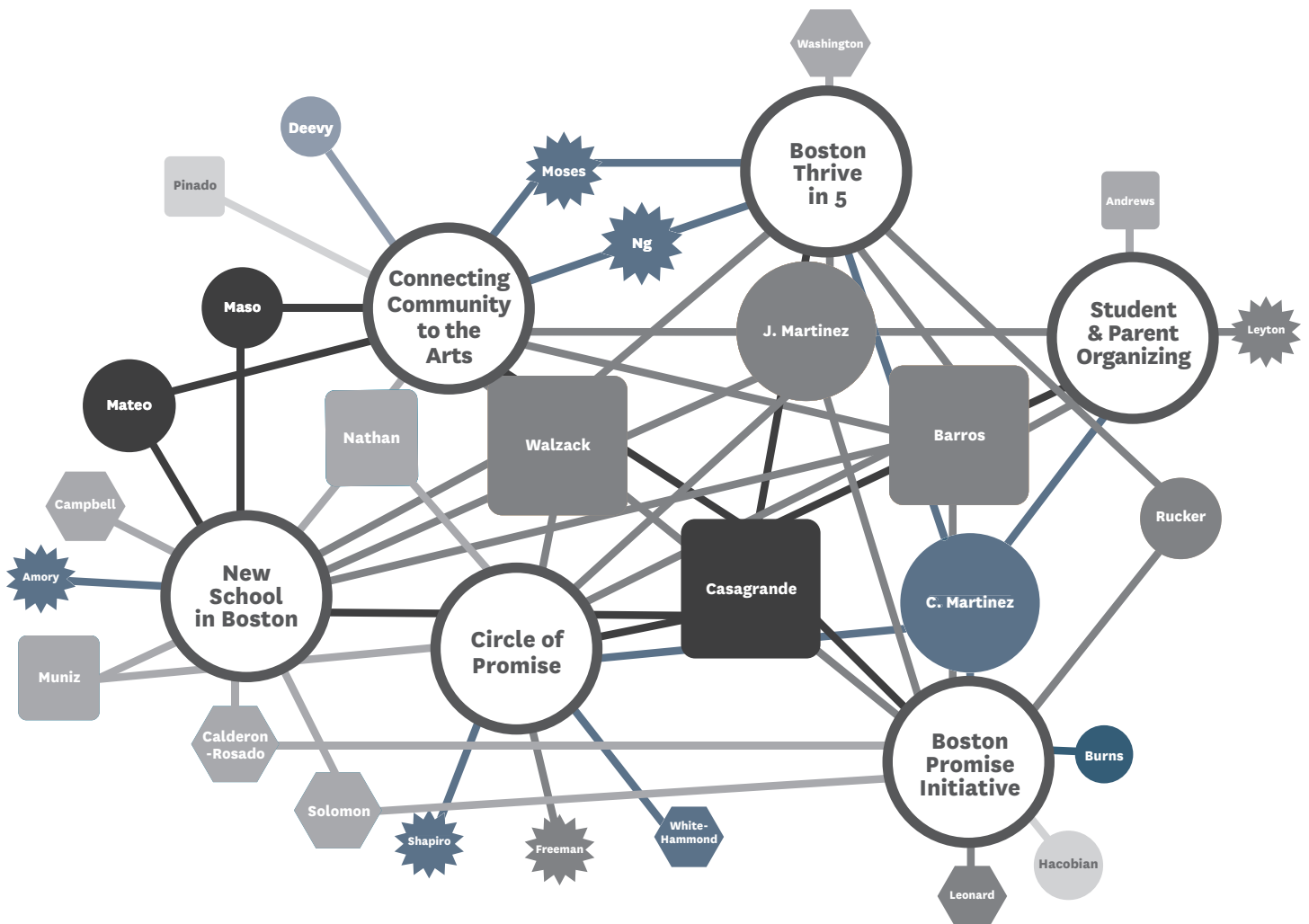


tion (See Figure 1). Understandably, the urgency many feel for outcomes means we often skip to alignment and action. Connectivity, we take for granted. It seems a nice to have, not a must have. Yet, connectivity turns out to be a powerful accelerator and amplifier of every other kind of network activity.

The promise of cross-sector collaborations has natural appeal. Many challenges are bigger than individual organizations. Yet, forging a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts is easier said than done. One limitation is the structure of relationships typically underlying such efforts. Often, these start

when foundations spend grant dollars or elected officials spend political capital to convene stakeholders. This can draw people into orbit around a common goal. In the parlance of network theory, this type of constellation often takes the shape of “hub and spoke.” Like a bicycle wheel, it has a single,

FIGURE 2 - Education Collaborations



Barr Fellows class by shape:

- 2005
- 2007
- ⬡ 2009
- ★ 2011

Sectors by color:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| HOUSING | IMMIGRATION |
| EDUCATION | YOUTH |
| HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES | ENVIRONMENT |
| ARTS & CULTURE | |

powerful center linked to many on its periphery. At their best, such networks organize resources, coordinate activities and get results. But if the center fails, if financial and political capital are exhausted, they often flounder, and gains are not sustained.

For these reasons, Barr and the Interaction Institute for Social Change decided to focus on building a connectivity network, and to create opportunities for disruption and authentic connections. If collaborations emerged, they would follow passions and possibilities that network members discovered on their own.

SKEPTICS WON OVER AS RESULTS EMERGE FROM A MULTI-MODAL NETWORK

Some fellows were initially unconvinced by Barr's insistence that it had no agenda for the network. "I'm a goal-oriented Mr. Fix-It," said Mos-sik Hacobian, a member of the Barr Fellows 2005 class, "and I wanted to have a specific focus. We wanted to see quicker results in Boston. I was skeptical about this grand theory of emergence." Yet, in time, as more collaborative efforts have emerged, skepticism has dissipated.

One example is the Boston Promise Initiative. In a 2008 campaign promise, President Obama pledged to replicate the Harlem Children's zone. In 2010, this became the "Promise Neighborhoods" – a competitive grant program to "design comprehensive approaches for addressing the education and developmental needs of children in distressed, high-poverty communities." When this was announced, several Boston organizations began positioning themselves as lead applicants. Many feared, however, that if Boston produced competing applications, success was unlikely. In the end, one organization emerged as lead – the Dudley Street Neighbor-

hood Initiative, headed by John Barros, a 2007 Barr Fellow. Asked how this happened, Barros explained: "If it weren't for the Barr Fellowship, I don't know how we would have negotiated a single Boston application. There were some difficult conversations that we could get through because of the relationships, the trust and the social capital we built."

Boston's final application was one of 300 from 48 states. Of 21 invited to submit full proposals, Boston's was one of three earning a perfect score. Unfortunately, Boston's full proposal was not among those chosen for implementation grants – at least in the first round. Faced with a similar outcome, a hub and spoke network might have disbanded. Yet, in Boston, the strength of the relationships underlying the effort has propelled the work forward. Timelines and scope have evolved, but work continues. For example, this fall will mark the opening of a new school in the Boston Promise neighborhood – The Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School – a vision made real by John Barros, other fellows and many others working together behind the scenes.

From the beginning, Barr has worked with evaluators to understand how the network is changing and to improve the Fellowship. This has included detailed interviews and network mapping. Figure 2 is drawn from this work. A visual antithesis to a hub and spoke network, it shows tightly woven, interconnected clusters of fellows who have self-organized to collaborate on multiple education-related projects. Barr has similar maps charting collaborations in other areas. The differing shapes represent different fellows classes. Differing shades indicate different sectors. The size of each shape indicates how frequently fellows report getting work-related assistance from each other. Unlike hub and spoke networks, this one

is "multimodal." There is no one center. And this gives the networks resilience. Even when funding is gone and political winds shift, there is still energy to move collaborations forward.

THE POWER OF DISRUPTION FOR BRIDGING ACROSS DIFFERENCE

Research by Robert Putnam and Tom Sanders makes the important distinction between two types of social capital – bonding (with others like me) and bridging (across differences). Typically, bonding is easy; bridging is hard. Yet, bridging is also vital. New ideas and new solutions to persistent challenges come from leaders able to transcend silos and "groupthink" of homogenous networks. Bridging is also an essential capacity for urban leaders, who must cross boundaries of race and class to create community. This is what makes the Barr Fellowship so powerful. It is a tightly woven network of bridging connections. Its members are diverse in age, race, sector and geography. Few knew each other before being inducted. The exceptions were those who knew each other from opposite ends of pitched battles over projects, or funding, or politics. Now, they know and trust each other deeply.

How did this happen? In a word – disruption.

The Barr Fellowship begins with a three-month sabbatical. In itself, this is a disruption for leaders, who typically have never had such an opportunity for personal growth and rejuvenation. Yet, from the perspective of social capital, it is critical that each class of twelve fellows spends the first two weeks of their sabbatical traveling together to the global south.

On these "learning journeys," fellows are immersed in experiences that open minds and hearts. They interact with indigenous leaders who, despite scarce resources and great challenges, provide examples that stir the imagina-

tion, inspire and bolster confidence for fellows to achieve what they may never have considered possible. Conversations and connections happen among fellows in many casual and unplanned ways during these journeys. A facilitator from Interaction Institute for Social Change provides structured opportunities to debrief, reflect and imagine together, as well.

Barr has a detailed logic model outlining its thinking for how an investment in disruption translates into positive change for the leaders themselves, their organizations, Boston and even the world. Here is the idea in brief:

- When boundaries are significant, it takes disruption to get to authentic relationships.

- It takes authentic relationships to build trust.
- Only when they have real trust can people bridge across differences.
- When you have a network of gifted leaders bridging across all kinds of differences, powerful change will emerge.

This dynamic is perhaps best expressed in the words of one Barr Fellow, who shared this reflection on his first learning journey:

We were able to open up to each other and state what we thought, what our fears were personally and professionally, where we thought we were going. That was fantastic!

To have someone to whom you can say ‘I’ll call you at three in the morning,’ or ‘I’ll be over at your house,’ or, ‘I need some time to debrief, a mental health break,’ or ‘my spirits are low.’ Those are opportunities that were created. You can overcome any obstacle whatsoever if you have someone to fall back on.

To learn more, visit www.barrfoundation.org/fellows. ■

Stefan Lanfer is the knowledge officer at the Barr Foundation.

Graphics by Hairpin Communications, courtesy of the Barr Foundation.

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Redirecting International Environmental Grantmaking

(continued from page 1)

According to Sun Jin, deputy director of PEAC, "It's not only the success of China's stop-paraquat campaign, but is also meaningful to the health and life of millions of people in China." Given that this ban also will halt paraquat production in China, the impacts of this organization's grassroots work will likely stretch much further – benefitting small-scale farmers and organic agriculture movements around the world.

Global Greengrants Fund provides small grants – usually from \$500 to \$5,000 – that allow quick and flexible support for grassroots actions, positioning groups to respond to challenges as they emerge. Our funding promotes the creativity of local leaders who are best positioned to protect their land, water and livelihoods in the face of ongoing environmental and human rights challenges, supporting hundreds of different solutions in as many different places, each one appropriate to the context and culture of the region.

In order to identify the groups that are doing the best work and are most in need of support, we have built a strong network of activists and community leaders from every walk of life. These locally based experts comprise our 13 regional advisory boards throughout the world, each operating under its own grantmaking strategy, tailored to the pressing issues in their respective regions. It is through their efforts that Global Greengrants Fund is able to fuel local solutions driven by those directly affected.

Large and disappointing international convenings about the environment, such as Rio+20 in Brazil this summer, or the earlier UN Conferences of Parties on Climate Change, confirm that the world is deeply divided about how to save the planet and the people who live on it. According to Nnimmo Bassey, founder of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria and chair of Friends of the Earth International, the world's largest federation of grassroots organizations



Chinese workers spraying Paraquat without proper protection. Photo courtesy of Global Greengrants Fund.

fighting for environmental and social justice, "The trend has been set right from Copenhagen in 2009, in Cancún and in Durban, that these gatherings are not really about real solutions."

We also must ask if the U.S. funding community is tackling real solutions. The vast majority of environmental grantmaking stays in our own backyard, in spite of the obvious fact that biodiversity or the climate chaos know no borders, and weigh heaviest on poor communities around the globe with few resources to respond.

In the North, we have begun to understand that the increased frequency and intensity of tropical storms is related to climate change, something those experiencing them have long known. When Hurricane Felix struck the Moskitia coast of Central America in 2007, flooding and mudslides devastated the region. More than 160,000 people were affected by that one natural disaster.

Cendela Lopez and her organization, MIMAT – a women's group in Honduras that works with indigenous Moskita to realize their rights to land,

sustainable livelihoods and cultural traditions – traveled to affected communities to speak with local women and their families about recovery.

Thousands of acres of crops had been destroyed. There was an immediate food shortage and loss of income, but the greatest concerns were long-term. Local women were especially vocal about the vulnerability they felt to future disasters and new weather patterns. They needed to build resilience in the face of their changing climate – a global crisis to which these communities had not contributed.

With \$3,000 from Global Greengrants Fund, MIMAT created three seed banks. Now, these subsistence farmers, and especially the Moskita mothers providing for their families, have access to new seeds if their crops are destroyed by drought, flood or some other environmental disruption. Crops of beans, rice, yams and yucca will continue to thrive and support local communities facing climate chaos.

In "Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment

and Climate Funders,” Sarah Hansen and NCRP contend that “we can secure more environmental wins by decreasing reliance on top-down funding strategies and increasing funding for grassroots communities that are directly impacted by environmental harms ...” While Hansen’s study focuses primarily on domestic grantmaking, her arguments are even more valid for international environmental funding.

Grantmakers are beginning to see the need for a more global strategy on many issues, but they usually overlook the most local solutions. According to a 2010 report from the Foundation Center, international giving by U.S. foundations has increased steadily since the late 1990s, even faster than overall funding between 2006 and 2008. Although global funding was below these record levels by the end of the decade, the rate of decline was slower than that of domestic giving. Yet, “exceptionally large grants of \$10 million and more accounted for well over half (57.7 percent) of the growth in international grant dollars among these foundations.”

Health has consistently been the largest portion of international support from U.S. foundations, followed by international development and relief. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provides the vast majority of all support in both areas.

According to the Foundation Center, funding to “the environment and animals ranked third among international funding priorities in both 2006 and 2008.” Of this, \$461 million was a five-year grant by the Hewlett Foundation to Climate Works. Four U.S.-based international conservation organizations, whose 2010 incomes together exceeded \$2 billion, received much of the rest.

In 2011, Global Greengrants Fund paid the Foundation Center to undertake a special analysis of its most recent data on environmental funding. Over the five-year period from 2005–2009, including all grants of \$10,000

or more awarded by a sample of more than 1,000 U.S. foundations, \$1.5 billion went to environmental work each year. Of that, nearly \$1 billion annually was dedicated to domestic U.S. environmental causes. Of the remaining \$500 million awarded for international environmental work, only 20 percent actually reached organizations based outside of the U.S. The rest went to U.S.-based international programs. Very little (less than 6 percent of the total \$1.5 billion to the environment) was dedicated to local environmental groups doing work in the Global South.

Contrast this support to the enormous investments that underfunded and unheralded environmental activists make in saving the planet. In “Who Conserves the World’s Forest,” Arvind Khare estimates that community investment in forest conservation, including time, labor and financial inputs, is between \$1.2 billion and \$2.6 billion per year globally. Local groups also make significant investments in

climate change mitigation and adaptation. A study of more than 80 community forests across Africa, Asia and Latin America found that forests sequestered more carbon when communities had secure ownership and greater autonomy over their management. Secure tenure to common property resources, strong local resource management institutions and the capacity to build networks and resolve conflicts with neighbors are also variables that increase the ability of communities to adapt to climate change.

A few large funders are changing their approach and we applaud them. In 2010, the MacArthur Foundation’s Conservation and Sustainable Development program completed a 10-year review of its grantmaking. From the findings, it has initiated a new strategic approach to promote development that respects the environment. One of the key parts of this new approach will be to support “conservationists to work with stakeholders to explore options and identify conservation scenarios that maximize benefits and minimize costs to local economies and thus have broad support among the people most directly concerned.”

What can be done to ensure that some of those resources reach the environment’s unseen protectors? As grantmakers, we have an obligation to share our strategies for funding these groups, which bring innovation and creativity to solving the world’s most pressing and complex issues. Our efforts must be focused on ensuring that grassroots groups have the resources to continue to fight for the protection of our environment on the frontlines. ■

Many thanks to Hilary Byerly and Greg Miller for their background research.

Terry Odendahl is the executive director and Peter Kostishack is the director of programs of Global Greengrants Fund.

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Consumer Health Foundation

Washington, D.C.

www.consumerhealthfdn.org

Est. 1994



Photos courtesy of the Consumer Health Foundation.

The Consumer Health Foundation works to achieve health justice in the Washington, D.C., area through activities that advance the well-being and health of historically underserved communities. In its approach to community health, the foundation has a dual focus: assuring that all residents in the D.C. region have equal access to quality health care and addressing the social and economic conditions that shape the health of our communities.

Over the past three years, the foundation has worked hard to prepare for its next phase by finalizing its strategic plan and clarifying its values around health and racial equity.

“Health is 80 percent not related to health care; it’s related to where you live, your income, what kind of housing you have, access to education, the color of your skin, etc,” says foundation president & CEO Margaret K. O’Byron. “We have firmly embedded ourselves in the model of looking at

all of these other forces, which affect health and have started to do more work in that area.”

The foundation has discovered even more opportunities to improve health and the lives of underserved communities since the Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Rachel M. Wick, director of policy, planning and special projects, says, “One of the critical things that we’ve been engaged in is doing outreach and education in communities to inform them about what’s in the law. We’ve found that there’s a lot of misinformation out there. In fact, research shows that those who can benefit the most from the law know the least about it.”

Consumer Health believes that the upholding of ACA presents opportunities for other grantmakers to get involved as well, from educating communities to dealing with policy issues. “We think innovations such as engaging patients and raising consumer

voices are critical in terms of improving the quality of care and delivering culturally appropriate care. There’s a lot to be done at the local level and many roles funders can play in transforming the health care system,” says Wick. O’Byron adds, “Funders can also help make those broader social determinant connections when it comes to population health.”

The foundation also is busy preparing for its next leader; O’Byron will be leaving Consumer Health in the fall of 2012 after a 14-year tenure with the Foundation. “My hope is that we’ve provided a firm foundation that the next person can run with. This foundation continues to have great promise, and the prospects and opportunities for the next phase of its work are very exciting,” she says. ■

This Member Spotlight was written by Meredith Brodbeck, communications associate at the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP).



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NCRP's Grantmaking for Community Impact Project (GCIP) documented \$26.6 billion in benefits for taxpayers and communities in 13 states, and found that every dollar grantmakers and other donors invested in policy and civic engagement provided a return of \$115 in community benefit.

Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment and Climate Funders February 2012

For the environmental and climate change movements to regain momentum and win important legislative battles, more money needs to go towards grassroots organizing and advocacy. Environment and climate funders can become effective resources of a successful movement for change by decreasing their reliance on national advocacy groups and increasing funding for grassroots communities.

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