

THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION



GCSP organises first joint event on the role of philanthropy in peace and security and mapping the current global landscape for improved collaboration across sectors.

On 30 October 2017, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), in partnership with **Foundation Center** and Donors and Foundation Networks in Europe (**DAFNE**), led the event 'Beyond Grantmaking: the role of philanthropy in conflict prevention and resolution'. It brought together a selection of foundations, trusts, philanthropic associations and civil society organizations from Switzerland and abroad to explore common challenges and emerging practices within the field of conflict prevention and resolution.

Following a brief introduction by Anna Fink, Head of Resource Mobilisation and Marketing at the GCSP, participants were jointly welcomed by the Director of the GCSP, Ambassador Christian Dussey, and the Foundation Center's Vice-President of Knowledge Services, Dr Lawrence T. McGill. Ambassador Dussey identified the aim and purpose of the event: to bring different people and sectors together that would usually not interact to discuss the essential role of philanthropy in international peace and security. Dr McGill shared how philanthropists are beginning to become more involved in peace and security issues; he emphasized, however, that 'philanthropy needs to enter this area with humility.'

PHILANTHROPY IN TURBULENT TIMES

Dr Jean-Marc Rickli, Global Risk and Resilience Cluster Leader at the GCSP, led the opening remark briefly outlining the changing landscape of conflict in the 21st century. He noted the impact of historical developments since the Cold War, including the rise of proxy-wars, surge of

humanitarianism, transnational terrorism, controversial media tactics and a heightened sense of power of the individual, all of which shape the current global climate. A trend towards conflict has also developed, leading to amplified defence spending globally, driving a deeper wedge between nation states and the international development world.

The case of Burundi was subsequently explained by former Vice-President of Burundi and GCSP Executive-In-Residence Fellow, Dr Gervais Rufyikiri. Although Burundi has been largely absent of philanthropic organisations, Dr Rufyikiri concluded that philanthropic contributions could help locally in two key areas: education and ethical leadership. In education, by informing local people on the role of democracy which includes protecting and upholding their constitution; in ethical leadership, by promoting integrity and moral standards for leaders in key decision-making roles. Focused investment could help change the narrative of the nation.

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE: WHO IS DOING WHAT, WHERE AND HOW?

The panel discussion, moderated by Foundation Center's Dr Lawrence T McGill, identified current challenges, key actors and emerging practices among European organisations working within conflict prevention and resolution. Panellists commented on challenges philanthropists should be aware of, where philanthropy is needed, how donors respond to crisis and the importance of sustaining a long-term and flexible approach.

Dr Avila Kilmurray, *Consultant, [The Social Change Initiative](#), former Director of [Community Foundation for Northern Ireland](#)*, expressed that funding should be invested in peacebuilding *during* conflicts not only after a peace agreement has been established, as donors need to have the ability to move at the same speed as conflict. In order to do so, essential localised partnerships must be strengthened. She shared also on the importance of donors establishing a value statement in order to build trust.

Ms Celia McKeon, *founder of [Rethinking Security](#), formerly with [Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust](#)*, identified that philanthropy is needed where there are underlying causes of conflict: environment, military, nationalism, economy. This demands long-term commitment of donors toward sustainable prevention strategies happening within realistic timeframes. She reiterated that engaging at the local level and responding to root causes should be a key priority.

Mr Alan Bryden, *Assistant Director and Head of the Public-Private Partnerships Division at the [Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces \(DCAF\)](#)*, stated the importance of challenging state-centric logic when discussing security issues. He revealed that there is too much focus in direct aid on security build-up and there needs to be a shift towards proactivity and long-term projects which generate input instead of only output.

Ms Tirana Hassan, *Director Crisis Response, [Amnesty International](#)* focused her statements on the necessity of ensuring donors have a better reaction time in conflict. She encouraged moving away from academic report-writing and towards flexible non-traditional approaches including the use of technology. These could include use of satellite imagery, 3D reconstruction for policy makers to better understand conflict, and machine learning in social media that develops algorithms to spot certain developments happening in real-time.

Mr Marc Finaud, *Senior Programme Advisor, [Emerging Security Challenges Programme](#); Arms Proliferation Cluster Leader at GCSP*, shared that it is essential to consider a donor's point of view, although it may be a challenge. He acknowledged points of contention within the fundraising sector and reminded the audience that donors also have different ways of working depending on the sector, i.e. governments, private foundations, international organisations. He recommended that, 'the relationship between the donor and the recipient should be based on trust and constant dialogue, not on threats of legal proceedings' in order to maximize impact.

Interactive question and answer session took place to conclude the panel discussion which explored specific issues. These included local actors having proper access points to donors, establishing tools to help small NGOs find funding amidst bureaucratic and institutional systems, and building confidence between beneficiaries. A call to action was noted for external actors to be in contact with their governments to assess how they engage with other regimes when problems and conflicts arise. A key question was raised on how international diplomacy could be used to encourage philanthropy to take on a greater role in peace and security.

COLLABOR-ACTION

Valuable data was gathered in an interactive workshop that generated steps toward action for donors and grant-seekers. Together participants uncovered challenges and frustrations within the field and exchanged expertise, lessons learned and opportunities for action. The below information reveals key focus areas developed by a diverse group of experts and identifies where collaboration can be put into action. The methodology used in this session comes from the **Institute of Cultural Affairs** (ICA) in the UK.

In the workshop, current frameworks and approaches were assessed. Targeted questions were asked in order to encourage participants to look at obstacles and opportunities from the point of view of the 'other,' i.e. donors thinking as fundraisers and vice versa.

Challenges for donors include:

- Donor coordination and partnership
- Partner capacity and accountability
- Alignment
- Learning and evaluation
- Theory of change
- Engaging with local actors
- Risk assessment

Challenges for fund seekers include:

- Systemic institutional issues
- Generating buy-in based on popularity of the cause
- Securing the right match
- Defining and demonstrating impact
- Sustainability
- Lack of access or capacity
- Effective communication

Key conclusions were identified between the two actors, including but not limited to:

1. Prioritising trust-building between donors and fund seekers
2. Seeking alignment on values, purpose, objectives and aims
3. Establish long-term plans for sustainable solutions rather than quick fixes
4. Transparency on reporting, budgeting, and dissemination of funds to generate accountability
5. Developing open communication channels in order to maintain access points.

Further questions were raised including:

- From a grant-seeking perspective, is there access to reliable information that identifies key funding opportunities?
- On the side of the fundraisers, is the local organization legitimately representing donor interests and implanting funds according to strict budgeting and reporting?

[Detailed Notes from Workshop.pdf](#) (91.7 kB)

PHILANTHROPY'S ROLE IN PEACE AND SECURITY

The event identified that there is essential work to be done in closing the gap between donors and local actors. In a closing session, Ms Annika Hilding Norberg, Peacebuilding Cluster Leader at the GCSP and Ms Lauren Bradford, Director of Global Partnerships at the Foundation Center gave their final remarks.

Ms Hilding Norberg concluded that, 'we have the tools to overcome world challenges; all we need is the will.' She implied that it can be transformational to connect networks to form partnerships for better coordination and efficient distribution of funds. Philanthropists should also have the ability to access ground zero for greater impact.

Ms Bradford revealed that, '[Less than 1% of philanthropic funding is going to peace and security](#), so philanthropy does have a role in the peace and security field but it has to respect that this area of work runs at high stakes - it is not philanthropy as usual, there are rules to be followed with a high demand for adaptability.' She went on to say 'long term approaches to philanthropy in conflict prevention and resolution are non-negotiable as recovery in peace building takes at least a generation.' Ms Bradford has published [15 takeaways](#) on the topic on Philanthropy News Digest

Conclusions drawn revealed the need to link the global with the local country context by utilizing knowledge and expertise on the ground. Sharing data creates the space for better coordination, creating the foundation for relationship, development and trust between donors and fund seekers.