

# **COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS**

***LEARNING FROM A COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE***

**Process of Systematization**

*Mexico City, July 2004*



## PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS





## **Acknowledgments**

Deep gratitude to the  
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
for its constant willingness to contribute  
to the strengthening of  
Community Foundations

and

## **Celebration**

The eleven persons who had the privilege  
of participating in this  
process of systematization  
celebrate —

We celebrate what we shared, learned, suffered and enjoyed.

And we celebrate, together with others,  
the existence of Community Foundations in Mexico,  
that without a doubt, contribute  
to the enhancement of active citizenship.

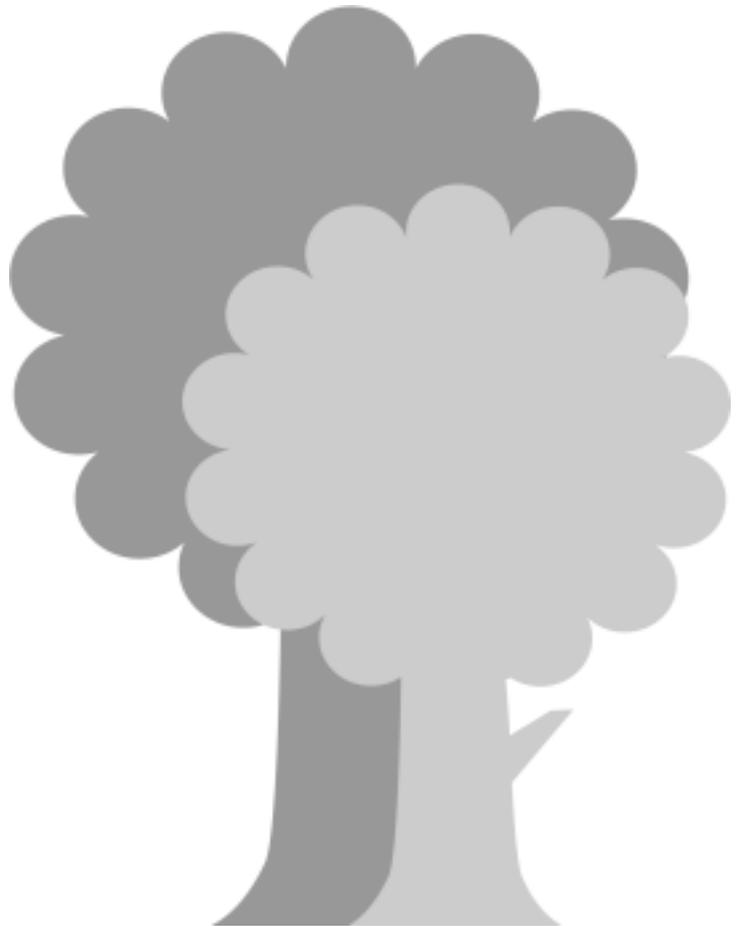


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# INTRODUCTION



*Every citizen should plan his participation in the community  
in accordance with his individual talents.*

***Plato***



# INTRODUCTION

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## The process

“Learning from a collective experience (*Sacando lecciones de la experiencia*)” is the product of a process of systematizing experiences that was carried out by eight Mexican Community Foundations (CFs): Tecate CF, *Frontera Norte* CF, Matamoros CF, Oaxaca CF, Puebla CF, *Fundación Comunidad*, *Fundación del Empresariado Chihuahuense* (FECHAC), and *Fundación Internacional de la Comunidad* (FIC).

Each participating Community Foundation (pCF) delegated one person to actively participate throughout the entire process.<sup>1</sup> This involved attending two workshops and gathering information regarding each CF according to the issues and contents selected, and on the basis of instruments designed for this purpose. These individuals also participated in reviewing this publication.

The process was carried out between December 2003 and July 2004. An outside team participated, consisting of two consultants specializing in community foundations and a coordinator<sup>2</sup> specializing in institutional strengthening—one of the central issues in the systematization of experiences.

## Knowing: practice-theory

The methodology used throughout the systematizing process is based on a recognition that *knowing* or knowledge can be found in experience, in the daily practices of pCFs. And that these foundations—more than “specialists” or anyone on the outside—are those who are familiar with, who experience

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<sup>2</sup> Vivian Blair, Magdalena Rubio, Laura Sarvide and Elena Luengas.

and confront the issues and challenges on a day-to-day basis. Clearly, foundations are those who have the elements for finding the most appropriate solutions and responses.

Within this conception of the process, the role of the outside team was to contribute to articulating and managing the existing knowledge in the pCFs, recognizing that this knowledge is unique and invaluable, although at times it is also dispersed, fragmented, underrated or disclaimed. The team also contributed *other* knowledge accumulated from other experiences or from theory or diverse concepts, with the aim of deepening or complementing the knowledge possessed by pCFs.

In synthesis, the knowledge from the experience of each pCF was identified, organized, contrasted and complemented with other experiences and theories, and consequently, when participants returned to their day-to-day practice, the foundations were strengthened from the incorporation of new knowledge.

### Contents

In addition to an introduction and final reflections, this publication consists of a core section entitled “Systematization Process,” which begins by giving an account of what the process signified and involved for pCFs and the persons delegated to participate directly. It includes a synthesis of responses to the question: Why systematize?

The process is organized according to five evolving phases, specifically:

**First phase:** unification of criteria and interests. An exercise was carried out for the purpose of revealing precisely what the pCFs expected to obtain as a result of the process.

**Second phase:** construction of images. This phase consisted of an initial effort in organizing the components making up the pCFs in general, using the POR approach developed by Espiral. After identifying and reviewing all the components of the pCFs, five key themes were selected to serve as the “gateway” to the systematization. The selected themes were the following: context, historic timeline, identity, governing body and mobilization of resources. The next step was to formulate the core question and to construct a cluster of questions to express as clearly as possible what participants wanted to know about the selected themes.

**Third phase:** reconstruction of experience. Participants focused on the task of reconstructing the experience of each pCF in relation to the selected themes, without making judgments as to the amount or quality of that experience. It was emphasized that this is a process of systematization, not an evaluation.

**Fourth phase:** analysis and interpretation. This phase began by each pCF sharing the usefulness of and difficulties experienced in reconstructing its experience. Then, there was an exchange process in which pCFs shared their perspectives of other pCFs. The third approximation was focused on the reconstruction of the experiences of pCFs in relation to the

five selected themes, identified as “knowledge from the experiences of pCFs.” Then, “other accumulated knowledge” taken from other experiences, from theories and diverse concepts was used to deepen and complement pCF experiences.

**The fifth** and last phase of the systematization process was focused on the communication of new knowledge.

This publication closes with some “Final reflections” that emerged from two different yet complementary places: from a place of reasoning and intellectual knowledge, and from a place of intuition and knowledge emanating from the heart.

## Reading guide

As you will note, four different voices are interwoven in the description of this process. A symbol has been selected for each of these voices, and is used throughout the text to help the reader identify and differentiate the responses from each of these voices. The four voices with their corresponding symbols are as follows:



the voice that points to conceptual aspects of the methodology used for the systematization process;



the voice indicating what took place during the process, through the application of the methodology;



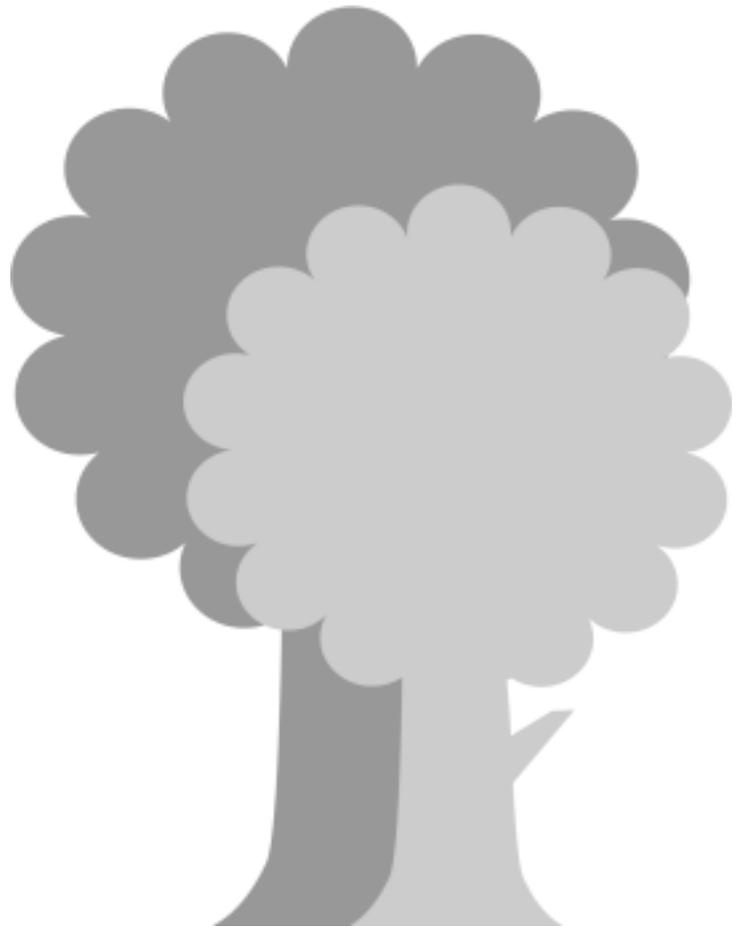
the voice of the pCFs indicating “knowledge from the experiences of pCFs”;



the voice of “other accumulated knowledge,” emerging from other experiences and theoretical and conceptual knowledge.



# SYSTEMATIZATION PROCESS



*Seek always to do some good, somewhere.  
You must give some time to your fellow man.  
For remember, you don't live in a world all your own.*

***Albert Schweitzer***



# SYSTEMATIZATION PROCESS<sup>3</sup>

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## SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

What was the significance of systematizing experiences?



*Systematization is an ongoing, accumulative process of producing knowledge on the basis of experiences in social intervention within a determined context.*



This process signified the production of knowledge regarding the practices of eight pCFs, or more specifically, knowledge about these foundations and their actions in the world —that serve to transform their surroundings, and in a parallel way, to transform themselves. The intention was not only to discover more about these foundations, but above all, to learn about *being* and *doing* better. *Knowing* and *being* are at the service of *doing*, and not only in a technological or technical sense, but rather with a focus on better understanding. The meaning of actions, the coherence between actions and intentions, and the directionality of actions were all specified and questioned.

We experienced the production of knowledge as an exercise in creating, as an art in letting our imaginations fly and interacting with each other in an unrestricted, creative way to make the most of the opportunity.

This involved systematizing from a particular way of conceiving reality (dialectic conception), of approaching reality in order to learn about it, and of acting upon reality in order to transform it. There are three central elements in this particular way of conceiving reality:

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<sup>3</sup> The source of inspiration for carrying out this process consisted of a number of articles, including: “La producción de conocimiento en sistematización,” María Mercedes Barnechea, Estela González and María de la Luz Morgan; and “El aporte de la sistematización a la renovación teórica-práctica de los movimientos sociales,” Óscar Jara. H: *La Piragua* journal, No. 16, 1999.

- Reality conceived of as a totality, as a comprehensive whole with parts that cannot be understood in an isolated way, but rather in relation to the whole. Nor can the totality be understood without understanding its parts.
- Reality conceived of as a historic process, or in other words, as a human creation, as a product and construction of our making.
- Reality conceived of as being in constant movement. Change is produced from reality itself, due to the contradictions and tensions between its elements, which are modified by reality.



*The systematization of experience is a rigorous exercise in the learning of and critical interpretation of processes experienced. It is an exercise that is clearly practical-theoretical in nature, and involves formulating categories, classifying and organizing empirical elements, analyzing and synthesizing, inducing and deducing, reaching conclusions and formulating them as guidelines to be verified in practice.*

*Systematization links immediate processes with their contexts, and involves the confrontation of practical tasks with the theoretical assumptions on which they are inspired. It creates new knowledge on the basis of concrete experience. It makes it possible to develop knowledge from day-to-day experience, and to explain the factors of change in processes.*



In this process of systematizing the experience of CFs, we viewed the process as being just as important as the product, since the persons directly involved in the experience were actively incorporated as primary stakeholders in the process. In other words, those who carry out the practice were those who did the systematizing, and they are part of what we were attempting to reveal. Thus, what is involved here is an intentional action aimed at transformation.

*In summary, systematization is the critical interpretation of experience, and based on the organizing and reconstructing of that experience, what is discovered or what becomes apparent includes the logic of the process experienced, the factors that have intervened in the process, how these factors have interacted, and why they have interacted in a determined manner.*

## RATIONALE

### Why systematize experience?

Following is a synthesis of what was shared by pCFs with regard to reasons for systematizing experience:



“We systematize for the purpose of producing and accumulating useful knowledge for Mexican CFs, in order to respond to new problems in a different way, to carry out a process of reasoning that facilitates taking the step from a confused vision of our complex reality to defining problems and courses of action, to learning through actions and reformulating actions on the basis of a better understanding.”

Another reason for systematizing was to provide guidance, moving from the isolated, individual knowledge of a specific CF to the organized knowledge of pCFs that can be shared, in order to facilitate the organization of knowledge produced from experience, to contrast what was known before with accumulated knowledge (theory), and to identify useful lessons for guiding practice. Still other reasons were to reflect upon practice and attempt to extract from practice the knowledge that has maintained that practice, as well as the knowledge produced from that practice.

Systematization allowed pCFs to capitalize on their experience and improve their positioning through a process that enhanced their legitimacy. Our intention—and it was successful—was to bring to light the theory that exists in the daily practice of each foundation.

## PHASES OF THE PROCESS

### How was the systematization process carried out?

The process was organized into five phases that were not followed in a strictly successive manner, but rather, we moved in and out of the phases, as a logical procedure became apparent in the process. Following is a description of each of the phases.

#### First phase: unification of criteria and interests



*The way in which systematization is conceived of and what is expected from it make up the indispensable starting point for the entire process. The focus in this phase is to explicitly identify the interests involved, and to negotiate a way to reach agreements that will assist participants in developing a clear understanding of what is going to take place, for what purpose, and in what way, as well as the expected product to be achieved, those who are to benefit from that product, how it will be disseminated and for what purposes.*



An exercise was carried out to detect the criteria and interests at play in the process. The purpose was to learn and apply what was learned in order to contribute to enhancing and professionalizing each pCF, while stimulating interaction among foundations. Also, to learn from practice and from the method for systematizing, and to share what was learned with other foundations in Mexico.

One of the participants pointed to “moving forward with certainty in relation to what is being constructed day by day, and at the same time recording and analyzing the experience of what we are doing and who we are.” Others mentioned the importance of “clarifying our role in order to achieve greater participation by boards and communities, making known what we do with greater clarity and without fragmentation. It’s an opportunity to make a critical analysis of who we are and what we do. We see this process as useful for positioning and acknowledging foundations as relevant stakeholders in Mexico.”

### Second phase: construction of images



*The purpose of this phase is to precisely define what will be systematized. This means constructing an initial organizing of experience, an initial approximation that is extracted from the field of experience to be translated into the field of knowledge.*

*It is necessary for those who are going to do the systematizing to define what they want to know about experience. Thus, a design for the systematization process or project is developed by carrying out the following process through successive approximations:*

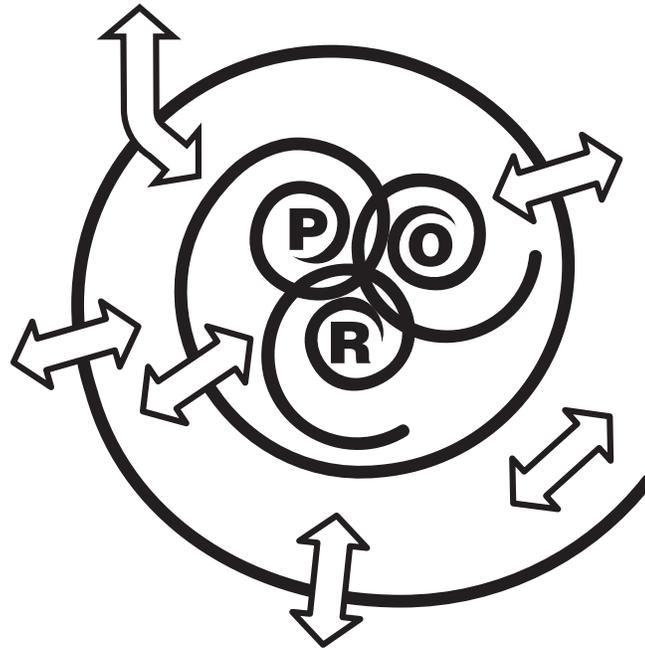
- *An initial organizing of what participants want to systematize, beginning with an account of the overall organization, to then identify a specific aspect or dimension that they wish to focus on.*

*This phase is complex since it requires an initial identification of the components making up experience, and thus it is necessary to divide totality, without losing sight of the fact that the selected dimension or aspect forms part of the totality and thus cannot be understood without referring to the totality. It is important to explicitly identify the relationships between the totality and the selected aspect.*



In the first of the two workshops in this process, participants made an initial attempt to organize information regarding the pCFs overall, and to identify their components. The POR approach, developed by Espiral, was used for this purpose. This approach acknowledges that, in a broad sense, foundations make up a social whole immersed in a dynamic process of oppositions and contradictions, and in an ongoing search for new forms of institutionality for resolving imbalances arising both inside and outside these foundations.

This approach also indicates that foundations have a political-ideological dimension, or a strategic **Purpose** or determined way of looking at the world; secondly, a social dimension, or the **Organizational and operational dimension** or set of social relations that gives shape to the way in which CFs are organized and operate, and determines whether or not they will advance in their Purpose; and a third dimension of **Resources** – human, material and economic elements that determine whether or not the Purpose will be carried out.



With the components of foundations identified and reviewed, we moved on to the following step which consisted of:

- *Selecting one or various themes that express what participants want to learn about.*

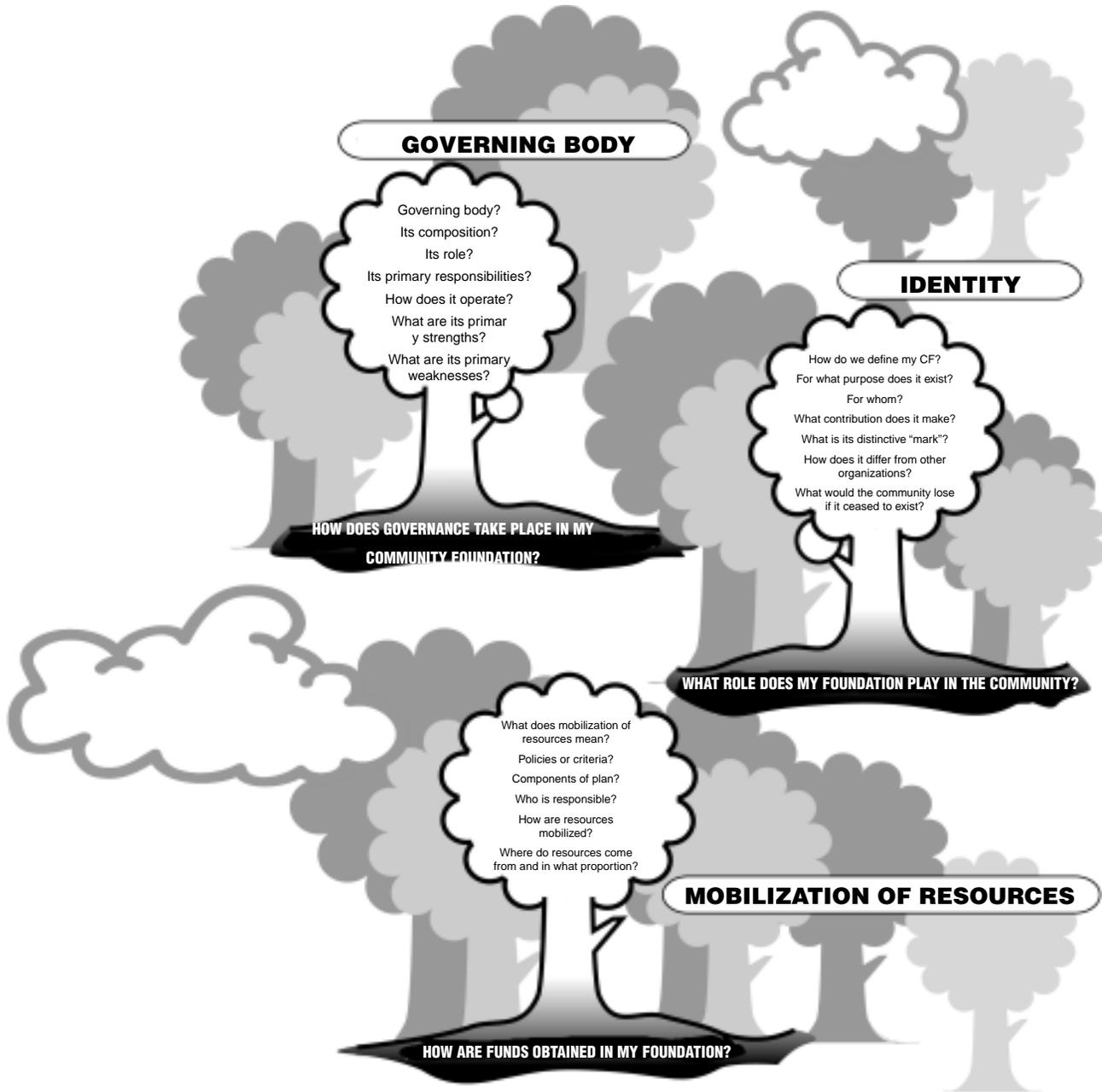
Five themes were selected as the “gateway” to systematization: context, historic timeline, identity, governing body, and mobilization of resources. These themes were selected on the basis of the experience from the institutional strengthening process carried out with four CFs in the state of Guanajuato, and because they were identified by the CFs as central or key themes around which others revolve, and as themes that are currently essential for the consolidation and strengthening of their experience. The next steps were:



*The formulation of a core question that expresses as clearly as possible what participants want to know with regard to the selected theme(s). The key to the process of producing new knowledge and moving beyond what is already known lies in the formulation of this question.*

*On the basis of the core question, a cluster of questions is constructed, expressing everything that participants want to know with regard to the experience that is being systematized. With the answers to these questions, and with organized information and theory, experience will be interpreted, leading to a better understanding of what has taken place. This involves organizing lessons obtained from practice and providing them with a rationale, and consequently, developing the necessary conditions for communicating these lessons to others.*

 The following core questions and corresponding clusters of questions were formulated by those participating in the process:



In order to bring dimension to the experiences related to the three selected core questions, each pCF was asked to place itself in its context and in its historic process. To accomplish this, an exercise was used to document the local context and local conditions in which each of the eight pCF operates —something useful for identifying the specific areas of opportunity focused on. This was carried out through a data search, using the internet and other sources.

Each pCF recuperated its own history to be told with a socialized, discussed, valued and useful commonality, to achieve its cohesion to the group. This historic recounting also made it possible to gain perspective for looking at the various stages and problems confronted by each pCF.

### Third phase: reconstruction of experience



*The focus of the third phase is to get another perspective, to make an organized description of what takes place in practice, but now from the perspective of the defined theme of knowledge. Some of the challenges involved in the reconstruction of experience are the following:*

*Remaining within the defined core question, avoiding reconstructing the overall organization, facing the risk of excessively broadening the description of what has been experienced or failing to give sufficient importance to the key dimensions for understanding.*

*Demonstrating the group of initiatives and interests that are at play in the experience, and that reveal the interrelationships between diverse stakeholders in a determined context, instead of one perspective of events.*

*Remembering that what is being reconstructed forms part of a greater totality, without which it would not be understandable.*



With the framework of the themes, core questions and clusters of questions, participants addressed the task of reconstructing the experience of their foundations, without forgetting that the focus was on reconstructing EXPERIENCE —whatever it was, whether a great deal, only a little, or nothing at all, and whether excellent, good, regular or bad. As well, the idea was to remember that this was a process of systematization or production of knowledge, and not an evaluation. The emphasis at this phase of reconstruction was to remain strictly descriptive.

It is recommended that different voices from the foundation are included in the reconstruction of experience, however this is not always possible. In this process, the way in which the reconstruction took place was different for each of the foundations. Some were able to carry out this process with the active participation of their boards, while for others, only the operations team participated, and in the case of one foundation, only the person participating in the process worked on the reconstruction.

### Fourth phase: analysis and interpretation



*This phase is focused on analyzing and interpreting what has happened in order to understand it. This is an extremely important phase in the production of new knowledge from experience. It requires breaking down the (totality of) experience into the elements of which it is composed, identifying the relationships between those elements, and understanding the factors that explain those relationships, and the consequences of what has taken place.*

*It is at this time that theories and accumulated knowledge are used to highlight, create links and enrich experience, from a conceptual perspective. This is the time to generate dialogue between theoretic knowledge and practical knowledge, something that turns out to be enriching for both.*

### Analysis and interpretation: first approximation



As a first step, pCFs shared with others the usefulness and difficulties experienced by each participant in the process of reconstructing experience.

“The most valuable was the reconstruction of the historic timeline, which helped in knowing where we are and revealing where we have come from, by recuperating the important, determining events for the CF. The events that marked different stages were brought into line with the interpretations made by each one of us. Through individualized interviews, board members recounted important, determining moments for the CF, and we gradually came to new realizations. They identified moments in time that helped to explain the responses characterizing the CF’s experience. This recapitulation changed our vision. There were moments that were very significant for everyone....And so, the historic timeline was the most valuable for understanding the current moment our foundation finds itself in.”

“It’s been very valuable for us. The historic timeline was something we didn’t have before in our CF. The questions were easy, since we’ve gone through a process of self-reflection. A former director and a project coordinator who had been involved since the CF’s beginning participated in the exercise. Now I understand a lot of things, like why we are where we are right now, and what needs to happen in order for the foundation to move forward. I’m thankful from the bottom of my heart for having done this work, since it was very interesting to be able to see that despite all of this, the CF keeps going and is constantly growing.”

“Our CF has an entire staff of only one person. In order to recuperate our historic timeline, I prepared a form with questions that were answered by internet. With some board members, there was a more personal exchange. We don’t have a lot to tell, since we are very recent. We began our historic timeline when the foundation was created and continuing to date, even though we don’t have a very clear process or defined stages. We’re moving into a stage of institutionalization, progressing slowly but with very firm steps forward. We want to begin generating assets, developing projects that distinguish us as a CF. We’re being cautious—there’s no hurry since the CF is forever.”

“This exercise served to further strengthen the process that we have been experiencing with systematization, and now we have a document. For us, the most relevant of all was managing to express, through very simple words, the reason that the CF is in our community.”

“In order to carry out this exercise, I sent a list of questions and a first attempt at the CF’s history to the founders, the fundraising trustees, and the board of directors. I invited them to answer the questions and to attend a strengthening workshop. I was very pleased by the response. Fourteen came, including the first director, the original trustees, the founders, the

current people, and a new trustee who had not yet joined in the work. It was a very interesting morning. We didn't have any problem creating the timeline, but the stages were difficult. We really liked the experience, and it helped to reinforce. We left the workshop very enthusiastic—I'm really pleased how it turned out."

"There isn't a lot of history to tell. The work helped me tremendously. It inspired me to call the community together for the first time. It was a first step in opening ourselves up to the community. We had a meeting attended by 25 persons from different sectors committed to forming part of the CF. We're a new CF and we have a great advantage since we're learning from those already operating, and they give us supportive tools."

"When we reviewed our experiences, the issue of mobilizing resources was where we found the most differences. Some focused on obtaining funds. Others said it was something more than money, since in order for there to be changes in the community, another type of resources must be mobilized: donations, channeling of funds, materials, in-kind resources—all of this makes for changes in the community. The president insisted that mobilization had to be in relation to financial resources. We asked ourselves: "are the non-financial resources measurable?"

"The responses from the foundation were brief, precisely because there's no history. The monograph helped me on the topic of context."

### **Analysis and interpretation: second approximation**



Each pCF gave its perspective on another pCF, and heard the perspective of another pCF on its own experience, for the purpose of sharing what they learned from the experience, and the similarities and differences they discovered.

#### ***Fundación Comunidad's perspective of Oaxaca CF***

- The Oaxaca Foundation has a high degree of institutionalization.
- There is diversity in the participating sectors. They have even managed to integrate people from the grassroots level.
- I see them as an example, and it tells me that "yes, it's possible."
- They have reversed the percentages of resources from international and national sources.
- The type of projects in which they invest are projects aimed at having an impact. They make major investments.

I learned

- That planning is basic.
- That permanence is very important.
- Comparing them to ourselves, I see that we have taken the path where opportunities have presented themselves, instead of defining the path we need to take.
- In the historic reconstruction, we did it more at an internal level, and Oaxaca did it more at the institutional level. I have realized that we need to do it for the community. What we need now is to enrich ours with the external aspect.

### Similarities with my CF

- ─ Interest in forming alliances, reaching agreements.
- ─ Knowledge of context.
- ─ The areas of initial investment; the public ones are similar. Now Oaxaca has comprehensive areas: local development, social responsibility and institutional strengthening.

### Differences

- ─ *Fundación Comunidad* emerged to a significant degree because of the interest of one person. Oaxaca emerged because of many people interested in the region, and everyone is interesting in seeing it move forward.
- ─ Its board is diverse, and operates in a more effective way.
- ─ Its vision is well aligned. We have strabismus in our CF. We need to have a communication strategy that will allow us to reach the point they have reached.
- ─ The level of contributions from members. It's not yet possible to cover operational expenses.



### ***Oaxaca CF's perspective of Fundación Comunidad***

I was impressed when I read *Fundación Comunidad's* systematization. I could see the professionalism that, as community foundations, we are achieving. Also, the amount of resources circulating is impressive. There are things that we need to look at again, in order to emphasize them more—for example, the mobilization of resources—and we have to systematize our experience to communicate it at all levels.

*Fundación Comunidad* has done impressive work in terms of:

- ─ Its diverse board.
- ─ Its alliances for cooperation with diverse stakeholders are interesting.
- ─ Its vision for strategic planning is common to CFs. They are following a line that has been planned and agreed upon by consensus.
- ─ The rotation of board members and individuals in the operations team is closely linked to finances. People grow along with the institution, and it's important to keep them. The personal situation of individuals in that they want to develop in economic terms, too, is quite valid. It will be more difficult to continue to grow, if people have to leave for economic reasons. The participation of board members entering, and the development of the board is a constant issue.
- ─ Naming an executive director
- ─ To see that communication is the backbone of CFs. Sometimes we lack the capacity to communicate even at the operations level.
- ─ Learning about the context in which we are working, as well as the needs and opportunities. It's vital to learn about the assets in communities.
- ─ Training is important. It's a topic that must be addressed. We must play a more active role in institutional strengthening, not only within but also in relation to others.
- ─ The institutionalization not only of the CF but also of the governing body goes hand in hand with the leadership of the founder, the one who gives an impulse to the foundation. It's important to seek strategies for transcending the leadership of certain individuals.

How long should they stay? It's important to institutionalize processes, and to have policies, manuals and clarity in the institutional process.



### ***Puebla CF's perspective of Matamoros CF***

- There are many similarities between the Matamoros and Puebla CFs.
- The stage of getting things going takes awhile. There are two years that you spend working to clarify the vision. The mission is vital for having success later on. This is something new in Mexico, and we must achieve clarity in order to share it and communicate it to the community.
- When I read their responses, I thought a lot about us. For example, in Puebla, I heard something about the CF once, and then I didn't hear anything, and I thought they hadn't done anything, and then suddenly they invited me to become part of the foundation.

#### Differences

- The diversity of reasons for beginning our foundations. Some reasons come from the outside, and some from the inside. In Puebla, there were five top-level organizations that decided to create something to strengthen what already existed. In Matamoros the idea came from the outside, and it took some time for the idea to take root in the community.
- It's different in Puebla because resources are local, in line with the foundation's philosophy.
- If resources had come from the outside, it would have been different, and in fact we would probably be different. We'd be in some other stage. It's like imagining growing up in a different family...

#### Similarities

- Empowering people so they know they're the best solution for their communities. This is the most important of all, and it's what makes us different from the rest, and is what we have in common—all of us who are working on this.
- Dedication. We don't operate [projects]. We place our trust in others, and we give them the tools so they can carry out their work. We are similar in terms of our dedication to this ideal.
- We don't operate projects. Our function is to promote social responsibility and philanthropy.



### ***Matamoros CF's perspective of Puebla CF***

- What is outstanding about the Puebla CF is that 80% of their resources are local.
- It emerged from five institutions. We began the opposite way, and we've moving in their direction. I find it encouraging that civil society organizations are willing to work with CFs.
- Puebla CF has had several directors. Finding a director is not easy—it requires time and resources. Changing directors is healthy.
- A company gives a sum of money to use in programs. The CF charges a percentage for administering the fund, and this helps to keep the office running. But it's not enough; there's not enough to keep the office functioning. It's an Achilles' heel. A CF needs resources to survive; it needs planning in order to keep itself going in the long term. The resources need to come from the local level.
- We have the same criteria.

### Similarities

- ─ Struggling with money.
- ─ Changes in directions.
- ─ Wanting to serve the community.

### Differences

- ─ The way in which our foundations were created.
- ─ Even though they've been operating for some time, there's still more to be done. We are beginning a process of institutional strengthening.
- ─ I didn't find many differences. I feel like I'm behind, but that we're going where the Puebla foundation is going. I really liked sharing with them, and the way they expressed their concepts. Their experiences will be helpful to me.



### **FECHAC's perspective of FIC**

From my reading, I would say that the processes are very similar. We have a great deal of will to serve. We're working on strengthening organizations.

With the experience we've gained at FECHAC, we've contributed to minimizing the processes others must go through. We're at the forefront because of the time we've been at this. What is mentioned by FIC refers to stages we've already been through, and they're going through them much more rapidly. Serving as a mirror for other foundations makes it possible for you to acknowledge your own situation, acknowledge your own process, discover things about your own foundation—for example, the community aspect. *Fundación Internacional* exists *for* the community, but is not *of* the community, since its resources come from the outside.

I discovered the positive aspects of our foundation's origin. The experience of business people, in terms of efficiency, results, and participation in entities—this has helped us to institutionalize our own entity. We were able to consolidate our process more quickly, and now we're trying to become more diverse. Others have been more diverse, and are now trying to institutionalize their foundation.

From my perspective, all of us emerged as a result of the social responsibility of a leader who brings people together, or from the coming together of three or four persons who are socially responsible. For some of us, it was easier because of certain moments in time. There are moments in time that leave their mark on our process of building, to become who we are.



### **FIC's perspective of FECHAC**

#### Similarities

- ─ In both foundations we are concerned about institutional strengthening.

#### Differences

- ─ Emergence: I learned about how it emerged in response to a tragedy, and the way in which they came together. FIC's beginning was smooth. Our board members were already in a CF and decided to give impulse to another.

- Its governing body is strong. It has a very clear leadership. For us, we need to work on integrating our leadership and our staff.
- The way funds are obtained. They have guaranteed funds from the tax. We don't, and we don't have local funds. Last year, we received a significant amount of local funds that were matched.
- Composition: we started with the idea of a diverse board. And it's a diverse board in terms of professions. But it still needs more diversity, because there aren't people from other areas, and socioeconomic levels in the community.
- In our committees, there's more diversity. In the environment committee, for example, there are lawyers, academics, and civil organizations. The committees aren't made up of only board members —and this is a way of integrating more voices. In FECHAC's board, there are only business people. In the committees there are people from other spheres, and in this way it's possible to integrate other visions and voices that intervene in decision-making.
- FECHAC is made up of business people. It's diverse because there are different political ideologies, and there is diversity in the visions, experiences and regions. Without a degree of diversity, institutions die out.
- The business sector agrees to contribute through the tax, and individual businesses make the payments voluntarily. They demanded that the decree be renewed. These are local resources.



### ***Tecate CF's perspective of Frontera Norte CF***

The experience of the *Frontera Norte CF* indicates to me that it has a strong identity, that they know where they're going and how to get there. Training has been fundamental in knowing the direction to take. I learned that what is the most valuable is to acknowledge and keep going despite the circumstances —to keep moving forward with firm steps, to reach your goals. It's the experience of being born, and beginning to take little steps. Gestation, birth, growth, and very solid, strong steps —thanks to Cemefi and Synergos.

#### Similarity:

- We are recently-formed CFs. We're growing with similar, firm steps forward, thanks to the experiences we have had the opportunity to become familiar with, and that take us by the hand, and to the support from international resources that have helped us to progress.

#### Differences:

- Its board is solid and established, in terms of social responsibility. This is something we don't yet have in our foundation.
- In addition to having international resources, there are contributions from its board.
- Its board is participative and it's clear about how to operate a foundation. I think CFs *are* their boards. We turn ideas into actions. If the board doesn't evolve, it's not possible for the people and the institution to evolve. The merit and responsibility belong 100% to the board. Leadership and momentum come from the board.
- We emerged about the same, and they have made a lot of progress, and we have been unable to move ahead.



### ***Frontera Norte CF's perspective of Tecate CF***

We emerged nearly alongside the Tecate Community Foundation. We emerged from the opportunity that *Alianza* represented —to join in that effort. The opportunity was there, there were people interested, and we got involved.

I learned

- Both of our foundations have boards with renowned people who have resources. The difference is that my board is passionate, although it doesn't know how to bring things down to earth. In the case of Tecate, this is what is keeping it from getting started. I don't think it will be hard for them —what they need is passion, since without it, progress is slow or nothing happens at all.
- We're very much the same, but two little steps ahead. My board members were already meeting together beforehand, and they started to do things until they hired someone, and then things started to happen. The tax exemptions help, and so does the logo. They are beginning to acquire an identity, of feeling more part of a group that wants to work for the community.
- The lack of staff. She's very present and committed, but until there's someone who brings all the dreams to a more rooted place, nothing's going to happen. For Tecate, it's important to invite a director to join them. There is a great deal of motivation from all that's being learned through these trainings. What's needed is someone who starts putting things down on paper, and turns dreams into reality. A director needs to sell the board's dreams. It's important that the staff is made up of people who are well paid and professional, and have opportunities for growth.
- We have all the training from *Alianza*, and from participating in the CF group.
- The rush to gain presence in the community. We've come to realize that there's no hurry.

## CONTEXT



Participating foundations gathered data from the areas in which they intervene, from the databases of public entities such as INEGI, CONAPO, state government departments, and municipal monographs, among other sources. This information includes demographic data (description, geographic location, main communities, population), as well as quantitative data in the economic, health, education and environment areas, as well as employment according to economic activity (agriculture, livestock, fisheries, industry, tourism and recreation), and in regard to water and electricity. There is also information regarding the status of potable water and sewage systems, electricity and roads/highways.



### ***OTHER ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE***

For a CF, analyzing its context is an ongoing, central task. These efforts contribute to becoming more familiar —in a deeper, more specific way— with the environment where it intervenes.

To conduct this ongoing analysis, the data provided by public entities such as INEGI, CONAPO and state governments and departments is important and serves as a starting point for gathering demographic and economic information. However, it is not sufficient for guiding the work of CFs.

It is necessary to gradually incorporate political, social, cultural and environmental data, as well as data that can only be obtained through ongoing observation of what is taking place in the communities where CFs are carrying out their work. This includes, for example, the population's likes, customs and preferences.

Similarly, an analysis of context should include the mapping of stakeholders who have an influence in the communities where CFs are also involved. This information is indispensable to building alliances and establishing differences.

Knowledge of the context in which a CF is intervening is important, since this is a key element to fulfilling its reason for being, since in order to achieve its mission, a CF will necessarily have to imagine, dream and then give an impulse to the development of a new context in its community—with the participation of citizens and civil organizations.

Learning about and developing a profound understanding of the context where intervention takes place, and identifying problems all help to design more assertive intervention and positioning strategies. These efforts also lead to a more appropriate definition of a CF's field of intervention, and the prioritization of certain issues and niches of opportunity.

In order for knowledge from the analysis of context to be useful in the strategic decision-making carried out by the CF's board, this analysis must be a practice that is institutionally adopted as a process that is ongoing and under constant review. It is important to have a simple, easy-to-use methodology that facilitates gathering relevant, up-to-date information. It will be enriched with a map of the various stakeholders involved and a map of community assets.

### ***Methodology for developing and analyzing context***

Prior steps:

- Defining why the CF needs an analysis of its context. What do we want the information for? How are we going to use it?
- Defining the timing, level and depth of information to be obtained, as well as the type of analysis to be carried out.
- Integrating a multidisciplinary approach: areas of knowledge, gender, sectors, and other considerations.
- Carrying out this work with a certain consistency and periodicity.

There are various methodological levels, depending on the information you wish to obtain and the analysis you have decided to conduct.

- An initial approach involves gathering general statistical and historical data. This is obtained by researching documents at information centers and libraries, through conventional means or by internet.
- Secondly, documentary sources or key resource people are identified, for acquiring more in-depth information regarding specific themes and issues that have been prioritized by the community foundation.
- Thirdly, more refined information is gathered for the purpose of obtaining elements that explain the current situation and make it possible to identify alternative solutions. This stage requires the development of some hypotheses that will guide the search for information and the selection of resource people.

Fortunately, the information for conducting an analysis of context is readily accessible at both local and national levels. The information exists, and is accessible, and what is important is to use it to guide decision-making. For a CF that has a board that reflects the social fabric of the community, it will be easy to conduct an analysis of its context. What is fundamental is to institutionalize a space for ongoing work in this area.

An initial effort consists of gathering statistical and documentary information to assist in developing a social, demographic X-ray of the area of influence or the field of intervention for a CF.

A very readily accessible source of information is INEGI,<sup>4</sup> which provides reasonably acceptable data regarding general aspects, such as population, average growth, per capita income, and schooling—in short, a series of indicators that facilitate an understanding of the situation in a particular city or state in relation to the national context.

With this initial approach, it is possible to verify whether a given city or state is close to the national average in terms of the indicators that are of interest to the community foundation. The recommendation is to have a state-level, national and even international point of comparison.

Another useful source is the *Asociación de Municipios de México AC* (AMAAC, or the Mexican Municipalities Association), an organization that was founded in 1994 and brings together municipalities on a voluntary basis. Its objectives include resolving common problems and reaching development goals. It is possible to access a significant collection of information, since it has its own library, bookstore and collection of documents on municipal issues. Through this association and through INEGI, information may be obtained regarding basic geo-statistical areas (AGEBS).<sup>5</sup> The economic and social studies conducted by Banamex also constitute an important statistical, documentary source of information.

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<sup>4</sup> *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática* (National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information).

<sup>5</sup> AGEBS represent the fundamental unit in a geo-statistical framework, and can be adjusted, to the degree possible, to the municipal and state boundaries within the country's political-administrative divisions. The National Geo-statistical Framework is a system that facilitates linking statistical information with the corresponding geographic area. Given differences in population density and land use, it is considered necessary to make a distinction between two types of AGEBS: urban and rural.

And, if more specialized information is needed regarding a specific topic, area or indicator of special interest to the CF, such as education or health, the recommendation is to request assistance from the government institution responsible for that area, such as the SEP, CONAPO, SSA, IMSS, etcetera.

Another aspect that complements the panorama of the community or field of intervention is the process of recuperating history. And here, the recommendation is to identify local documentary sources. In the major bookstores, usually located in the center of the city, near the civic plaza, diverse publications can be found and provide relevant elements for understanding the local and regional history. Local knowledge offers important elements in the composition of the social fabric, and facilitates an understanding of the current situation and the reasons for specific behaviors.

The best quality of information is obtained from the individuals who are most rooted in the city, and who know a lot about their own community. The challenge consists of identifying those who will provide the information needed for an in-depth understanding of the current situation, in social, economic and political terms. Among these resource people, we would particularly mention some public servants, representatives of IFE, plus public education and cultural delegates, as well as some academics and researchers who address the social issues in the region.

Another level of information that can lead to in-depth understandings and a refined analysis of behavior can be obtained through interviews with important resource people who have been identified on the basis of the issues to be addressed and understood. The local bishop, priests, the municipal president, town council members, and representatives of the region's economic activities such as livestock owners, and business and industry owners, as well as community organizations are among those who can share their vision and their analysis of the situation under study and of hypotheses under consideration. Basically, from their own experiences, from being part of the community and contributing to its identity, they can contribute their ideas for resolving social problems.

In order to obtain the desired information for outlining solutions, it is necessary to analyze the context as it was developed on the basis of prior information, and then develop specific questions that will facilitate bringing clarity to new hypotheses. Only through specific, well thought out and well-developed questions will it be possible to obtain the explanations and solutions needed.

### ***Map of Stakeholders***

Applied in the field of social sciences, a map of stakeholders is a graphic representation, or a scale of the work, actions or strategies carried out by diverse stakeholders in relation to a social situation or problem—with the understanding that stakeholders are the individuals, groups of individuals, or institutions that intervene, fulfilling a role or simply participating in an exercise of citizenship, and that facilitate or hinder social processes.

This is a tool for identifying and analyzing the stakeholders who, in one way or another, participate and have an impact on a given process. They literally make it possible to visualize the diversity of individuals, groups, institutions and organizations that act in some way around a given situation. After these stakeholders have been identified, the map is completed by characterizing the actions carried out by each one of them: their methodologies, the resources they have available to them, the interests that determine their practices, and the positions they assume. Finally, the map is complemented by identifying the types of relationships, links and alliances observed among the various stakeholders.

The map of stakeholders uses a methodology that is open to creativity and the use of visual tools that facilitate the organizing and classifying of information, and when necessary, the identification of social or institutional hierarchies. The final result is a graphic representation that provides a clear description of the status of a given context at a given moment in time.

This exercise is especially useful for visually and graphically developing a diagnostic assessment of the context where a community foundation is intervening. It provides a constant reference that is easy to consult, and this facilitates planning processes. The symbols used are part of a group code, and they make it possible for individuals to easily reconstruct the information contained and the analysis and decision-making conducted.

### ***Map of Assets<sup>6</sup>***

Focusing on community assets<sup>7</sup> as the basis for promoting the development of a community and the work of a Community Foundation leads to a cultural change, since it involves a repositioning of the CF that represents a new posture on the part of its board members and collaborators.

This methodological approach makes it possible to discover and address social needs as opportunities for development based on the identification, mobilization and inter-connection of the capacities, strengths and wealth to be found in the everyday life of communities where a CF intervenes.

This approach emerges from the conviction that development should begin from inside a community, and is based on the hypothesis that there are resources within the community itself to promote that development. Historic evidence indicates that community development takes place when the people of a community are committed to investing in themselves and bringing together their resources to promote actions. This approach is also based on the recognition that outside assistance is increasingly less available, and it also emphasizes the vital importance of defining the concepts of local, investment, creativity, hope and control.

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<sup>6</sup> Inspired by the methodological approach of the construction of communities based on their assets, as developed by John Kretzmann.

<sup>7</sup> Assets understood as the strengths, capacities, abilities and resources of communities.

The approach is based on the following principles:

- A recognition of the specificity of communities, or in other words, that each community is unique, not only in relation to the assets it possesses, but in relation to the mobilization it can generate to build its future.
- The focus is inside the community, or in other words, on the community as a social producer which has ownership of its vision and its actions. The proposals and resources that come from the outside will be analyzed in relation to this approach.
- That development takes place through relationships, or in other words, through the diversity and multiplicity of interconnections and relationships that can be established. These relationships are being constantly built and re-built among citizens, associations and institutions.

There are diverse types of assets to be discovered, connected and mobilized, and they include individual, group and institutional assets: capacities and abilities, experience, networks, programs, methodologies, materials, leadership, infrastructure, equipment, technology, and economic and political power, etcetera. Maps of assets can be used by a CF for the following purposes:

- To mobilize assets toward programs and goals already established
- To identify new goals or programs
- To organize and mobilize people
- To spark new relationships and create new scenarios
- To identify the CF's role

In a community that fully recognizes its assets and places them at the service of others, and in which its inhabitants are increasingly part of the action, these inhabitants will not be “clients” or passive receivers of assistance, but rather full contributors to the process of building their communities.<sup>8</sup>

To develop a map of assets, it is essential to take an inventory that will facilitate recognizing the capacities of all the members of a community in three categories: individuals, groups and institutions. It is also necessary to identify other aspects that include physical characteristics—the land, buildings and infrastructure upon which the community and the local economy rest. Furthermore, since the well-being of a community depends to a great extent on the local economy, a section is needed for exploring the way in which individuals, and local groups and institutions can contribute economically to social causes.

It is important to clarify that this development approach does not imply that communities are not in need of additional outside resources, but rather, it simply means that these resources will be more efficient when they are invested in a community that knows what its assets are and is fully mobilized and committed, with the capacity to define its process, since its development is rooted in its traditions, vision and culture.

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<sup>8</sup> From the book by John Kretzman and John McKnight.

Consequently, the five steps for promoting development in communities on the basis of their assets are the following:

1. Making a map of assets
2. Strengthening relationships
3. Bringing the community together to create a vision and a plan
4. Using the assets of each person for the needed actions
5. Maximizing outside resources to support local actions.

## HISTORIC TIMELINE



### **KNOWLEDGE FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF PCFS**

We offer four examples of the how participating CFs organized their histories and named the periods of those histories:

- One of them named the periods as: conception and gestation, birth; learning to walk, first steps; learning to be, taking more sure steps; developing our *be-ing*, walking with certainty.
- Another, this way: initiating and formalizing the foundation; clarifying its mission and role within the community; initial achievements; analysis of path taken; and moving ahead strengthened.
- A third: origins; initial definitions, planning the institution; growth, from effects to causes, from projects to programs; institutionality; and maturity, from programs to processes, from well-being (*bienestar*) to a solid sense of *be-ing* (*bienser*).
- Lastly: constitution, a profile closer to NGOs than to foundations; focus on being a foundation; radical reorganization, consolidation.



### **OTHER ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE**

As civil society organizations (CSOs), community foundations are very young. None of them have been operating for more than 15 years since their creation. In Mexico's context, they constitute a new model of organization.

The oldest among them were not established as CFs. One of them was created as a business foundation, while another was named a community foundation from the beginning, but it operated as a nongovernmental organization.

There were diverse motivations for founding the pCFs: urgent situations; the opportunity to obtain outside or government financing; influence from an outside person or from an institution that mentioned the potential for initiating a CF; and inspired by models or experiences from the United States and Canada that were used to promote philanthropy.

Most of the pCFs were not established on the basis of a demand for their creation, or on the construction of local consensus or alliances, but rather, they were motivated by an outside

proposal. This reality leaves a mark on their histories, and may be one of the primary reasons why other organizations intervening in the same territory feel threatened or in competition with CFs.

Several of the foundations began their processes because of an external requirement to constitute themselves legally, whether as civil associations or private assistance institutions.

The oldest foundations already have an accumulated history, and are able to clearly indicate the stages in their timeline. The most recent ones, meanwhile, are at a point in which they are narrating happenings or actions, without a clear perception of the direction they are taking.

Experience indicates that establishing a solid rationale for a CF takes time. For example, those with the most time have spent at least five years in this process —the necessary period for trial and error, for moving from disperse ideas and informality to a process of institutionalization, of seeking and refining their identities, of positioning their foundations in relation to other similar efforts and in the eyes of society. Is it possible to shorten the time required? What would need to happen? When the period of time needed to obtain achievements is shorter, as in the case of Puebla, what are the factors working in its favor?

The construction of a CF is always an unending process marked by different moments in time, cycles, phases and dynamics. Understanding the situation in which a CF finds itself at a given moment in its institutional life is fundamental to orienting its growth and strengthening process, for the purpose of assertively contributing to the social change strived for.

A CF's current situation is strongly linked to and determined by its own history of development and evolution. The historic journey is a methodological tool that facilitates recuperating and reconstructing the institution's history, in order to identify events and actions in the past that explain its situation at a particular moment in time. And, understanding a CF's life cycle, or its process of development and evolution makes it possible to enrich the vision of the stage through which it is passing.

Defining history and life cycles signifies understanding the particular rhythm of each foundation in accordance with its own stages of institutional evolution. Recuperating its historic timeline and identifying its current life cycle will make it possible to appreciate the best it has in the present, while valuing efforts in the past, and identifying its own potential for guiding its own path and for moving forward in a more solid way toward the future.

### ***Historic Journey***

The *present* in the life of a CF is the sum of what has taken place over time. The only way to understand the *present* is by learning about past events, by discovering and analyzing the fundamental moments or periods in the institution's life. Some examples include the period in which the CF was founded, the period of consolidation or expansion, etcetera.

History is not a linear process that follows the same course, at the same frequency. In the experience of an institution, there are moments of great vitality, of joy over achievements or impact obtained, of growth or clarity and understanding at the collective level. And there are also moments of stagnation, routine and failures.

All of this is expressed in concrete situations, in events that are visible and not so visible, and it is also translated into moods, spirit, energy, participation, dialogue, activity, growth, conflict and disagreements.

Reconstructing the history of a foundation is a necessary and systematic task aimed at acquiring the information that will facilitate remembering and taking ownership of its past, understanding its present and projecting its future. It helps in understanding its origins: to see why, how and for what reason it emerged. It makes it possible to identify the opportunities that led to its origin, and the difficulties that presented themselves and were resolved as the institution evolved.

Taking a journey through the history of a foundation is a collective process of reconstructing events and their importance, since institutions and their processes are established and determined by individuals. It is important to open up a space for what each person has to contribute, to their memories, to the sensations experienced, and to the analysis that each person can offer regarding his/her experiences of the events that marked the institution's life.

Some central ideas for the journey are the following:

- ─ Defining the period of time, or from what year to what year the historic timeline of the foundation will cover
- ─ Remembering significant events and happenings that have built the CF's history
- ─ Grouping events according to the dates they occurred
- ─ Distinguishing and characterizing the different moments in a CF's history, and naming the phases or stages and placing them in order of occurrence
- ─ Identifying problems, their consequences and solutions
- ─ Identifying achievements.

### ***Life cycle–Phases***

There are potentially five phases in the evolution of a CF: conception, initiation, growth, strengthening and conclusion. If we make a comparison with stages of human development, the conception phase corresponds to gestation and birth; the initiation phase to the stage of infancy and childhood; and the growth phase to adolescence and young adulthood. A strengthened foundation may be compared to a mature person in the fullness of life; and the completion stage can be compared to death. Throughout the entire life cycle of a foundation, there is the possibility of a decline, a crisis or agitation.

Taking a brief journey through the different phases, we can identify some elements that can contribute to identifying the moment in which a CF finds itself, and to identifying some of the challenges it must address.

*Conception phase*

Characteristics: There is commitment on the part of some individuals, who have a strong citizen spirit, to an idea of doing “something” for the community, such as creating a CF. There is common interest, synergy and some degree of uncertainty.

Challenges: To develop an understanding of the concept of a CF; to convert dialogue, promises and dreams into initial actions; to bring in other citizens to participate.

*Initiation phase*

Characteristics: There is a lot of enthusiasm; limited resources; everyone participates in all types of tasks; and there is list of broad, diverse actions. The main organizational features are: it is legally constituted; with a board of directors in the process of being formalized and involved in working to obtain economic resources; a minimal operations team; and some economic and material resources.

Challenges: To identify the community’s needs and assets; to identify sources of local resources in order to determine viability and services; to assure operations expenses; to obtain funds in order to begin financing projects; to select and train the operations team; to maintain a board that is involved and active.

*Growth phase*

Characteristics: There are many levels of activity, however priorities have not yet been defined; the operations team is stretched beyond its limits, and tuned into doing a little of everything.

The main organizational features are: the board is beginning to establish committees and invite other individuals from the community—beyond board members—to participate; rotation of founders; the beginning of a process of institutional strengthening. There is an operations team; there is training; those involved are beginning to think more of the future; there are structured programs and services.

Challenges: To assure economic resources for responding to programmatic priorities; to achieve visibility in the community for the purpose of attracting economic resources; to enhance the commitment of board members.

Indicators of its strengthening: There is an institutional culture and atmosphere that is favorable to fulfilling the CF’s mission. There is a sense of belonging that is shared by everyone. There is potential for impact and visibility that is demonstrated through the community actively acknowledging and backing the CF’s work.

*Maturity phase*

Characteristics: Actions are taken in a comprehensive way; the focus turns to the community, and the community respects the CF; there are varied programs and services; economic resources are generated in accordance with what has been planned, with programs and goals; there are systems in place.

The main organizational features are: the functions of the board and the operations team are separated; there is greater diversity in the board, and board members delegate more work to committees and to the operations team. The programs and services satisfy needs identified from a comprehensive vision. Economic resources are generated from different sources, with emphasis placed on community assets.

Challenges: To continue to grow, and to evaluate and monitor programs and services; to maintain a committed board; to maintain itself in sync with changes in the community.

Indicator: Recognized in the community for its influence, autonomy and impact. Acts as an interlocutor and has capacity for negotiating in favor of the community.

### *Completion phase or the death of the institution*

Based on the recognition that CFs are living organisms with life cycles, it is important to consider that they may die, and the individuals who work there will continue to live.

This phase corresponds to the termination or end of a CF, and it may occur in a natural or violent way. It refers to the closing of a CF that may result from a process that helps it to “die well” after not having managed to fulfill the expectations of its community. A violent death may result from an insurmountable crisis in which a CF has not performed in line with the institutional values and goals that gave it life.

When the moment arrives, it is the board’s responsibility to preserve as much value as possible—in terms of persons and ideas—to pass on to others. Foundations, as any other civil society organizations, deserve to die with dignity. Instead of an expensive, cruel and agonizing process suffered by all the members of a foundation that falls into decline, the board should instigate a process that reorients the talents of individuals in a constructive, active manner, as a kind of “last testament” that will “leave some legacy behind” in a dignified manner.

A decline, crisis or agitation may occur during any stage. A decline corresponds to moments of institutional weakness or frailness that may be generated by the loss of energy and enthusiasm on the part of the citizens who originally gave momentum to the project or collaborators, or it may be generated by a lack of competence or capacity to respond on the part of the CF. To the contrary, agitation corresponds to a time when spirits are agitated or heated up, and this can occur within the tasks to be carried out or at the level of the institution’s *be-ing*. Finally, a crisis corresponds to difficult, compromising situations for a CF, and involves decisive moments. Just as during a crisis from an illness, it can serve to aggravate or improve an institution, and it may represent a special opportunity in the evolution of a foundation.

## IDENTITY



### **KNOWLEDGE FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF pCFS**

*How do we define community foundations?*

As civil associations; spaces for citizen participation; philanthropic organizations; institutions; local savings and loan associations; investment accounts; institutions that serve as liaisons.

### *For what purpose do they exist?*

To mobilize the social capital of communities; to catalyze, promote, articulate and multiply community assets; to create and exercise leadership; to attract local, national and international resources; to strengthen and professionalize the work of civil society organizations; to serve persons or institutions with the capacity to contribute resources; as an option for exercising philanthropy; to assist donors in creating their vision of community; as a mechanism for channeling primarily local resources; to collaborate in the construction of a more just, humane and participative society.

### *For whom do they exist?*

For all the inhabitants of communities; for the society in general; for civil society organizations; for donors, grassroots groups, academics, for both local and foreign social investors; for the most vulnerable, marginalized sectors.

### *What contribution do they make?*

As a space for the community; professionalizing CSOs; developing a model for young people; sharing experiences; promoting community participation; identifying assets; promoting the culture of philanthropy; providing economic assistance; increasing the awareness of companies; promoting the creation of networks and alliances; orienting social investors; creating a neutral platform; serving as those who know something about reality; linking, promoting and catalyzing projects; improving life in communities; as a mechanism for the transfer, multiplication and efficiency of resource management; supporting the needs of donors and communities; contributing to social development.

### *What is their distinctive “mark”?*

They work with all stakeholders in society; they are organizations created *by* and *for* communities; they are diverse; they work in alliance with all sectors of society; they are composed of a board of citizens and a staff that comes from the community; they reflect the social fabric of communities; they make use of and enhance local assets; the moral authority of the founders; they function as conciliators, mediators, catalyzers and facilitators of agreements and they generate bridges; they promote the participation of all key stakeholders in society in processes of social development; they promote long-term local development; the percentage of their budgets that is allocated to administrative costs is between 14 and 18%; they recognize that the primary resources are *in* communities; and they recognize participation as a process of building citizenship.

### *How do they differ from other CSOs?*

They are aimed at improving the quality of life through the mobilization of resources; they involve CSOs, governments, grassroots groups, academics, donors, young people, volunteers, and communication media, and anyone within or outside the community can participate; they are second-level foundations with very broad-based areas of services; they are community organizations; they provide services to donors, and don't operate projects; they promote social investment on the basis of intra-community, inter-institutional and inter-sector alliances; they promote local philanthropy on an ongoing basis.

*What would communities lose if CFs no longer existed?*

Communities would lose organizations that provide economic assistance and support, and serve as allies; companies would lose the opportunity to improve their systems of social investment, and to strengthen and guide corporate social responsibility; donors would lose the opportunity to make donations; the society would lose out on education and organization; a professional, transparent mechanism; the generating of innovative projects; an entity that links diverse stakeholders and sectors; non-profit civil associations; groups and individuals at the local, national and international levels.

**OTHER ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE**

Community foundations<sup>9</sup> are civil society organizations created under the assumption that social development is possible on the basis of promoting local processes that involve a diversity of stakeholders and sectors. They emerge in order to create spaces for interlocution, interaction and articulation among different stakeholders, and consequently their form of organization should contribute to the collective process of listening and learning at both local and regional levels. CFs facilitate two-way exchanges, between those who have resources and those who live in conditions of poverty and marginalization. CFs are spaces for the training and education of citizens.

Their governing bodies are diverse, and are composed of individuals from the communities, reflecting the social fabric of communities. As a result of this diversity, members of society can feel represented in a private, autonomous, independent entity—one in which they have complete trust.

CFs do not represent competition for other civil society organizations, since they seek to facilitate, strengthen, enhance and catalyze processes of community development, and not only support or carry out projects. Their intention is to establish alliances and mobilize the different sectors of society to carry out tasks that give an impulse to development. This mobilization is possible since CFs are established in specific geographic areas, where they establish alliances with different sectors of society and with the aim that everyone will participate in the development of the region—since citizens are all familiar with their own regions, including the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of their regions.

With regard to resources, CFs promote the creation of community endowment funds that will make social investment long-lasting, and this reflects their long-term, ongoing vision. Their primary “clients” are social investors to whom they offer a range of opportunities for investing—based on knowledge of the local areas. CFs offer transparency and accountability to social investors, and they provide supervision to assure that investments are correctly and efficiently applied.

The intention of CFs is to contribute to change, not only by promoting participation and networking, by working with professionalism, by supporting autonomous forms of organization,

<sup>9</sup> *Community Foundations. Exercising Citizenship.* July 2003. Vivian Blair, Magdalena Rubio and Laura Sarvide.

by incorporating new stakeholders in development work, and by obtaining local resources, but also by contributing through their values and principles such as generosity, transparency and honesty.

With all of this, CFs contribute to a cultural change that breaks with the paradigm that the government should resolve everything, and breaks with the custom that solutions come from the outside. Instead, CFs promote the principle of co-responsibility among political, economic and social stakeholders in communities, and they encourage those who have resources to make the decision to share them, and to learn how to resolve society's problems together with others, with creativity and solidarity. With their presence, CFs create awareness in politically powerful groups for facilitating better living conditions for everyone.

### ***Perspectives and currents of thought on identity***

The topic of identity is addressed from a diversity of perspectives and currents of thought from social, biological, philosophical, administrative and humanistic sciences.<sup>10</sup>

The vision of identity from an organizational, institutional or corporative tendency is what, in this text, we consider to be the most useful for reflecting upon the identity of CFs. From the perspective of this tendency, there are different ways of defining identity. Some emerge from sociological, psychological, and visual conceptions, and others come from formulas that emphasize the perceptual result of identity.

Organizational identity<sup>11</sup> refers to the entity's personality. This personality is the conjunction of an organization's history, ethics and philosophy of work, however it is also formed by everyday behaviors and established norms. Organizational identity is the set of characteristics, values and beliefs with which the organization identifies itself and distinguishes itself from other organizations.

From the viewpoint of organizational analysis, the identity of an organization is constituted by all that which makes it possible to distinguish the organization as unique and different from others. It materializes through a structure. It is defined by the resources it has available to it, and the use made of those resources, by the relationships among its members and with its surroundings, by the modes adopted in these relationships, and by the goals that guide existing actions and programs for their implementation and supervision.

Thus, identity has multiple manifestations: it exists in the roles of organizations and in their technology, in their information and control systems, in the ways in which decisions are made,

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<sup>10</sup> Van Riel (1997: 31) recoge diez definiciones de otros tantos autores sobre el concepto de identidad corporativa exclusivamente.

<sup>11</sup> Identidad, juventud y sexismo. Gabriela Cob de Habitación Propia un espacio para mujeres

in their members' processes of socialization, in the ways in which power and authority are assumed, in the modes of interaction among members, in their physical spaces and in their equipment, in their resources and in their discourse.

Dowling (1994:8) defines corporate identity as the set of symbols that an organization uses for identifying itself in the eyes of groups of individuals. Selame and Selame (1988:VI) defines corporate identity as the visual expression of an organization, according to the vision it has of itself and according to how it would like to be viewed by others. For Verónica Nápoles, corporate identity is a symbol that reflects the way in which the company would like to be perceived (1988:20).

Identity is projected in four different ways: who are you, what do you do, how do you do it, and where do you want to end up? Thus, we can see that identity is manifested in three clearly visible areas, and in a fourth that is less visible but equally perceptible:

- Products and services: what you do or sell
- Environments: the places in which you carry out your activities
- Communication: the ways in which you explain what you do
- Behavior: how you behave with your collaborators and with the outside

### ***Identity of CFs***

From the POR perspective of institutional strengthening,<sup>12</sup> identity is a basic component of a CF, and is an indicator of a CF's level of strengthening. Within this perspective, identity refers to the set of practices, ways of belonging, and collective experiences, both past and present, in which the CF, as a stakeholder in society, acknowledges and adheres to a specific community. It also refers to the way it differentiates itself from others and how it interprets the world from a shared perspective.

In this sense, identity is built through collective experiences, through common practices, shared memories and forms of collective belonging, in which a CF acknowledges itself and acknowledges the world in which it operates.

In part, the identity of a CF is defined by the combination or inter-connection of elements of its strategic Purpose, such as: vision, mission, values, field of intervention (in what, with and for whom, where, for how long), elements of organization and operations such as organizational structure, decision-making, division of labor, politics as well as the types of human, economic and material resources that are mobilized.

A CF makes certain choices on the basis of a certain identity, but also, the choices made contribute to forming its identity. In this sense, a CF is immersed in a permanent dance or

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<sup>12</sup> *Procesos de fortalecimiento institucional. Un enfoque para su abordaje.* Espiral, 2000.  
*Community Foundations. Exercising Citizenship,* July 2003.

movement, in which its personality, its identity is created and re-created. This dance can be traced back to its past, exists in its present and is projected into its future —which demonstrates that what we call identity is composed, in reality, of a whirlwind of diverse influences, both internal and external.

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**GOVERNING BODY**





## **KNOWLEDGE FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF pCFS**

### *Is there a governing body?*

There are legal norms regulating CFs under their legal status as civil associations or private assistance institutions, and this means they must be governed by a Members' Assembly from which a Board of Directors is selected, including four positions: president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, plus regular members. In addition CFs have committees or commissions.

### *What is its composition?*

The number of board members varies according to the level of consolidation achieved by a CF. The board should be diverse, that is, composed by persons who reflect the social fabric of the community.

### *Its role?*

Is to govern from a strategic position. Both the assembly and the board are those directly responsible for defining the path to be taken by the CF and guaranteeing that the CF follows that path. They guide, lead and monitor what the CF does.

### *Its primary responsibilities?*

Board members should actively participate in the foundation; attending meetings and forming part of a committee or commission; supervising and strengthening the foundation's development; mobilizing resources and assuring that the foundation has the resources needed to operate and establish an endowment fund; calling on different stakeholders to become involved, and serving as a liaison among those stakeholders; and also approving work plans and annual budgets.

### *How does it operate?*

This varies among foundations, depending on their level of development. For example, in the more consolidated foundations, there is a clear division of labor between the various entities, while in others "everyone does a bit of everything." And in some foundations, it is established how often governing bodies meet.

### *What are its primary strengths?*

The profile of the individuals who serve on the governing body includes: persons who are very highly respected and renowned in the community; who have a spirit of service; have experience and broad participation in CSOs and in foundations; have a solid commitment and clear conviction to work for their community; and that together, they bring together a diversity of vision and knowledge.

### *What are its primary weaknesses?*

The difficulty in meeting all together; the lack of commitment and time; the lack of knowledge or lack of understanding with regard to what a CF is and what is involved; the failure to make the foundation "theirs"; the establishment of personal commitments to the president but not to the foundation; not having their role and responsibilities clearly defined.



### **OTHER ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE**

The governing body of a CF is the pillar around which it exists and is consolidated. It is one of a CF's most valuable assets, and it is composed of persons interested in participating on a volunteer basis in order to exercise their citizenship. There is still a great deal to accomplish in order to respond to the challenges that present themselves in the leading of foundations. Among the reasons that explain the low level of participation is the need to promote and enhance a culture of citizenship and social responsibility that extends beyond a philanthropic vision centered on specific, short-term assistance. Active, involved, long-term participation is needed.

#### ***Governance, governability and government***

When compiling and establishing knowledge and theoretical-methodological approaches to the governing bodies of CFs, it is necessary from the beginning to understand the concepts of governance, governability and government.

In the most recent UNDP report on human development, it is pointed out that neither markets, nor politics nor society can function without institutions and rules, and that these elements — governability— no longer refer only to governmental organizations, since they frame and weave together an inter-dependent series of stakeholders that include governments, civil society and the private sector, at the local, national and international levels (p. V). The report emphasizes that “the challenge of globalization is not to hold back the expansion of global markets but rather to find the rules and institutions for better governability —local, regional, national and global— and also to provide the sufficient community and environmental resources to assure that globalization works for people and not only for benefits (p. 2).”

In this context, the UNDP views governability as “the framework of established rules, institutions and practices that set forth the limits and incentives for the behavior of individuals, organizations and companies (p. 8).”

With respect to the concept of governability, Cynthia Hewitt of *Alcántara* writes that in the English-speaking world, “governance” is a word that has been commonly used throughout centuries to refer to the exercise of authority within a determined sphere. Even though the concept is applied to many situations in which a formal political system is not observed, it does imply the existence of a political process: “governability” means creating consensus, or obtaining the necessary consent to carry out a program in a scenario where diverse interests are at play.

As a result of the broad applicability of the term and its reference to basic problems of a political nature (including effectiveness and legitimacy), during the last decade it has become a useful instrument for a growing number of participants in the debate on development. The concept of “governability” is being used by sectors of very different ideological orientations, for diverse aims that are often contradictory.

C. Hewitt points out that some individuals began to speak of governability, civil society and democracy in order to refer to programs designed not only to reduce the size of the State and make it more efficient, but also to shift the balance of power in societies from governments and the public sector to individuals and private groups. The reference to “governability” in this context expands the limits of the discussion and broadens the spectrum of alternatives to be considered, in the light of problems that governments cannot necessarily resolve when they are acting on their own.

In a document by Richard E. Stren,<sup>13</sup> in which the concept of “governance” is translated into Spanish as democracy and participation, reference is made to the origin of the concept and provides a broader notion of this concept. According to Stren, this concept entered into use in the 1990s in seminars on development and in research studies. We would point out that the term entered into use in development literature at the end of the 1980s, especially in Africa. The “Program regarding a Report on Governance in Africa” by the Carter Center at the University of Emory in Atlanta refers to governance as “a broader, more inclusive notion than government,” and “the general manner in which a country is governed. It can be applied to the formal structures of government as well as to thousands of institutions and groups that make up civil society in a nation” (cited in McCarney, Halfani and Rodríguez, 1995, 94).

A more focused, limited vision was that of the World Bank, which defined “governance” as “the manner in which power is exercised in the administration of economic and social resources for the development of a country” (World Bank, 1992, 3). A more in-depth discussion regarding governance—in its application to urban situations in the entire developing world—concluded by stating that the important element explicitly lacking in many official definitions and those from international agencies was the connection between the government—especially local government—and the emerging structures of civil society.

In this sense, Patricia McCarney, Mohamed Halfani and Alfredo Rodríguez decided to define governance as “the relationship between civil society and the State, between leaders and those who are led, between the government and those governed,” (McCarney, Halfani and Rodríguez (1995, 95). This was later established as the essence of the current UNDP definition: governance can be understood as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage the affairs of a country at all levels. This involves mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and other groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, fulfill their obligations and resolve their differences (PNUD, 1997, 2.3).

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from a document presented by Richard Stren of the Center for Urban and Community Studies at the University of Toronto, Canada, at the seminar entitled “El CIID en la gestión del desarrollo urbano sostenible en América Latina: lecciones aprendidas y demandas de nuevos conocimientos” that was held in Montevideo-Uruguay on April 6-7, 2000.

### ***Governance, governability and good government in CSOs***

Inserted in the debate and derived from the development approaches and tendencies indicated above, the concepts of governance, governability and good government have been applied to the world of civil society organizations.

According to the glossary of terms of the NCNB,<sup>14</sup> *governance* signifies the legal authority of a board to establish the policies that will affect the life and work of the organization while holding the board accountable for the outcome of such decisions<sup>15</sup>.

In this same glossary, the Governance Committee is defined as the committee responsible for recruiting, orienting and training members for the Board. For his part, Jorge Villalobos of the Mexican Center for Philanthropy (*Centro Mexicano para la Filantropía—CEMEFI*) mentions that the word governability can be defined as “the capacity to exercise government with consensus, participation and therefore, the co-responsibility of those governed.”

In broad terms, for CSOs, governance<sup>16</sup> is understood as the responsibility of the board to establish the path, the direction to be taken by the organization. This implies deciding what will be done, making plans and establishing priorities. It refers to processes and structures that an organization uses to lead and administer its operations, programs and activities.

The board, composed of persons who choose to exercise their citizenship through volunteer service in a CF, is a CF's most valuable asset.

### ***Governing bodies of CFs***

The governance tasks of CFs can be divided into various categories that include the following board responsibilities:

- To define the vision, mission and strategic planning.
- To provide meaning and define the institutional path.
- To develop and administer the board. Corresponds to giving life to the foundation as a social project.
- To develop and define the institutional policies for the foundation's operations. Signifies, from this point forward, giving life to the foundation as an institution.
- To guarantee institutional resources.
- To hire, supervise and evaluate operations personnel and volunteers.
- To evaluate its own performance as the board.
- To be accountable.

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<sup>14</sup> National Center for Nonprofit Boards

<sup>15</sup> The legal authority of a board to establish policies that will affect the life and work of the organization while holding the board accountable for the outcome of such decisions

<sup>16</sup> In diverse materials such as “Helping Canadians help Canadians. Improving governance and accountability in the voluntary sector,” CFC Governance and Management, 1998.

Whether or not CFs are long-lasting and develop in a healthy manner depends on the positive functioning of the governing body. The governing bodies of CFs are represented by Boards of Directors or Boards of Trustees. CFs that have volunteer boards which reflect the social fabric of the community are distinguished as dynamic movements in the process of development, and as young organizations at stages of development that are increasingly requiring more institutionalization processes, with the aim of contributing in a significant and ongoing way to social development.

CFs, as living institutions in a dynamic process of development, require governing bodies and strategic planning that are just as dynamic. This means developing a mental attitude of flexibility, creativity and quick responses —that penetrates the organization in a comprehensive way.

The dynamic process in which CFs are inserted is leading to transformations in the schemes of how governing bodies function. Following is a proposal for new functions for boards<sup>17</sup>:

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<sup>17</sup> From Barbara E. Taylor, Richard P. Chait and Thomas P. Holland.

<b>Old functions</b>	<b>New functions</b>
Administration defines the problems, gives advice regarding the options and proposes solutions. The board listens, learns, approves and watches over or maintains a watchful eye.	Administration and the board discover problems or important issues, mutually determine what the agenda will be and resolve problems together.
The board establishes policies that administration places into practice. Respective territories are defined and there is not a lot of doubts or movement at the boundary lines. A graph organizes and determines what the domains are.	Administration and the board establish policies and place them into practice. There are no solid, functional boundaries. The matter that is being addressed determines the domains.
The structure of standing committees is parallel to administrative functions. Importance is attributed to permanent structures and established routines. Members fulfill functional niches. The board concerns itself with insignificant, non-productive tasks.	The structure of the board reflects the foundation's strategic priorities. Importance is attributed to flexibility and arrangements on a case-by-case basis. Members fulfill functional intersections. The board creates centers of action.
Board members respond to processes, and protocol is invariable. Functions are subject to formalities. Emphasis is given to the transmission of information and reports.	The board gives momentum to goals. Protocol varies according to circumstances. Functions rule over formalities. Emphasis is given to participation and action.
The board is a cast of stars, and recruits members on the basis of their experience and status. The executive director cultivates individual relationships with and exploits the talents of board members.	The board is a constellation and recruits collaborating members on the basis of their personalities and the chemistry of their personality in general. The board cultivates group norms and the collective abilities of members.

In order to achieve governability in a CF, it is necessary to assume that the creation and development of a governing body is an ongoing process of learning and, in the end, the definition of its own model of governing. Due to the importance of this topic, centers specialized in the development of programs and materials for enhancing boards of directors have emerged. In Mexico, CEMEFI has taken on the task of forming a bibliographic collection on this topic, and has also included the professionalization, orientation and training of boards of directors in its program.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Another example is "Reflexiones y prácticas del buen gobierno," a joint publication by the *Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana* and the *Asociación Internacional de Administración de Ciudades y Condados*. COPARMEX-ICMA, 2003.

In the publication entitled “Community Foundations. Exercising Citizenship,” emphasis is placed on the importance of the board of directors as the governing body, and it is identified as one of a CF’s most valuable assets.

A CF’s board of directors is composed of individuals who are citizens interested in participating on a volunteer basis in the community’s development, as a way of exercising their citizenship. The interest of the overall community is what should prevail in the minds of each board member.

As well, board members have personal responsibilities such as developing, taking ownership in and sharing the CF’s strategic Project, fulfilling their particular functions in a responsible way, fulfilling leadership positions, preparing for meetings, understanding trustee responsibilities, and acting in a pro-active manner in generating resources.

MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES



 **HOW ARE FUNDS OBTAINED IN CFS?**

*What is understood by mobilization of resources?*

All economic, in-kind and human resources (volunteerism) that are received by a CF and are subsequently channeled to other organizations and grassroots groups. This also includes raising and channeling resources, or integrating the community's human and financial assets into service for the community.

*Under what policies or criteria?*

CFs have established policies and criteria primarily for raising and channeling resources, and in some cases, for the creation of an endowment fund. Sources of resources are diversified, with emphasis at the local level, for the purpose of consolidating the foundation's autonomy and permanence.

*Components of the plan?*

Obtaining funds from companies, chambers and individuals, and diverse activities such as special dinners; receiving funds from national and international foundations and the government at its three levels; campaigns; developing a database of donors; establishing policies; identifying assets; social investors; organizations that have programs in communities; establishing long-term programs; creating business funds, designated funds and an ongoing community fund.

*Who is responsible?*

In principle, all those involved in the foundation have responsibility for these tasks, however with varying emphasis and levels of responsibility. In most foundations, the greatest responsibility lies with the board of directors.

*How are resources mobilized?*

Resources are obtained through government institutions, international foundations, companies and individuals; through contributions made by board members; through the organization of events. Specific projects are presented to potential donors from different spheres. In compliance with the requests made by donors, CFs carry out effective administration, receiving and analyzing proposals that are made within the corresponding time limit, evaluating and providing follow up to project results. Also, implementing diverse programs, projects, campaigns and initiatives for social causes.

*Where do resources come from and the percentage of each source?*

The origin of funds varies from one foundation to another. In one foundation, 90.17% comes from company contributions, while in another, 90% comes from international foundations, although it points to the importance of generating more local resources. In another foundation the diversification of sources can be clearly perceived, including: companies, individual donors, contributions from members and board members, national and international entities, governments and from events. One foundation generates 88.37% of its resources from local sources, and in the case of another, 70% between local and national resources.

*What resources have been mobilized?*

A diversity of resources, including not only economic and in-kind resources but also human resources. CFs have offered training to CSOs, to young people regarding volunteerism and community participation, conferences on various topics, and dinners. Through the building of citizenship, strengthening of philanthropy and training for volunteers, innumerable human resources have been mobilized. Resources received include contributions from international foundations, from individuals from the community, from board members, specified donations from companies, and an interest fund for a local business foundation has been created. Volunteer work, material resources such as

books for libraries, educational material and kitchen equipment have all been channeled. CFs have served as a bridge for groups to access funds. A board member has contributed space for a foundation's office with fax, computers and telephone.



### **OTHER ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE**

The mobilization of resources refers to the means for a CF to obtain all types of goods or means for subsistence that are needed in order to carry out the strategic plan and to move forward in fulfilling its mission. Therefore, this involves much more than obtaining funds, since it refers to obtaining a variety of resources from a wide range of social investors and through diverse mechanisms.

The mobilization of resources could therefore be understood as a combination of resources, mechanisms and social or philanthropic investors or donors. With this perspective, obtaining funds is a fundamental element, however it is only one part of mobilizing resources.

Since the primary work of CFs is to mobilize and channel resources for contributing to, among other objectives, the well-being of the community and to see that the society invests in its own community,<sup>19</sup> it is fundamental to address this topic in conceptual and methodological terms, and based on the assumption that the mobilization of resources requires time, talent and strategy.

Resources are not only the basis for achieving objectives, but to a significant degree, they also determine the CF's permanence. Achieving permanence implies advancing in a CF's sustainability, which in turn signifies the capacity or ability to remain in a scenario for the long term and to do so in a satisfactory situation, not only in economic and social terms, but also in an adequate environmental situation.

Sustainability is advanced to the extent that the community's support is obtained, and that the proposal for acting in favor of social change—or the CF's strategic project—is pertinent and contributes to collective well-being and local development. In this sense, the different social stakeholders and sectors in the community not only support a CF, but also take ownership in the social project, and join in the efforts, contributing their time, talents and goods for a social cause.<sup>20</sup> Lastly, effective mobilization of resources requires the promotion of co-responsibility as the expression and consolidation of the willingness on the part of diverse stakeholders and sectors in the community to address the problems affecting everyone, in a joint, differentiated way. This requires committed participation, and involves acknowledging that all of us are capable of contributing solutions. Also, in order to address social causes, it is necessary and indispensable to establish alliances and seek complementarity, dialogue and negotiation, while respecting differences.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Community Foundations. Exercising Citizenship.* July 2003.

<sup>20</sup> *Community Foundations. Exercising Citizenship.* July 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Workshop materials on institutional strengthening, *Espiral.*

***Mobilization, strategies and creativity***<sup>22</sup>

Reflecting upon long-lasting strategies in the mobilization of resources, Elizabeth Nelson<sup>23</sup> comments that by focusing attention on financial and non-financial resources within a community, CSOs will be better positioned to integrate their programs in that community and to be constantly evaluating their needs. Globally, CSOs are committed to promoting the interests of society and promoting civic values. However, it requires time to build a citizen base of support and to use alternative strategies for mobilizing resources. CSOs must also take care to avoid replacing one type of dependency with another (from the external to the local level).

Creative fund-raisers must move beyond the excuses often heard regarding the viability of developing a local base of resources: “our culture doesn’t support the raising of local funds,” or “the people we serve don’t have resources to support our work.” In countries with scarce resources, these are frequent obstacles, however they can be overcome. CSOs that have initiated successful campaigns for involving the communities in countries with limited resources have been successful through creative strategies —those which are frequently unique in terms of the cause, culture and particular resources within a given community.

“Initially,” says Harley, “most of the CSOs in Brazil didn’t believe we could raise funds locally...in Brazil, as in many other developing countries, the lack of a local history of giving, combined with a social and economic scenario that continues to worsen, makes it difficult to mobilize local resources.” Since this initial appreciation, Harley’s organization has implemented various successful strategies. “Obviously,” she continues, “there have been many benefits from our intents: theoretical and methodological knowledge with respect to the local raising of funds and the social market; increasing institutional visibility; and consequently, growing visibility for the cause; expansion of alliances; and the opportunity to have provided technical assistance in fund-raising for other organizations in this field.”

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<sup>22</sup>From Ashoka.

<sup>23</sup>*De vuelta de lo Global a lo Local: Estrategias Perdurables en Movilización de Recursos.*

While many creative strategies are developed by thinking of one CSO in particular and the resources within a specific community, the strategies themselves do not always need to be original in order to be successful. As the social resources movement grows, chain reactions are being sparked, with new strategies and ideas emerging, thus providing activists and social entrepreneurs with a whole new source of energy and renewable resources.

Like Henriques and Lukasiak, many social entrepreneurs and civil society activists are forming part of a growing movement that believes that instead of continuing to depend on outside financing, it is more effective to develop creative ways of finding resources for their organizations through local possibilities. The Ashoka Citizen Base Initiative has coined a new formula for this process, that it calls Creative Resources. This initiative describes the capacity for finding new ways of committing resources from the local context (that is, financing, persons, goods and services) in order to support an organization and make it self-sustainable. This covers a wide range of strategies, including schemes for generating income to raising local funds and the establishment of volunteer opportunities. These efforts find their expression in a variety of fresh perspectives that reflect different cultural, social and economic contexts.

The Creative Resources Network, located on the internet at [www.citizenbase.org](http://www.citizenbase.org) is a forum for exchanging strategies and ideas for creative resources. The Citizen Base Initiative is developing national and regional lists of these strategies, and these efforts will culminate in a compilation of the best strategies from around the world. All the case material will be published in the form of a book, and on the internet at [www.citizenbase.org](http://www.citizenbase.org). For more information regarding this network, visit the web site or contact [cbi@ashoka.org](mailto:cbi@ashoka.org).

### ***Elements to consider for formulating a strategy***

A creative, sustainable plan for mobilizing resources begins with identifying community assets instead of focusing on community deficiencies, and by creating strategies that connect and multiply these resources for the benefit of a cause.

The mobilization of local resources is a generalized practice in Europe and the United States. It has been an effective mechanism for financing the tasks and actions carried out by civil society organizations.

The importance of mobilizing local resources lies in the fact that it generates and promotes:

- Processes of society's participation
- A social base that supports civil society actions
- Allies in the case of emergencies or special projects
- Participation of diverse stakeholders and sectors
- A sense of integration
- National identity
- Distribution of surpluses
- Attitudes of cooperation and co-responsibility

- Prestige and status
- Credibility and legitimacy of our actions

Mobilizing resources is a process that requires time, research, the cultivating of relationships with donors and persistence. It involves the development of the most creative and successful strategies in raising funds and generating income, such as the promotion of a campaign for volunteerism, philanthropy or social responsibility in order to: incorporate volunteers in diverse tasks in the organization; obtain in-kind donations in services and time or talent, or achieve strategic alliances with companies or other community institutions, for the purpose of raising funds or in-kind resources. It also promotes the idea within a CF to develop an initiative for generating income.

In synthesis, what is involved is identifying and promoting the most innovative practices in mobilizing resources in order to achieve the diversification of a CF's resource base, to diminish the risk of depending on a single source.

Through this process, new resources are incorporated into the organization, and different stakeholders from the community, institutions, other organizations, companies and neighborhoods become involved in a CF's activities, thus contributing to enhancing its mission and increasing the legitimacy with which its activities are viewed. There is a series of methods and techniques designed and tested in various countries for mobilizing resources, and they are essentially similar in nature.

### ***Fundamental elements in mobilizing resources***

#### Pillars of mobilization

- Diversity of resources
- Long-term sustainability
- Co-responsibility for committed participation
- Management as a multi-dimensional process

#### Main principles for mobilization

- autonomy
- sufficiency
- transparency
- win-win
- sense of belonging

#### Requirements for mobilization strategies

- time
- creativity
- professionalism
- diversification of sources
- persistence
- dedication

- efficiency
- honesty

### **Fifth phase: communication of new knowledge**



*This phase can be carried out through different means, depending on the desired objectives and the individuals on the receiving end of the communication. Written documents, videos, theater and other audio-visual forms are some of the possibilities. The point is to share the knowledge and disseminate the lessons, findings and learning emanating from the systematization of experiences.*



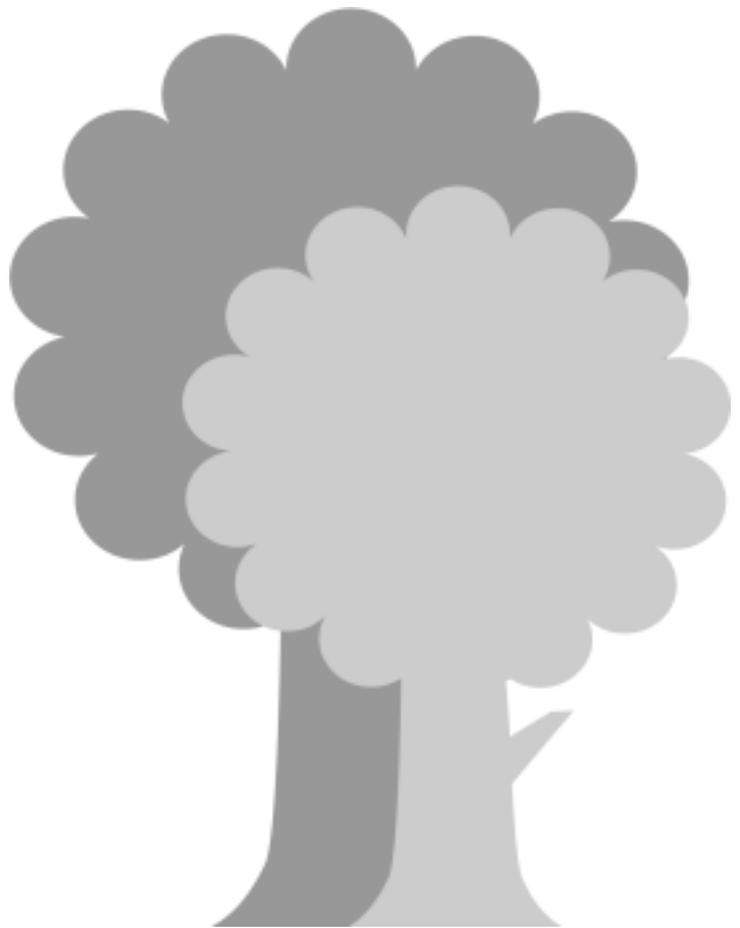
*This publication “Discovering lessons from experiences” is the way in which it was decided to communicate the new knowledge that emerged from the process of systematization with pCFs and other CFs in Mexico and other countries (there is a version in Spanish).*



*Lastly, it is important to highlight that the systematization process makes it necessary for participants to pass through different points of emphasis in their thought processes: descriptive, analytical and communicative.*

*With this systematization process, participants contribute to the production and accumulation of a type of knowledge that transmits the practices and the significant learning that results, not only in relation to better ways of intervening for transforming, but with regard to reality itself, in its multiple complexities and manifestations.*

# FINAL REFLECTIONS



*He who wishes to secure the good of others,  
has already secured his own.*

***Confucius***



## FINAL REFLECTIONS

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Community foundations represent an opportunity for us to develop ourselves, to participate, to harmonize with our own values. Communities confront enormous challenges. There are many complex social problems, and the solutions are not readily apparent, therefore communities need innovative ideas and actions, and community participation and the creation of alliances are vital. CFs are an answer to the need for identifying and enhancing community assets and mobilizing them.

The commitment of each person in a CF is essentially a personal commitment that is made with oneself, freely and consciously, from a sense of power from within.

When we live our identity, we do so from the heart. When we live our identity, what we do is resounding. Identity is like a precious stone, or an unbreakable diamond, however its value lies in the shape it is given, and in bringing out its brilliance from its own elements.

When everyone involved in a CF assumes its identity, everyone remembers its reason for being, which is reflected in everything done and how it is done, in what everyone strives for and how everyone wants to be remembered in the long term and perceived in the short term.

Boards of directors are the cornerstone of CFs. It is essential that their practices are coherent with their discourse, that they exercise firm leadership and build a solid governing structure for leading CFs. They represent an opportunity to have an impact on the community's capacity to confront the challenges of the present and the future, through the development of community assets. CFs offer communities an opportunity to serve and build bridges between the diverse groups that give life to communities.

The governing of a CF is a decisive component in the effectiveness and efficiency of its organization and a vital component in its operation. Expressed in another way,

the functions of governing bodies represent the head of the organization. When any group of individuals come together to achieve a goal, it is necessary to have forms of self-government—means for making decisions. Governance is a process through which a group of individuals make decisions that guide their collective efforts. The majority of individuals in such a group delegate this portion of responsibility for making decisions to the governing bodies. In a CF, this entity is called the board of directors.

In other words, governing involves strategic aspects that are implicitly necessary for leading, for serving as the head, and it involves strategic decisions that define directions. Governance is complex for the simple reason that it involves multiple players. The board articulates its interests, influences decision-making and helps to determine who makes what types of decisions.

The ramifications of inadequate governance in CFs can be enormous. If a CF does not manage to carry out this function effectively, there is the risk of losing credibility with members and with the community in the broadest sense, and there is damage to its capacity for implementing policies and providing services. And finally, it will be unable to fulfill its mission. Bad governance and bad operations contribute to failure and crisis in CFs. Deficiencies in governance lead to the eroding of this type of organization in the eyes of the public, and call for greater transparency and accountability.

Good governance in a CF is equivalent to a board that is energetic, committed and effective. The board is the heart and soul of the foundation. Boards have basically three great responsibilities: representing all those involved in the foundation, exercising leadership, and demonstrating accountability.

All individuals in a CF have many resources that may not have been noticed: their energy and will to commit themselves, their time, talent, knowledge and abilities, their ideas and vision for a better world, their compassion and concern for others, their sense of being rooted in and belonging to their community, their financial resources, and their commitment to use all of the above to make a difference in their community.

CFs have the potential to obtain solid support through the economic contributions, in-kind contributions and volunteer work of their members, the public and the communities. They generally confront significant obstacles that involve their own institutional capacity and their framework of regulations and policies that do not always create a favorable atmosphere for obtaining sufficient resources from other sources. Consequently, CFs must adopt coherent, long-term strategies in order to assure the effectiveness and sustainability of their programs and their organization.

A fundamental commitment must be made on the part of CFs to dedicate significant resources of a financial, administrative and professional nature in order to build the necessary internal capacity to achieve the needed support.

The operations team is too frequently subjected to pressure in its efforts to mobilize resources in order to fulfill its goals. Typically, it is short on time for dedicating itself to this function, and there is a great deal of improvisation, without the dedication to researching and developing new strategies and methods.

It is not easy to create and maintain a CF. You will often be afraid and will feel as if you do not know what you are doing. You will pass through difficult moments working to convince people to join your efforts. In the beginning, many individuals will not want to make a commitment. And once you begin, there will be frustration, but be persistent. Move through the emptiness. It will be painful, but do not stop in the middle. Keep moving forward and soon, you will find fresh air at the top of the mountain and you will be laughing and crying and feeling more alive than you have felt in years, or perhaps more alive than you have ever felt.

This is how a CF begins. Do not be afraid of making mistakes. It's an adventure. You will be capable of not only sharing your fear, but your talents and strengths as well. From the vitality of your CF, you will be capable of doing things you never thought were possible.



*Help thy brother's boat across,  
And lo! Thine own has reached the shore.*

***Hindu proverb***

*If you want to make innovations, change an initiative or a society,  
you'll need the will of people to do the unexpected.*

***Jean Riboud***