



Donors working together

The story of the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy

Rafal Serafin & Ros Tennyson



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Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to: Megan McGlynn Scanlon and Matt Reeves (Aga Khan Foundation), Chris Cardona (Ford Foundation), Gabriela Boyer and Marcy Kelley (Inter-American Foundation), Nick Deychakiwsky (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation), David Jacobstein and Maryanne Yerkes (USAID) and Hope Lyons (Rockefeller Brothers Fund). And, of course, to Jenny Hodgson (Executive Director of the Global Fund for Community Foundations – GFCF) whose decision it was to get us involved in the story. The Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP) members and GFCF staff were unfailingly generous in sharing their insights and experiences of the Alliance, and we hope we have done them justice despite the necessary editing to avoid repetition and/or the piece becoming unwieldy. The final responsibility for this interpretation of the Alliance story rests with the authors.

Commonly used abbreviations

AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
GACP	Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy
GFCF	Global Fund for Community Foundations
IAF	Inter-American Foundation
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
PBA	Partnership Brokers Association
RBF	Rockefeller Brothers Fund
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Authors

Rafal Serafin & Ros Tennyson are at the forefront of examining and promoting transformational partnerships through their work as Associates of the Partnership Brokers Association (PBA). They have been engaged with a wide range of partnering projects and building partnership brokering capacity since the early 1990s. Their first joint publication from a workshop in Krakow, Poland in 1993 – *Brokering the Partnership Idea* – is still used as a case study in training partnership brokers across the globe.

From 2016, they have been working together as part of the PBA team contracted to evaluate the collaborative element of the GACP and have much appreciated the opportunity to examine and explore this important experiment alongside the seven entities that comprise the Alliance. The authors have been pleased to be able to contribute to the Alliance's evolving way of working and planning for the future as well as to sharing ideas drawn from the Alliance with a wider audience through the PBA's own initiative: *Working with Donors*.

This paper has been built from materials collected as part of the on-going evaluation process, from conversations with Alliance members and key players as well as from observations and deductions made through having been present at several Alliance meetings and events. Their approach to this particular publication, however, has been as story tellers who (to quote Annette Simmons from her book *The Story Factor*) '... borrow a story's power to connect people to what is important and to help them make sense of their world.'

Why tell this story?

Stories are, at heart, like a baton handed over in a relay team . . . they give each of us a visual template of what to expect, a map of the 'wilderness.' But, most of all, the best stories provide a sort of psychological preparation for life's inevitable struggles. In short, stories are prescriptions for courage.¹

In the years 2013–2019, six US-based donor organizations, all active internationally, came together with the support of the GFCF to work as an alliance to build and promote community philanthropy as a global movement. There were three underlying factors that made this initiative unusual:

- 1 The Alliance was a mix of private and public donor entities, who do not often work together in this way.
- 2 It was based on a commitment to work collaboratively over a number of years around an idea.
- 3 A key motivation was to promote new approaches to community philanthropy as an important part of the development portfolio to donors operating internationally.

Surely, this makes it a story worth telling – not just to see if the collaboration achieved its goals, but also to explore what it means to be part of an 'alliance' *and* what lessons this Alliance may have for other donors across the globe seeking to collaborate in new ways to make a difference.

¹ From: Buster, B., *Do Story: How to Tell your Story so the World Listens* 2013 published: The Do Book Company

What prompted the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy?

The Alliance was born out of a series of meetings, reports and ongoing interactions of donors actively supporting and enabling community philanthropy starting in the 2000s. This included the establishment of the GFCF, which was established as a pilot project with funding from the World Bank, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and Ford Foundation in 2006 as *'an independent grassroots grantmaker working to promote and support institutions of community philanthropy around the world.'* The idea of a more formalized donor collaboration to promote community philanthropy more systematically across the globe was conceived at this time by some of the initiators of the GACP. The mission of a GACP was articulated as follows:

The GACP is a multi-donor and multi-stakeholder collaborative engaged in a series of joint research and learning activities aimed at advancing the practice of community philanthropy and at influencing international development actors to better understand, support and promote community philanthropy's role in achieving more lasting development outcomes. The concept of community philanthropy has not tended to have been part of the mainstream development discourse and the Alliance seeks to rectify this by demonstrating why it matters and how donors can appreciate, support and harness its potential more effectively.²

To get started, the idea was for Founding Partners to pledge a total of US\$1m over five years, Programme Partners to pledge a further \$250,000 and Technical Support partners, to do much of the implementation. In this initial formulation, Founding Partners were expected to provide strategic guidance to the programme design and implementation, and to select the secretariat. Programme partners would be engaged in financing or contributing to specific programmes or activities, whereas Technical Support partners would implement research and activities. They might include funding beneficiaries, but were envisaged as involving a broad array of research institutions, support organizations, intermediaries and other groups, as well as the secretariat. The aim was *'... to stimulate partnerships around community philanthropy from across sectors and regions of the world.'* Activities were envisaged as falling into three components:

- 1 Programming and piloting community philanthropy activities.
- 2 Learning and research about community philanthropy.
- 3 Communication and representation to global stakeholders.

The early initiative to bring together the Founding Partners was orchestrated by the Aga Khan Foundation which invited the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the Rockefeller

2 See: <http://www.globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/about-the-gacp/>

Brothers Fund to meet in Washington DC around 2011. By 2014, the Alliance was in operation with six Founding Partners pledging the initial funds required. These were:

- Aga Khan Foundation
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Inter-American Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- US Agency for International Development (USAID)

From the outset, the Alliance was designed and initiated as a time-bound five-year experiment in donor collaboration that was not about pooling funds, but about promoting the community philanthropy idea and encouraging other donors to make investments. The motivation was to get more donors involved in learning from each other and getting funders to understand and support community philanthropy in ways that would nurture and promote a movement. It was not about working out new forms of collaboration between donors.

Box 1 The Alliance as seen by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)

Matt Reeves & Megan McGlynn Scanlon

Five years ago, when AKF joined the Alliance, we did not have a very clear understanding of what community philanthropy was. Nor did we understand which of our initiatives and investments fell under that umbrella. Today, we have a much clearer understanding across the whole Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). We now recognize a difference between strengthening philanthropy ecosystems and community philanthropy. This new lens has enabled AKF to engage with the field in new and more productive ways. Community philanthropy is now a cornerstone of AKF's civil society strategy, and therefore, forms a part of many of our donor conversations.

Critically, AKF has begun to count local financial and in-kind resources mobilized for local development as a global indicator. Of course, the mobilization of local resources does not necessarily equate to community philanthropy. But this process has enabled us to identify and shine a spotlight on places where community philanthropy is happening in our various focus countries. While we have not yet mobilized significant additional external or internal resources for community philanthropy, we are making progress. Our programme and partnerships staff are aware of our strategy around community philanthropy, and community philanthropy concepts and approaches are appearing in more of our designs.

Some of the inter-organizational relationships that we have developed through participation in the Alliance have greatly shaped and continue to shape our thinking and ways of working. AKF can point to tangible ways in which we are now collaborating with Mott, Ford and USAID – the Alliance partners with whom we share a geographical focus. What's more, the constituency of people aware of and talking about community philanthropy has grown over the past five years. The Alliance contribution to this has

been two-fold. First, it matters when a group of donors like ours comes together to endorse a concept and way of working. Rightly or wrongly (probably wrongly), people pay attention in ways that they might not otherwise. Second, funding from Alliance members has enabled the GFCF to reach a larger audience than it had in the past, most notably through the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy in 2016.

The GFCF was at the time building a growing reputation for networking and supporting community foundations around the globe, and so, was awarded the role of 'secretariat' to the Alliance. However, its activities, from the start, were far more than that of a conventional secretariat in that it was itself a significant pioneer in the field of community philanthropy and thus it 'shaped' as well as 'served' the Alliance. This has been a key feature of the Alliance story, as will emerge later.

It is important to note and acknowledge that for some of the Alliance funders, an important motivation for establishing the Alliance was to direct more resources towards the GFCF, which was seen as an organization with a critical role to play in advancing community philanthropy. In its secretariat role, the GFCF was able to recruit staff, to increase its operational capacity and to amplify its impact.

In 2013, the GFCF's Executive Director, Jenny Hodgson, produced the following schema to clarify the interface between the Alliance, GFCF and individual Alliance member organization activities and focus.

A shared framework for strengthening the global community philanthropy field as an essential dimension of locally rooted development



Reflecting on the development of the GACP, Alliance members revisited the original vision and articulated three key reasons for participating to include the following:

Reinforce the importance of community philanthropy as a mechanism for local engagement and self-reliance in civil society more broadly and within their own organizations.

Learn from each other and deepen/develop new thinking about the place of community philanthropy in a rapidly changing development landscape, as well as supporting research and learning from the experience of others inter alia through support for the GFCF.

Influence by increasing the impact of each organization acting individually and collectively in order to achieve more than could be achieved by working alone, especially in relation to advocating with other donors.

Growing the collaboration

With these big ambitions in mind, an important driver for the Alliance was a desire to initiate a collaboration of donors that would revitalize and re-frame the notion of ‘community philanthropy’ to be fit for purpose for the 21st Century in the context of a rapidly changing development and humanitarian landscape.

Box 2 The Alliance as seen by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF)

Hope Lyons

We joined the Alliance because we believe in community philanthropy and have seen its power and potential through our own grantmaking, but we had yet to see it get the traction with other funders that it deserved as a key grantmaking approach for sustainable outcomes.

We were excited by the Alliance as a way to come together with colleagues in philanthropy who shared our commitment to, as we described it in early documentation, help ‘advance the practice of community philanthropy and encourage international development actors to better understand, support, and promote the role of community philanthropy in the sustainability and vibrancy of civil society and its potential for achieving more lasting development outcomes.’ Our interest in this collaboration was more field-focused than driven by internal needs.

RBF has been involved in more conversations with other funders about supporting community philanthropy and seen interest in it begin to cross into different fields we support. The GrantCraft publication has been very helpful in that regard, and we anticipate it will continue to be a helpful resource going forward as we think about the role of external funders in supporting community philanthropy. Our grantees have also participated in various activities organized by the GFCF in conjunction with the Alliance, including attending the Summit in Johannesburg.

While we cannot attribute the growth in attention to community philanthropy directly to the Alliance, we have enjoyed contributing to the increased understanding, excitement for, and awareness of the potential for community philanthropy that we now see six years after the launch of the Alliance. Community philanthropy now enjoys more interest and legitimacy in mainstream philanthropy and international development—which was one of the most important Alliance goals.

Another important outcome has been the increased support for the GFCF, which has in turn generated more resources to enable it to do more for the field. The Alliance was always a timebound initiative; as it draws to a close, we are encouraged by the GFCF’s growth and believe it is well-positioned to continue to support the field in this new context of greater appreciation for the work of community philanthropy.

The motivations for the individuals representing the Alliance member organizations were, as might be expected, quite diverse. Some were focused on sharing their different experiences of community philanthropy and on supporting each other in their individual efforts to embed new approaches within their own organizations. Others sought to advance the programmatic goals of their organizations with respect to developing new types of local philanthropic institutions or pooling experience to generate new synergies and new ways of operating. Others still were seeking to learn about community philanthropy and increase the priority of community philanthropy in their own organizations. Another motivation was advocacy, especially in relation to influencing other donors. It was also recognized that the community philanthropy concept itself was not well understood and needed greater clarity, even among Alliance members.

At an early stage, it was agreed that, given the experimental nature of the Alliance, there should be an on-going evaluation³ of the Alliance and the role of evaluator was put out to tender with the evaluation of the project being awarded to the Partnership Brokers Association (PBA) because of its focus on partnering/collaboration as a process and the fact that it had undertaken similar work over several years with the Start Network.⁴

It soon became apparent to the PBA evaluation team, that Alliance members were not optimizing the collaboration potential that was emerging as they learned about their different approaches and became more familiar with their diverse experiences of the community philanthropy field. What's more, there appeared something of a disconnect between the approach of the GFCF as secretariat, programme partner, grantmaker and technical partner, which was acting as a, largely independent, change leader – and an emerging Alliance members' aspiration to do something more collectively. It is important to note that although the GFCF was a grantmaker, it was never envisaged that it would take on this role for and on behalf of the Alliance.

The results of an extensive 'baseline review' of Alliance members and stakeholders to assess the collaborative status of the Alliance that was completed in 2015 were presented and discussed at an Alliance meeting convened in Haiti in December 2015. In presenting the findings, the PBA introduced concepts and frameworks of partnership brokering. These provided a way of addressing the collaborative dimension of the Alliance and considering how this might translate into actions going forward. It is worth noting that at this time, the desire to turn the Alliance into a partnership, in which costs, risks and benefits were to be shared was limited. It was alignment around an idea that was seen as crucial as opposed to the collaboration opportunity. It was no accident that the GACP was termed an 'Alliance' as opposed to a 'partnership' or other form of 'collaboration'.

At this point, it seemed somewhat unlikely that the Alliance would become more collaborative (given that the members only met infrequently and that between meetings they operated largely on a bilateral rather than a collective basis) unless there was more

3 This was one of the conditions laid down by USAID as part of its grant to the GFCF for the GACP.

4 Now an international consortium of 42+ INGOs operating in the Humanitarian Sector – www.startnetwork.org – PBA's work included the production of three 'learning case studies' that charted the story of the Consortium from its inception.

recognition of the added value that more dynamic collaboration could bring. It was therefore agreed that the role of the PBA team would become one that included a level of ‘accompaniment’ – in-putting into, and supporting, an emerging collaboration process in addition to simply evaluating it.

Over the following two years, PBA contributed (albeit in a fairly low-key way) to the partnering/collaboration element – both in terms of promoting better partnering practices and in contributions to actual Alliance outputs and events (for example, contributing a paper on the role of partnering in shifting power and being given facilitation roles and a speaking slot at the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy in December 2016). The PBA team⁵ operated as *critical friends* as much as evaluators and they also brought with them a range of review/evaluation approaches.

In the second year of the evaluation work, encouraged by PBA, the Alliance members drew up a Statement of Intent that included the following elements designed to strengthen the collaborative element of the Alliance:

Agreed principles of working⁶

Working with our stakeholders, we support the promotion and values of community philanthropy and are committed to⁷:

Collaboration among and between organizations, communities, and funders;

Engagement with the community philanthropy field, its institutions and networks, through the inclusion of local practitioner voices and the promotion of context-appropriate approaches;

Working with others from across the nonprofit, philanthropic, academic, and private sectors in a community of practice;

Sharing learning among members, and sharing learning across sectors and regions; and,

Exploring in a ‘spirit of enquiry’ that will shape the range and scope of the work through our appreciation of diverse perspectives, experiences and models of community philanthropy.

We acknowledge that a strong and vibrant community philanthropy field must be shaped and led by local voices and institutions and that as external funders, our role is supportive/responsive rather than directive. Consequently, we are also committed to⁸:

1 Leading from behind, with a view to enhancing locally driven messages about the role of community philanthropy;

5 Marcia Dwonczyk, Surinder Hundal, Rafal Serafin & Ros Tennyson (project lead) took on different aspects of the work over a three and a half year period.

6 Extract from the Alliance Statement of Intent – co-created in April 2016.

7 Sources: Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy Guiding Principles October 2014.

8 Minutes of Alliance Meeting 13–14 April 2015, Pocantico Centre.

- 2 **Cascading** Alliance experiences and thought leadership with regard to community philanthropy as widely as possible among key players/stakeholders;
- 3 **Being open** to change and to being challenged as the community philanthropy field itself develops.

An evaluation of the Alliance was completed in 2017, which included in-depth interviews with all Alliance members, found that Alliance members identified quite strongly with the growing awareness of what it takes to collaborate effectively. They attributed more value to the relationships that had been developed and to the Alliance itself as a collaborative venture distinct from and different to their individual relationships to the GFCF. This was reflected in a growing appetite for practical engagement in drafting, commenting on, producing, promoting and using Alliance products.

An Alliance Advocacy Strategy (see box)⁹ and the GrantCraft Guide for donors¹⁰ interested in supporting community philanthropy stand out as two such products. The GrantCraft guide was published in 2018, drawing on concrete examples from the work of all Alliance partners and involved Alliance members in two US promotional events in April 2018. The guide has since been translated by the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) into Portuguese and Spanish. The IAF has shared the GrantCraft guide with some grantees to help them clarify their messages. In Nicaragua, a producer's association of 13,000 members has decided to establish a foundation to support community activities and the IAF has provided support through the GrantCraft guide. The guide is being disseminated by Alliance members as part of individual and joint advocacy activities.

Alliance Advocacy Strategy

Extract

[. . .] The purpose of this advocacy strategy is to seek to identify ways for Alliance partners to position community philanthropy as a critical vehicle to build community-led durable development amongst a broader cross section of stakeholders in the development and philanthropy space.

By providing common tools and assets that can be adapted and packaged for different audiences, the advocacy strategy is a multi-prong approach that aims to:

- Amplify the voice and ideas of those working in community philanthropy and foundations to influence policy and development practice amongst key stakeholders.
- Better document and package the evidence and experience to demonstrate impact of this type of activity on social justice and development outcomes.

9 The strategy has been developed as a document, but it is really seen as a practical way of nurturing a collaborative culture for the Alliance that plays to the strengths of the Alliance, i.e. a group of funders/donors committed to and advocating community philanthropy across the globe. The idea of the strategy was first articulated at the Alliance meeting in Flint in April 2017 and was taken forward jointly by Hope Lyons (RBF) and Megan Scanlon (AKF).

10 The grantcraft guide was authored by Jenny Hodgson and Anna Pond, <https://grantcraft.org/content/guides/how-community-philanthropy-shifts-power/>

- Build new constituencies and allies that can further promote a more people-centred and bottom-up approach to aid, charity and philanthropy.

This working advocacy strategy, will use the shared framework for strengthening the global community philanthropy field as an essential dimension of locally rooted development as its central pillar. It will specifically be guided by *learning & advocacy* to 1) strengthen the evidence base for community philanthropy as a strategy for people led development through focused action learning and research, 2) communicating the learning to global stakeholders with a view to influencing policies and practices and appreciation of community philanthropy. And, *networking and field building efforts* to strengthen the community philanthropy field and link it with relevant networks.

Key themes related to community philanthropy that will resonate with donors include:

- Links between community philanthropy and longer term civil society sustainability
- 'Beyond the grant' benefits of community philanthropy (e.g. building capacity and trust)
- How support for community philanthropy can be integrated into programmatic goals as an approach
- How local agency, ownership, and control can lead to better development outcomes over the long term.
- The role of community philanthropy in responding to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters
- How community philanthropy can contribute to longer term achievement of the SDG agenda
- Role of community philanthropy as a mechanism for building inclusive community development

By 2018, PBA's evaluation found that those involved directly in the Alliance recognized that the collaborative value of the Alliance was somewhat intangible, but nevertheless real. There was also universal acknowledgement that the very existence of the Alliance has symbolic importance and that it could potentially offer wider lessons for donors both in collaborating themselves and in supporting collaboration with their grantees.

Box 3 The Alliance as seen by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Nick Deychakiwsky, Vera Dakova & Mamo Mohapi

The Mott Foundation's involvement with the Alliance began long before the formal establishment of the Alliance itself. We were a supporter of the GFCF since its inception. When we were approached in 2010 by the then president of the Aga Khan Foundation USA (AKF) to work together on community philanthropy, our first reaction was, frankly, to encourage AKF to support the GFCF. But, at AKF's urging, subsequently our two

institutions embarked on a consultative process in which we involved many stakeholders, including the GFCF, that were interested in community philanthropy development. This process ultimately led to the creation of the Alliance in 2013.

The initial programme framework was developed mainly by AKF but with heavy involvement from Mott staff. It outlined three components: 1) programming and piloting community philanthropy activities; 2) learning and research about community philanthropy; and 3) communications and representation to global stakeholders. Inasmuch as the Mott Foundation already was investing significantly in community philanthropy (roughly \$2 million in grants annually), and we had 40 years of experience in supporting (mainly) community foundation development, we were most interested in the third component, hoping to broaden engagement and increase funding for community philanthropy.

Particularly in the early years of the Alliance, the Mott Foundation devoted considerable programme and communications staff time to the Alliance and once the Alliance started, the Mott Foundation strongly advocated for the Global Summit for Community Philanthropy, organized by the GFCF and held at the end of 2016, to become a key part of the Alliance's agenda. The Summit had greater success than it might have otherwise because of the involvement of all the Alliance members in conceptualizing, planning, funding, and participating in the event.

The Alliance has given Mott more regular contact with other donors sharing an interest in community philanthropy. The time spent together discussing and thinking through both strategic and tactical issues regarding community philanthropy furthered our relationships with Alliance members. Mott Program Officer Nick Deychakiwsky, the formal liaison with the Alliance, attended every Alliance meeting and, over the years, seven other Mott staff members also attended meetings, thus deepening institutional linkages with the other members. Although Mott already had relationships with other members, and of course was a lead funder of the GFCF, one of the biggest added values of the Alliance was the opportunity to systematically engage with USAID staff working on community philanthropy, not only in Washington DC but also in the field.

Mott's involvement in the Alliance enabled us to become more familiar with the nexus between community philanthropy and international development and to observe the renewed ascent of the idea of shifting power from large donors to communities. Although the Mott Foundation is not an international development agency, the Alliance focus on transforming the international development paradigm helped us clarify our own niche.

The Mott Foundation sees its renewed commitment to a focus on community foundations as a substantial complement to the work of other Alliance partners, who may be more interested in a wider array of community philanthropy organizations and approaches. At the same time, we are concerned that at times the community philanthropy concept has been so broadened that it may be losing its core meaning, which to the Mott Foundation has traditionally been local institutions that match local resources with local needs.

The Alliance experience also greatly enhanced our appreciation of the complexities of partnership. We believe that the Alliance may have achieved better results had we paid closer attention to the less exciting, but necessary, matters of governance and administration while continuously managing partners' expectations. We understood, as the Alliance progressed, that several of the Alliance members had different priorities and so we learned how to try to balance the Alliance's interests with our own institution's interests. We also were faced with the challenge of harmonizing the passion and interests of the individuals engaged in the Alliance with their respective institutions – including our own.

On balance, we believe the Alliance was a good investment in terms of the development of the community philanthropy field. We certainly see that: the number of organizations that engage in community philanthropy has increased; practice has deepened and diversified and that the evidence base has not only grown but become more accessible. Mott staff certainly learned much that has informed not only our foundation's community philanthropy development programming strategy, but our knowledge and skills around collaboration.

The evaluation enabled Alliance members to address differences of opinion, expressed often with some emotion, on a number of issues including the:

- Alliance's limited effectiveness as a collaboration
- Alliance/GFCF interface – specifically the role of the GFCF in relation to the Alliance as that of secretariat or change leader
- Question of funding mechanisms – which were different for each of the Alliance members and hard to align
- Challenge of agreeing whether or not to expand the membership (in terms of type of donor and location – the current membership being quite traditional and all based out of the USA)
- Different responses to the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy

Whilst all the Alliance members fully acknowledged the impressive contributions of the GFCF to advancing community philanthropy, there was recurring discussion as to how far these contributions were or should be independent of, rather than the result of, the Alliance, and on the nature of mutual reinforcement of activities of the Alliance and the GFCF. The Alliance was slowly but surely evolving its own identity and form of collaboration.

It is probably fair to say that the Alliance was about sharing and promoting an idea by providing a framework and point of reference for individual members to pursue actions individually as well as collectively in ways that could not have been developed or delivered by any one agency operating alone. Key Alliance achievements included donor endorsement for supporting approaches that enable grassroots or bottom-up

community philanthropy, showing how donors can collaborate to promote an idea – rather than just around money or funding – and providing a mechanism for learning for all those interested in or engaged in community philanthropy, whether as donors, as beneficiaries or stakeholders. Achievements, along with key publications, are presented in an accompanying flyer.

In its role of critical friend, the PBA helped to facilitate a crucial meeting of Alliance members in Washington DC in April 2018 to review achievements, confront challenges and explore potential for re-designing and up-scaling the Alliance going forwards. At this meeting, it became clear that a stronger collaborative culture within the Alliance would require more shared responsibility and the space for the difficult conversations needed to explore and build on the diverse interests and experiences of Alliance members and those of the GFCF.

'From the perspective of the GFCF, the Alliance is a collaboration that has developed its own culture. It has enabled the GFCF to make great contributions to the community philanthropy field – this should be seen as an Alliance success story'¹¹

But the question remains, are the clear successes achieved by the GFCF over the past several years, a strong enough justification for the investment (of time, energy as well as money) by the Alliance members, as opposed to investment in community philanthropy promotion outside the Alliance. Let's see if we can answer that question as we explore further.

11 Quote from one of the Alliance members captured in the 2017–18 evaluation report

Collaboration achievements

If the Alliance story is, at least in part, one of growing recognition of collaborative potential and of exploring ways of exploiting that potential, then what are some of the milestones or key moments of insight that helped build greater self-awareness?

In looking at the effectiveness and impact of collaboration in the 2017 evaluation, Alliance members came to recognize and acknowledge collaboration achievement and potential as follows:

Intangible value The Alliance is a worthwhile undertaking not just as an advocate of community philanthropy, but also as a means for drawing attention to the transformational role donors can play in the wider field of international development. The existence of the Alliance has also been important for large organizations, such as USAID and AKDN, where much effort has to be made to legitimize, promote and deploy internally new approaches to development (such as community philanthropy). Also, donors not directly involved in the Alliance, such as The National Lottery Community Fund and Comic Relief in the UK, the Open Society Foundation and others have taken note of the renewed interest in community philanthropy shown by the Alliance as they reflected on and reframed their own programmes and approaches.

A learning initiative The Alliance is an on-going learning initiative that benefits the individuals directly involved and indirectly the organizations that they represent. The Alliance-facilitated learning is largely informal and ad hoc, but has resulted in a number of 'learning products' that were verified and improved through an informal Alliance peer review and, building on PBA's evaluation approach, learning came also to include gaining an appreciation for what it means to collaborate, where no single organization or person is 'in-charge.'

Advocacy Alliance members were in agreement as to the ambition of using collaboration to advocate the benefits of donors investing in community philanthropy. A conviction emerged that when it came to donor audiences, Alliance members could complement and add significant value to the GFCF advocacy efforts. The result was the development of an advocacy strategy for the Alliance, but one which was never implemented in any systematic or shared way. It became rather part of the culture of the more active Alliance members and represented the more self-aware the collaborative direction pursued in its last years.¹² This included also preparation and dissemination the GrantCraft guide. With regard to advocacy, Alliance members acknowledged and added to the significance of the GFCF putting together an impressive 'evidence base' on the impact and benefits of community philanthropy as a point of reference and resource. GFCF work in this regard was significantly

¹² The strategy is more of a guide for exploiting the strengths of the Alliance for individual and joint advocacy efforts to donor and government audiences. The message is that there is group of public and private funders/donors committed to and advocating for community philanthropy across the globe. In practical terms this means that GACP members speak for and on behalf of the Alliance, as and when appropriate, when they are invited to various speaking platforms and other public engagements/events.

supported, enabled and enhanced by Alliance members acting individually and collectively.

Box 4 The Alliance as seen by the Ford Foundation

Chris Cardona

The benefit to Ford has been about staying connected to the community philanthropy field worldwide especially with donors operating in different geographies who share the same values and commitment to the community philanthropy idea – the notion of helping communities organize and resource themselves. Where differences often emerged among us was in our relationship to the GFCF, and how hands-off or hands-on we chose to be in our grant relationship. The emphasis on control that the Alliance talks about as a challenge in the development arena would sometimes show up in our own behaviours among the funders, especially with regard to the GFCF. We weren't able to work out the model of how to reconcile these differences.

An important Alliance contribution has been to distinguish community philanthropy from participatory grantmaking. The two can often get confused, because they're both about shifting power. In fact, in the US, one group working on participatory grantmaking used the hashtag #ShiftPower – just three letters away from the Summit's #ShiftThePower. But thanks to the GrantCraft guides that came out about each topic in 2018, it now feels clear that community philanthropy is what communities do to leverage their own assets, capacities, and trust, and participatory grantmaking is what institutional donors do to engage community members in the donors' decision-making processes. It's a difference of who's hosting the party. And this matters, because community philanthropy therefore has more far-reaching implications: it is power on the community's terms, not the donor's.

In terms of the bigger picture, Alliance impact seen in terms of recruiting or influencing other donors to take on the community philanthropy agenda has been limited. More and better communications would help. Having said that, the Alliance has certainly generated more opportunity and scope for us to engage in/present at conferences and panels specifically on community philanthropy. The global exposure the Alliance has given us has been important.

The Summit was great for networking and a real opportunity to connect with the global movement, given my US remit/focus. But we never quite managed to agree how the Alliance could help Ford advance its agenda in the US or globally.

These insights and perspectives came after the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy organized by the GFCF in December 2016 in Johannesburg, which was supported financially and in other ways by Alliance members. The Summit was an important milestone in the Alliance story. It was an idea that pre-dated the Alliance and had been advocated by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Adopted by the Alliance, the Summit provided the GFCF with the opportunity to connect the international

community philanthropy agenda advocated by the Alliance to the international development agenda.¹³ We will return to the Summit in the next section. Here we focus on significance of the Summit for Alliance evolution.

By introducing the #ShiftThePower tagline for the Summit, the GFCF placed the emphasis on local asset development, capacity building of local groups and strengthening social trust – as a method and opportunity for re-framing international development. The aim was to draw attention to community philanthropy as a mechanism to push for the ‘localization’ agenda – a practical means for shifting power from global actors and putting people at the local level in charge of their own development.

To varying degrees, Alliance members recognized the wider significance of the Summit as the search for new frameworks for development:

‘The theme of community philanthropy is more than just a question of international development – it is about universality. Local agencies are, understandably, critical of global level initiatives in international development and will not get traction if the perception persists that it is all top-down. Communities in both developing and developed countries need a framework that embeds trust, relies on capacity and on local assets in ways that provide an institutional vehicle, organization and process.’¹⁴

The Summit created an opportunity for exploring the interface between a framework for change and working collaboratively, drawing together experiences of the Alliance, GFCF and the PBA in order to understand and communicate better the role, place and opportunity of community philanthropy in the sustainable development agenda (see summary in the table below).

13 The rationale for increasing the role of community philanthropy in international development is expressed in: Wilkinson, Susan (2017) ‘Shifting the Power: Community Giving as a Critical Consciousness-Raising Tool,’ *The Foundation Review*: Vol. 9: Iss. 3, Article 11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1378> For a more provocative perspective, see also: Jenny Hodgson (2016) *Community philanthropy: a brave new model for development funding?* – a popular article published in the Guardian newspaper. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/nov/29/community-philanthropy-a-brave-new-model-for-development-funding>

14 Nick Deychakiwsky, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Synergies for sharing power for sustainable development

Contribution of community philanthropy	Contribution of better partnering	Contribution of donors as partners
Lessons from GFCF on resourcing local development	Lessons from PBA on brokering effective partnerships	Lessons from the Alliance on better investment through partnering
1 Participation and mobilizing people		
People based local development is central to shifting power.	Develop locally-based, inclusive, co-created partnerships that are mutually accountable, with active contributions of local populations.	Practice what you preach. Model and inspire responsible partnering behaviour in your own operations – build partnering capacity of your own staff and partners.
2 Added value		
Strengthening processes (how development programmes are delivered) and outcomes (what is delivered).	Collaborate across traditional boundaries and build new ways of working that celebrate and build on the diversity of public, private and civil society partners.	Assess the value of monetary investments in terms of added value, outcomes and additional benefits generated, treating non-monetary contributions on an equal footing. Going beyond measuring just the outputs planned at the outset.
3 New resourcing models		
Resources need to be used in different ways, testing new models and assumptions.	Partners are also 'donors' because they all contribute something essential for the partnership as a whole – but non-cash contributions must be properly valued and attributed.	Leverage the brand, position and history of individual donors to engage with other donors in order to develop new types of resourcing arrangements that would not be possible for donors acting alone or in isolation of others.
4 Evidence and data		
Build evidence for the work and using data to grow and drive it.	Use evidence gathered by partners to capture layers, complexities and what it takes to drive change.	Develop metrics and standards for monitoring/tracking partnering performance (as opposed to just project). Tell stories of how monetary and non-monetary investment can be combined to achieve impact and sustained results.
5 Governance		
Enhance the work of other institutions by demonstrating new forms of governance and decision-making.	Partnerships are at the forefront of evolving and testing new governance models worldwide based on sharing power, risks, and resources for a common purpose.	Collaborate with other donors in arrangements in which no single donor is 'in charge', but all share in responsibility for operations and impact.
6 Effective interventions		
Community philanthropy methods can bring better results and capture emergent practice.	Effective partnering requires new brokering/intermediating skills and a focus on how not just what.	Investing effectively requires that donor organizations adopt a partnering culture or mentality – it is not just a matter of individuals sensitive to local needs and stakeholder opinions. Individuals must constantly work on this in relation to their own organization.
7 Narrative and communications		
Words and meanings matter and we need new and better descriptions for local level collaborations.	The best partnership approaches avoid jargon and evolve language that includes rather than alienates.	The non-monetary contributions of donors are seldom acknowledged or celebrated. This is a mistake, Non-monetary contributions, and how these made a difference need to be recognized.
8 Structures and systems		
Structures matter – we need to encourage new forms whilst encouraging existing institutions to go local.	Partnerships provide an alternative to centrally-controlled structures that limit genuine co-ownership and inhibit collective action.	Use the 'convening power' of donor collaboration to create new space for new structures that favour sharing power through partnerships.

Global Summit on Community Philanthropy

A major event that took a central place in the history and achievements of the Alliance was the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy, which was organised by the GFCF and held in Johannesburg on 1–2 December 2016. The idea of a Summit to take the community philanthropy field to a more global audience had been conceived many years earlier through discussions involving the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, GFCF and others. But the idea did not gain traction until after the Community Foundation Centennial conference held in Cleveland in 2014. A sense of urgency and momentum meant that the idea became part of the Alliance agenda with Alliance members providing input as to intent, content, shape, as well as making available financial resources. The Summit became a focus for the Alliance throughout much of 2016.

With over 400 practitioners participating from 62 countries, the Summit was an opportunity to take stock of the place, needs and opportunities for community philanthropy in efforts across the globe to enable and support community-based development. The Summit drew attention to many new developments in the community philanthropy field, especially recent growth of community philanthropy initiatives in the Global South.

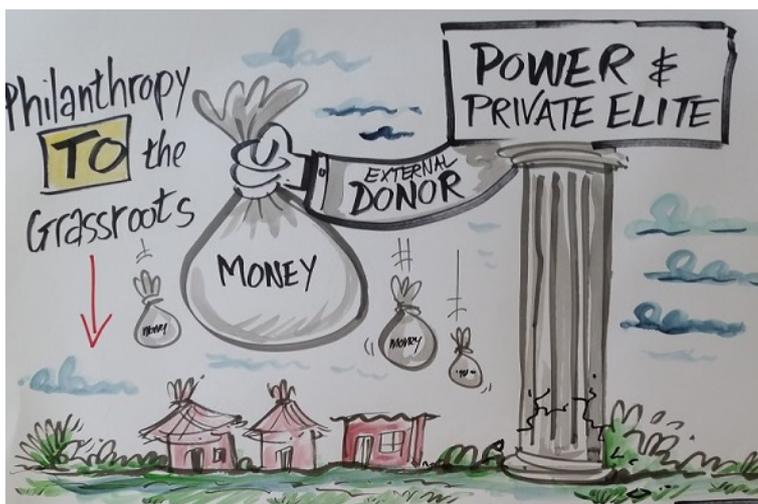


Image created by a cartoonist at the Summit

The key message of the Summit was that community philanthropy with its emphasis on local asset development, capacity building of local groups and strengthening social trust can be and should be a central tenet of any strategy that shifts power and puts people more in charge of their own development. Community philanthropy should thus be seen as an opportunity for re-framing international development and re-orienting the operations of big bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as motivating private donors to invest more strategically in enabling community philanthropy.

Alliance members recognized the Summit as a watershed event for the community philanthropy field, albeit in different ways, as evidenced by their feedback:

'The Summit was a great success in terms of providing visibility to the community philanthropy movement, re-energizing the grassroots and providing a stronger glue among those involved in supporting – including Alliance members. It is important to remember that the Summit was really a GFCF initiative, for which many Alliance members provided additional support (including Mott).'

Nick Deychakiwsky, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

'We took 30+ local organizations from Central & South America to the Summit. This proved very worthwhile as it was an opportunity to spend time with grantees and also to expose them to a larger picture or context. We stayed an extra three days to carry out some site visits. We had a chance to travel to the field with Mott and see their grantees. This was certainly something that could not have been organized without an Alliance.'

Gabriela Boyer & Marcy Kelly, IAF

'The Summit helped consolidate and provide momentum for the community philanthropy movement. This was more of a GFCF initiative with the Alliance providing additional funding and support. Its value will become apparent over time.'

David Jacobstein, USAID

'The Summit was great for networking and a real opportunity to connect with the global, given my US remit/focus. Quality of the meeting was great. The methodology of the event and the various sessions were also very good.'

Chris Cardona, Ford Foundation

'The Summit was an important opportunity for the community philanthropy to celebrate and reinforce its potential – and successes – for lasting development outcomes that builds assets, capacity, and trust for communities.'

Hope Lyons, RBF

'The Summit represented a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the successes of community philanthropy. It was incredible to see so many practitioners come together and be given the opportunity to share their work. As a member of the Alliance it was very heartening to see this. Our AKDN colleagues and partners took home some exciting new ideas and perspectives.'

Matt Reeves, AKF

Lessons for Donors

'The Alliance has provided a framework for engaging with other donors – exchanging, learning and networking'¹⁵

There was recognition from an early stage that there were wider lessons to be extracted on the role, implications and potential of donor collaboration globally and locally for community philanthropy as a means for enabling and promoting multi-sector collaboration. Working out how to enable effective partnering at both global and local levels (and between the local and the global) was likely to be of considerable interest even to those donors who are not directly involved in community philanthropy. This is because there is growing recognition that successful realization of the UN-advocated SDGs will depend on effective multi-stakeholder collaboration. In this regard, community philanthropy and community philanthropy organizations are partnership resources.

One of the Alliance members¹⁶, stimulated by the work with the Alliance, produced a useful set of 'tips' that is now available on the USAID website (see below). The tips were developed through an informal and somewhat ad hoc consultation and review process with other Alliance members. The author later reflected that articulating the ten tips would not have been possible through contracting a consultant as their value lay in capturing for USAID purposes the personal practical experience and insight of donors directly involved in philanthropic grantmaking and also motivated the task as something worthwhile in its own right.

Ten tips for bilateral donors to incorporate community philanthropy principles¹⁷

Within grant construction:

- 1** Space for community control – in aspects of how a grantee is given funds, even for set purposes, find choices that they can offer to relevant communities, helping those communities gain ownership over the grantee's overall work.
- 2** Ask for an exit plan – rather than the donor planning for exit, ask the grantee to define an exit plan for how they will ensure their organization benefits from and maintains as much value as possible.
- 3** Shared understanding and curiosity in learning and Theory of Change – in working with a grantee, ask them to highlight the two to three areas of most uncertainty regarding how the programme will fit into their context, and to update learning around this. The language of 'systems thinking' can be useful in helping convey dynamic contexts (rather than uncertain plans).

¹⁵ Quote from one of the Alliance members recorded in the 2017–18 evaluation report

¹⁶ David Jacobstein, USAID

¹⁷ Available from: <https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/rethinking-resourcing-civil-society>

- 4 Be clear about saying 'no' – if an application is not core to your focus, do not ask for adjustments and changes from the applicant to try to make a fit.
- 5 Statement of values – in calls for proposals and in grants, issue a statement of donor values that reflects community philanthropy ideas as well as the donor's mission. Ask the grantee to offer feedback on what more the donor could do to live up to its values.

Within project design:

- 1 Connect actors and spotlight connections – in working with grantees, ask them to note key connections made. Spend time linking grantees with local businesses, other foundations, or other groups – particularly those addressing issues in the same community but not the same topics. Set targets for the number and quality of connections to be made and recalibrate with input from both sides.
- 2 Invite perspectives and diversity not tainted by funding – set up advisory boards of stakeholders in the outcomes who are not directly affected by the funding flows. Ask these advisors for regular input on what is working well and not working, as well as key trends and issues in the context. Model a 'thick skin' in encouraging and welcoming critical feedback, with an emphasis on fit to context of the programming rather than quality of execution.
- 3 Triggered resources (matching funds, surveys, TA) – reserve some of your support to be unlocked by grantee actions consistent with community philanthropy explicitly making these part of grant requirements.

In language used:

- 1 Frame change as bigger than you – in the language of the programme, consistently situate the expected impact of the effort as well beyond the scope of the grant. This helps remind both parties and others that donor and grantee are contributing to social change, alongside vital other actors and drivers.
- 2 Simple language for expectations – help grantees answer questions around what they expect the programme results will be (as distinct from aspirations for programme impact if it is successful) as a triangulation and reality-check on donor planning and theories.

The Alliance members with their considerable networks have been able to point to many relevant experiences, models and types of expertise that have been explored further through the PBA's 'Working with Donors' initiative¹⁸, which was itself inspired and informed by the Alliance. We have drawn on insights generated in our efforts to understand better how and why donors seek to collaborate with one another and how they invest in making partnerships more effective for greater impact.

18 See: www.workingwithdonors.org

At an early stage of the working relationship between PBA and the Alliance, a list of the things donors can do to build partnership impact¹⁹ was drawn up that has now been presented and verified in a wide range of contexts by the PBA (see below).

12 things donors can do to build partnership impact

- 1 Promote** partnering as a delivery mechanism
- 2 Provide** funding for partnership-generated projects
- 3 Invest** in building partnering capacity and processes
- 4 Develop** new ways of fully valuing non-cash contributions
- 5 Broker** new partnerships and collaborative models
- 6 Engage** as real partners
- 7 Model** high standards in partnering practice
- 8 Assess** the added value of partnering
- 9 Build** constituencies for partnership action
- 10 Influence** policy and decision-makers
- 11 Share** learning about partnering challenges
- 12 Bring** a longer-term perspective to the table

The Alliance-inspired contribution to PBA's 'Working with Donors' project is the central idea that *power shifts when power is shared*. The thesis being that community foundations practicing partnering at the local level can achieve more with donors operating at the international or global level, such as those in the Alliance, when funding (from all sources and at all levels) is thought of as 'investment' in strengthening the collaborative capabilities that link the global with the local in new ways. The following points were developed as a result of the Alliance relationship and were presented (and well received) at an event for donors co-hosted by the GFCF and the National Lottery Community Fund in London in 2017.²⁰

Building better investment through partnering to:

- 1 Ensure** more context-appropriate investments
- 2 Evolve** innovative ways of valuing non-cash contributions
- 3 Re-define** what is meant by 'return on investment'

19 Initially articulated at the Alliance meeting in Haiti, December 2015.

20 We include the following list as well as the list above because they would not have been compiled without the working relationship to the Alliance – in other words they are indirect but important additional outcomes from the Alliance.

- 4 **Promote** greater equity between 'funders' and beneficiaries
- 5 **Demonstrate** the 'value add' from sharing power
- 6 **Explore** the transformational potential of collaboration
- 7 **Build** greater partnering capabilities in donor organizations
- 8 **Challenge** donors to operate as genuine partners
- 9 **Confront** those locked into an outdated paradigm
- 10 **Monitor** the benefits from collaborative resourcing models
- 11 **Disseminate** learning about new approaches
- 12 **Share** responsibility for sustaining outcomes

In 2018, with the end of the agreed Alliance programming period in sight, some Alliance members displayed both enthusiasm and appetite for continuing to work towards a breakthrough on new ways of funding, supporting and partnering aimed at advancing the cause of community philanthropy.

*The Alliance is needed. Its very existence has value as it sends a reinforcing/reenergizing message to other funders and to the community philanthropy world (this was the key value/achievement of the Summit). It is the voice of the 'global community of funders.'*²¹

From an external perspective, the Alliance's lead in forming a collaboration of donors, combined with the GFCF's drive towards engaging with new types of donors, represents an important reformulation of the donor/beneficiary interface. The Alliance can be seen as part of the move to reconsider traditional donor approaches in favour of more complex/layered relationships that are negotiated and navigated with a conscious intention to build greater equity.

Box 5 The Alliance as seen by the Inter-American Foundation (IAF)

Gabriela Boyer & Marcy Kelley

We joined the Alliance because we were already working in community philanthropy, albeit using other terms, for nearly 50 years. At the IAF we call it grassroots development. In 1977, the IAF published 'They Know How: An Experiment in Development Assistance', which turned traditional development thinking upside down. The IAF pioneered the idea that communities, given some resources, know how to invest it for their own good and do not need experts to tell them what to do and how to do it.

The IAF focuses its grant making exclusively on Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The Alliance has enabled us to connect with, and contribute to global developments in the community philanthropy field. The Global Summit on Community Philanthropy gave us

21 Quote from an Alliance member recorded in the 2017–18 evaluation report

and also our grantee partners, who participated, exposure to the practice of community philanthropy outside of our region. Alliance-inspired research and publications gave us a platform to share our experiences and learn from experiences in other parts of the world. The GrantCraft publication for donors, among others, communicated our experiences in the context of a global community philanthropy movement. We worked with the GFCF to translate the publication into Spanish and Portuguese and have circulated it widely throughout our region.

The geographical focus of many Alliance members does not include our focus on LAC. While the IAF has a long history of collaboration with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the GFCF, being part of the Alliance has expanded our relationships among like-minded donors. We have interacted with other donors in mutually beneficial ways, such as our participation in the evaluation of a joint USAID-AKF community philanthropy initiative called YETU, which was implemented in Kenya. The IAF collaborated with AKF and USAID to develop a workshop session on community philanthropy for a USAID staff event. RBF also contributed to the IAF Earthquake Fund in Mexico, supporting work on strengthening the community foundation sector to respond to natural disasters.

The different geographies meant that it felt like we were swimming upstream because some participants brought community philanthropy to the table as something new. In LAC local and informal forms of philanthropy have existed for a long time and have always been part of IAF funding (we call it counterpart) from both communities and grantees.

While local institutions and international donors are still becoming familiar with the practice of community philanthropy, there's an increasing appreciation that without local ownership, knowledge, and resources, international development efforts will not help effect sustainable social change.

Getting beyond 'politeness'

*'The Alliance could achieve far more than it has, if we can get beyond this tight family group and get beneath the tendency to operate in a spirit of politeness. We need to really get to know each other better and to build from our differences rather than avoiding them.'*²²

Whilst much of the story so far has been couched in terms of achievements and learning, this does not mean that the working relationships in the Alliance were always easy, or straightforward. Indeed, at various times, there was a level of discontent and frustration that rumbled away under the surface of outwardly warm relationships. In fact, some of the in-depth conversations conducted as part of the evaluation revealed quite strong irritations. Experience of participating in Alliance meetings revealed also that the Alliance culture involved disagreements and divergence of views being largely addressed in informal or private conversations/email exchanges rather than being discussed by the group as a whole.

This should not be understood as anything other than the common experience of those working in multi-stakeholder collaborative ventures, especially where those involved are highly committed to and actively looking to leverage collaborative advantage. In fact, any collaboration or partnership that is positioned as entirely 'plain sailing' is likely to either be operating at a fairly superficial level, or there is a level of avoidance in voicing discontents, which means recognizing collaborative advantage is made difficult. The decision to include some of the underlying issues (for which the Alliance members and the GFCF are to be applauded!) is to be as true as possible to the realities of the collaboration experience and not to risk simplifying or sanitizing things since this would convey a rather false picture of the story. Discontent, frustration and difficult behaviours usually signify that those involved care deeply about the collaboration, and so 'difficult conversations' aimed at achieving collaboration potential and advantage should not be avoided, but have their place in collaborative processes.

*'Barriers to collaboration are fundamental issues, which persist as unresolved – what does it mean to be an Alliance member? Should there be a set of rules and a structure for making decisions?'*²³

What made it so difficult to bring discontents to the table and resolve them?

One answer relates to staffing transitions. Incoming staff and representatives often had a very different set of expectations of the collaboration than their predecessors. There was not much in the way of 'on-boarding' new representatives, and certainly changing faces influenced the engagement, environment, and pushes on the Alliance. This is a key issue in managing long-term collaborations.

²² Quote from an Alliance member recorded in the 2017–18 evaluation report

²³ Quote from an Alliance member recorded in the 2017–18 evaluation report

But staff transitions are only part of the story. It is also the context and motivations that change – of both the individuals involved and their organizations. Initially the emphasis was on drawing attention to big picture systems change which moved, over time, to greater emphasis on outputs and outcomes. It is likely that the differences between the Alliance members in terms of their own organizational cultures and priorities needed to be understood and navigated more effectively. And there was considerable criticism from members (more strongly felt/voiced by some than others) of their individual and collective relationships to the GFCF.

*'A key challenge lies in managing/dealing with the 'mechanics' of the Alliance collaboration in a situation where there are many voices, strong personalities and unhelpful behaviours.'*²⁴

Let's explore this a little further – since it is an issue that can challenge even the most robust collaborative ventures and understanding it, perhaps re-framing it, may be of use to others in similar situations. As suggested in the quote above, the issue can be seen as both a 'mechanical' one (i.e. exploring and agreeing the appropriate structure for the relationship) and a 'behavioural' one (i.e. navigating strong voices and the determination of individuals to do things their own way).

The issue relates also to the role of the funder in the community philanthropy field. There were different views and experiences in this regard. In the Alliance, there are funders in the mix who are primarily funding other organizations to do work, and funders who also work as implementing organizations. While all Alliance members came to share end goals, there was distinct differences of opinions on a) how to get there, b) how directive Alliance members should be individually and collectively – particularly vis-à-vis the GFCF.

How far was the role of the GFCF (as the 'secretariat') understood in the Alliance?

Was it a question of the members wanting the GFCF to be largely supportive/administrative in character? This may not be the case, what seems more likely is that members felt that they did not have enough input into activities carried out in their name – in other words, it felt as if the Alliance was supporting GFCF activities rather than co-creating initiatives with the GFCF.

At the time that the Alliance was initiated, the GFCF was in a vulnerable position and the GFCF team acknowledge that the support, specifically the financial support, provided by Alliance members was critical to the organization's survival. In fact, it is worth underscoring that an important motivation for the Alliance at the outset, and certainly for some of the Alliance initiators, was to provide support for the development of the GFCF.

Beyond that, the value to the GFCF in being involved with the Alliance was always to do with having:

- Access to more resources to support cutting edge work
- Influence on donors and, through donors, with other key players
- Opportunities to raise the profile and impact of community philanthropy

²⁴ Quote from an Alliance member captured in the 2017–18 evaluation report

With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that the GFCF team saw the Alliance relationship as a strong contributor and driver for their own mission and were often surprised when their actions were challenged as not being rooted strongly enough in Alliance decisions and prior agreement. It is likely that Alliance members were simply unable to give the additional time to being more deeply engaged at a programmatic level, but the GFCF team felt both hurt and angry at what they felt was a thinly veiled critique of their actions.

The GFCF's argument (if it had made it) might have been that the Alliance was by its nature loose in structure and primarily about sharing learning rather than being able, as an Alliance, to take on practical initiatives. GFCF success, therefore, was dependent on its willingness to take on a range of somewhat spontaneous initiatives using Alliance branding and support to strengthen their influence and impact.

Our working hypothesis is that any disconnect between the expectations of Alliance members and the GFCF team can be best understood by recognizing that the term 'secretariat' was probably inappropriate for the GFCF role. The Alliance needed active brokering and/or animating if it was to be more than just a bi-annual get together for a small group of donors. What the GFCF did was to operate somewhat spontaneously as an 'animator of the field' rather than a 'secretariat' and that without this, the Alliance would not have achieved as much as it did. Some Alliance members, however, have argued the opposite – namely, that a more conventional 'secretariat' for administering Alliance activities would have enabled the Alliance to achieve more.

These 'mechanics' could have been explored and the GFCF role/responsibilities re-defined much earlier which could have avoided some harrowing moments of a working relationship sometimes on the edge of breakdown. In our experience, it is usually a lack of clarity with regard to structures and operations more than 'personality clashes' that undermine collaborative working relationships, though personality clashes are often cited as the more important issue. Too often, 'difficult behaviours' arising from individual efforts to find their place in the larger whole are mistaken for 'difficult people' with the result that 'difficult conversations' to reframe legitimate concerns about collaborative working are too often not pursued or pursued reluctantly. This was also the Alliance experience.

What was missing according to some Alliance members, was also a willingness of the GFCF to discuss the operational structures for greater clarity, seeming to see some advantage in avoiding clarity. The issue tended to be pushed off to the end of meetings when there was little time to give proper consideration, or the issue would be left off the agenda altogether. It was not until April 2018 that the issue was addressed head-on as a consequence of the final annual evaluation, which provided a framework for pursuing 'difficult conversations' as an opportunity for realizing collaborative potential in a practical or operational way.

None of the above invalidates the achievements of the Alliance – though sometimes those achievements may have felt as if they had been hard-won or required 'swimming upstream.' But it does raise a question about when 'difference' (with its positive potential for innovation that can result from working through diversity) becomes 'divergence'

(with its negative potential for being, or being seen as being a source of breakdown and/or conflict)?

*'In an Alliance, which takes precedence – the interests/priorities of members or the perceived needs of the wider cause? Whilst the two may be broadly in alignment, when it comes to choices about specifics (about how time or money is spent, for example) it can quickly become polarized. Whilst it is sometimes the case that such tension can be productive, it is also true that managing this tension can be immensely time-consuming and nerve-wracking for those who have to do so. Added to this is the fact that mission-driven individuals are often highly directional and impatient in character and this does not always sit well alongside the attributes needed for patient relationship- and consensus-building.'*²⁵

A further issue is the primacy of the topic (in this the case, community philanthropy) for each of the organizations involved. For those in the Alliance where the issue is not central to their organization's mission but rather a relatively small element in a broad portfolio, the Alliance offers a place to compare community philanthropy approaches and/or to muster arguments that will help make a stronger case for community philanthropy within their own organization. For those where the issue is central, the Alliance represents an important opportunity to challenge, change and grow practice.

*'There is no question that the Alliance by just existing provides Alliance members with a legitimacy and leverage, which support their ongoing community philanthropy promotion work.'*²⁶

Whichever category each Alliance member belongs to, an alliance is also vulnerable to the, sometimes frequent, changes in strategy that each member organization undergoes over the lifetime of a collaboration, which, of course, the Alliance itself has absolutely no influence or control but which will invariably have an impact. This issue may be a significant contributory factor and merit more attention. As it happens, in the case of the Alliance, there has been a level of stability evidenced by the fact that the people who initiated the Alliance are still at the table seven years later. It is the individuals and their personal commitment, not just their institutions that made a difference. This is, surely, an achievement and evidence of commitment in a sector known for its rapid turnover of staff.

25 Extract from: Tennyson, R. 'Animating Alliances' 2018

26 Ibid

A powerhouse for change?

‘In my view, the Alliance could be a powerhouse for change if a way of working can be created that is highly flexible, responsive and nimble in its operations – to be at the leading edge of change. The Alliance as a collective should be able to achieve more than any one institution by really working out how to work together.’²⁷

Despite some questions and discomforts about the GFCF’s role, it is also clearly the case that the Alliance members take a real pride and delight in the GFCF’s growing impact and reputation (the Johannesburg Summit being a notable high spot). Indeed, this is seen by some as the Alliance’s single biggest achievement.

Each of the entities involved in the Alliance cite a range of reasons as to why, from their perspective, the Alliance has been worthwhile. Their views, like the one in Box 6, have been captured throughout this piece.

Box 6: The Alliance as seen by USAID

David Jacobstein & Maryanne Yerkes

The Alliance had a diffuse but significant impact on USAID by providing specific ways to approach local ownership and local leadership. While there is a long history of USAID exhortations to partner with locals more equitably, sharing responsibility and leadership, this primarily focused on mistakes not to make. The Alliance contribution allowed us to get beyond explaining what it wasn’t and have illustrations and specific input from community philanthropy organizations around what it is.

USAID has contributed to the Alliance mission by advocating for community philanthropy to an array of audiences within our Agency. This has been manifest in specific tips and tools, updates to training, webinars, and consultations with USAID Missions around programme design and considerations of local ownership and sustainability. As USAID funding is decentralized, numerous offices in their own countries make their own decisions around how to structure funding or how to develop programming, yet nearly all of them work with civil society. Reaching those audiences has an influence on how they approach and work with civil society, and how they think about sustainability, while also mobilizing more of their funding toward that purpose.

Ideas derived from the Alliance also feature in Agency plans for ‘Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform’, on co-creation approaches and lessons, and will inform forthcoming policy on defining capacity development for the Agency. Perhaps most robustly, community philanthropy is woven into the fabric of the local works initiative, and local control of resources is central to their definition (on behalf of the full Agency) of locally-led development.

²⁷ Ibid

Most of our understanding of the field itself is refracted through the Alliance. That said, it seems that the field of community philanthropy grew more mature and more confident as a result of gatherings, learning pieces, and momentum for new donors to join generated by the Alliance. In that sense, community philanthropy has become more mainstream to overall discourse, and gained influence over other trends in development that increasingly emphasize local knowledge, adaptation, and downward accountability, providing if not an end point than at least a coherent vision of what community philanthropy can look like in practice.

Aside from the six donors co-creating the Alliance and building its sphere of influence, the GFCF also played a key role in shaping its operations. The GFCF is very central to the story. Their perspective was articulated as follows (the following section in italics was written by Jenny Hodgson and Wendy Richardson from the GFCF):

'Having six influential donors spreading the community philanthropy message has been invaluable to the GFCF mission. We found that donors do listen to other donors. It is one thing if the GFCF is singing the praises of community philanthropy – it's another thing entirely if that message is coming from influential public and private donors. The Alliance helped make the case that exploring community philanthropy was a legitimate field and strategy.'

The GFCF would not be what it is today without the Alliance. We were able to secure new funding to the GFCF to develop programmes of work around particular geographies and issues which involved getting resources to community philanthropy organizations directly. We have conducted research/ advisory work and co-convened initiatives with other donors looking to foster more donor interest in community philanthropy and #ShiftThePower – such as the National Lottery Community Fund.

The Alliance has given us increased capacity. We've managed to pull off events at scale, such as the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy. With nearly 400 participants, this inevitably raised the profile not only of community philanthropy, but also of our organization. But it is also important to note that the community philanthropy field itself has changed and the Alliance certainly made its contribution to this. In #ShiftThePower, we are seeing the birth of a truly global movement for a different kind of development.

Thanks to the Alliance, there is more systematic evidence, research, writing about the field than ever and more continuity in terms of messaging. When it comes to community philanthropy and the emphasis on local resources and local agency, many donors ask: what role does that leave for donors? Should they leave it alone? Through the GrantCraft guide targeting donors, the Alliance

provided practical answers in terms of both strategy and practice in the form of tool-kits that could be integrated into the work of any donor.'

In the period 2013–2019, the Alliance made an important contribution both to the organizations involved and to the field of community philanthropy – whether this was by direct Alliance outputs or via the GFCF's range of programmes undertaken under the umbrella of the Alliance or as an inspiration of the Alliance. During this period, community philanthropy has been significantly re-invigorated and has achieved a higher profile and position internationally in a range of humanitarian and development interventions. Of course, the impact of the Alliance must not be over-stated but neither should it be under-valued! It certainly played an influential role among donors and brought the idea to international development discourse.

Moving on

Collaborations are always in the process of becoming. They are always in flux, always transforming, always a bit messy as they involve people, organizations and a context that is always changing. The Alliance has been no exception. In concluding and planning to continue their work together as the Alliance, the members recognized that the future would represent a new kind of collaboration. It was in this spirit, that at a meeting held in New York in March 2019, they conducted a symbolic Viking Funeral for the Alliance as it has been to date. For Alliance members this was about:

‘Letting go of the challenges and negative feelings as we move to celebrate the accomplishments of our work together.’²⁸

In terms of the unfolding story, Alliance participants sought to move forward and reconfigure their collaboration as donors or funders working together around two themes:

- **Continued learning** community about the practice of community philanthropy, recruiting additional partners and putting into place a fit-for-purpose secretariat.
- **Connecting the dots** on donors and civil society to advocate and to position the community philanthropy field as a player in an emerging discussion concerning the role of the civil society sector in promoting a vision of the good society, engaging in particular with private philanthropy.

The next chapter of the collaboration story is now unfolding, requiring courage for all concerned to build on what has been and to move on to co-create the new.

28 Notes from an Alliance meeting held in New York in March 2019

Prescription for courage

So, what is 'the prescription for courage'²⁹ that we can take from this story?

As the Alliance members, together with the GFCF, move into new initiatives there is a level of confidence about using the Alliance experience as a basis for taking on a range of new things including:

- **Reaching out** to new audiences – both new kinds of donors and other key players
- **Approaching** community philanthropy from a more broad-ranging perspective – with a specific focus on shifting/sharing power
- **Exploring** other forms of collaborative approaches to achieve different goals
- **Expanding** geographies and reach – moving beyond the current USA-based donor community
- **Discovering** new energies and synergies that will support innovation and advocate for community philanthropy as a locally generated movement for change

The Alliance story is a story of perseverance and a determination to keep on going despite internal organizational pressures and rapidly changing external conditions.

The Alliance story is one of a collaborative venture finding its *own* way of operating and evolving what it can best do. The legacy it leaves, including how the Alliance members work together, and with others, to morph the Alliance into new entities and activities, will speak for itself over time.

The Alliance story is one of some dedicated and remarkable individuals who gave their enthusiasm, insights and experiences, over several years, to a topic they felt deeply about even though there were a number of challenges in working together and many changes they and their organizations faced.

The Alliance story shows that identifying collaborative advantage and benefiting from that advantage is not as simple and straight-forward as would appear at first sight. Too often those involved take collaboration for granted, assuming that a common or shared goal or mission is sufficient. Yet the reality is different. Collaboration is hard work because it requires an articulation and framing of the differences – not the similarities – of those involved.

The need is to invest personal time, effort and reputation to see diversity and differences in motivations, interests and objectives as opportunities for identifying and filling gaps and, by doing so, providing a basis for evolving new practices and engaging new players. Value and benefit lies in accentuating and embracing differences as opposed

²⁹ cf quote on page 3

to assuming that a common goal trumps differences. It is important to learn to separate 'difficult behaviours' from 'difficult people.'³⁰

The Alliance story is told a little bit differently by the different participants involved, especially when it comes to describing so-called 'personality clashes' and 'competing interests'; which supposedly inhibited fuller collaboration. But, as in many collaborative situations, collaboration within the Alliance was undermined not so much by 'personality clashes' as by a lack of clarity with regard to structures and operations. Strong and diverse personalities are always an asset in collaborative working, which is why collaborative processes, structures and arrangements that promote collaborative behaviour are so important.

In line with many other collaborations, the Alliance experience shows how difficult it is to invest in the collaborative dimension, and yet how important such investment can turn out to be for achieving lasting results. It takes time. It requires operating outside of a comfort zone. It means difficult conversations. It means working out and nurturing a collaborative culture that is most appropriate. In the case of the Alliance, the important thing is that those who have co-created the collaboration now have both an individual and collective choice on how to configure collaboration going forward, and perhaps most importantly an awareness that there is a choice to be made.

For all the talk of 'donor alliances', 'institutional buy-in' and 'organizational engagement', the Alliance is really about individuals who have brought their institutions with them (not vice-versa) and it is they who keep their institutions engaged, ensuring that benefits are individual and collective – and can potentially be shared with a much larger group of donors. It is a personal commitment to collaborative ways of working that inevitably involve (personal) costs and risks, with unclear benefits as the outcomes are typically unanticipated.

This is the 'prescription for courage' in this collaboration story – a kind of courage associated with individuals seeking to move their organizations that is all too often unrecognized.

30 The insight that 'difficult behaviours' can and should be distinguished from 'difficult people' is that of Andrew Floyd Acland, a long-time collaborator and supporter of PBA. The first opens up the space for 'difficult conversations' to explore better collaboration, whereas the latter shuts down that space. This insight is elaborated in more detail in: Acland, A. (2003) Perfect People Skills. UK: Random House Business Books.

Final words

Reflections from Alliance members recorded in New York in March 2019



Published by GFCF



The GFCF works with individual community foundations and other local grantmakers and their networks, particularly in the global south and the emerging economies of Central and Eastern Europe. Through small grants, technical support, and networking, the GFCF helps local institutions to strengthen and grow so that they can fulfil their potential as vehicles for local development, and as part of the infrastructure for durable development, poverty alleviation, and citizen participation.

About the authors

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Published September 2019

Global Fund for Community Foundations

4th Floor
158 Jan Smuts Avenue
Rosebank
Johannesburg 2196
South Africa

www.globalfundcf.org
info@globalfundcf.org

A company limited by guarantee. Registered in Northern Ireland No. NI073343

Registered charity number XT18816

Section 21 Company (South Africa):
2010/000806/08

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