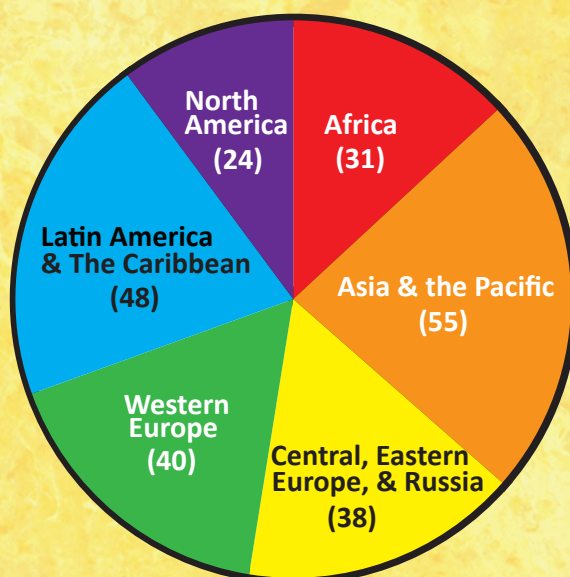


# **The CUNY International Fellows Program and Community Foundations: Learnings From the Field**



**1989-2021**

**Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society  
The Graduate Center, CUNY**



**CENTER ON PHILANTHROPY  
AND CIVIL SOCIETY**



**GRADUATE  
CENTER**

**60 YEARS**

# The CUNY International Fellows Program and Community Foundations: Learnings from the Field

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# **The CUNY International Fellows Program and Community Foundations: Learnings from the Field**

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**N.B.:** Biographies of the twenty-four Fellows referenced in this report can be found in the companion report on “The CUNY International Fellows, 1989-2021.”



# ***The CUNY International Fellows Program and Community Foundations: Learnings from the field***

When the CUNY International Fellow Program made its debut in 1989, the new crop of U.S.-based centers on philanthropy and nonprofits was still in its infancy and only one, at Johns Hopkins University, was working on global nonprofit trends. The Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (CPCS) at CUNY's Graduate Center adopted non-U.S. philanthropy as one of its three major areas of activity from the outset, despite naysaying observers who viewed it as a barren field.

Philanthropy still seemed like a uniquely American brand. Little was known about giving and voluntarism outside the United States, even for countries with far longer traditions such as Turkey and Egypt. The globalization of modern philanthropy and the community foundation movement were still far over the horizon. Although the previous decade had witnessed an upsurge of social activist and development NGOs around the world, philanthropic practices were still under the radar. Most non-U.S. foundations were operating foundations with relatively low profiles, and grantmaking was relatively rare.

That changed dramatically in the intervening decades. Today, community foundations (CFs) are a worldwide phenomenon and the globe is laced with local, national and international infrastructure organizations that serve them and the sector as a whole. Moreover, the CUNY Fellows have played a significant role in helping to develop CFs and modern philanthropy around the world, creating a global community.

## **SECTION I: THE PROGRAM**

When the CUNY International Fellows Program made its debut, viable candidates were few and far between. A search for candidates in Asia, Africa and Latin America produced two, one in India and the other in Argentina. Of the eighteen who applied for the first cohort, one scholar, one philanthropy practitioner, and a water resource management expert working with an Indian NGO were chosen, emphasizing the program's initial eclecticism. The net had to be very widely cast.

As the field changed, so did the CPCS International Fellows Program (IFP), growing from 3 Fellows per year to an average of 10 to 11 Fellows annually now.

Initially, it was held once a year, and limited to three Fellows per cohort. Since 2003 there have been two groups of five or more apiece each year: an Emerging Leaders Program for those in the early stages of their careers, and the Senior Fellows Program for those at more advanced levels.

The Emerging Leaders do a graduate-level paper based on original research that tests various models for replication in their home countries, while the Senior Fellows zero in on a particular issue of interest to their organization, from mergers and relationships with government to endowment building.

Although hundreds of applicants apply for each program, the cohorts have intentionally been kept small to allow us to hand tailor the seminar and research to the Fellows' interests, making it highly competitive. The ability to customize the program for each cohort is one of the program's earmarks and the root of its flexibility.

Initially, it was broadly etched and loosely structured. Courses and books on the field were still rare, and courses had to be developed from scratch.

But although still very much of a startup, the program had a significant impact on the careers of many of the first nine Fellows, drawing *Andrés Thompson (Argentina, 1989, 2005)* into a lifelong career as a philanthropic entrepreneur, moving Quintin Oliver (Northern Ireland, 1991) from an Irish nonprofit infrastructure organization to a global career in nonprofit-based conflict resolution, and helping to set *Noshir Dadrawala (India, 1990)* on the path to becoming an international authority on Third Sector law. Both Noshir and Andrés subsequently helped to launch their countries' first community foundations.<sup>1</sup>

The second stage in the Program's development came in the 1990s, when the focus narrowed to specific topics for each new group, from women's philanthropy to corporate social responsibility.

The third and final evolution came in 2000, when funding from the C.S. Mott Foundation refocused it on community foundations, where it has stayed.

Over the ensuing two decades, it has attracted funding and in-kind support from over 70 individuals, governments and foundations in 34 countries around the world. This has allowed us to bring in Fellows who are interested in related topics as well, from corporate philanthropy to legal and web-based issues.

Because some of these funders are from developing countries, it also demonstrates that if infrastructure organizations have projects that non-U.S. donors value, they will fund them, an important lesson for the field as a whole. Based on the IFP, non-US funders have the potential to play an increasingly important role in underwriting the global philanthropic infrastructure.

Over time, the IF program has included internships, mentorships, site visits, research and a graduate-level seminar.

The research component has remained constant over time, promoting active learning, broadening the Fellows' contacts and providing collateral for briefings, publications, and conference programs.

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<sup>1</sup> For biographies of the 24 Fellows featured in this study, along with a list of all participating program Fellows, their countries of origin and when they participated in the program, see the companion volume "The International Fellows: 1989-2021."

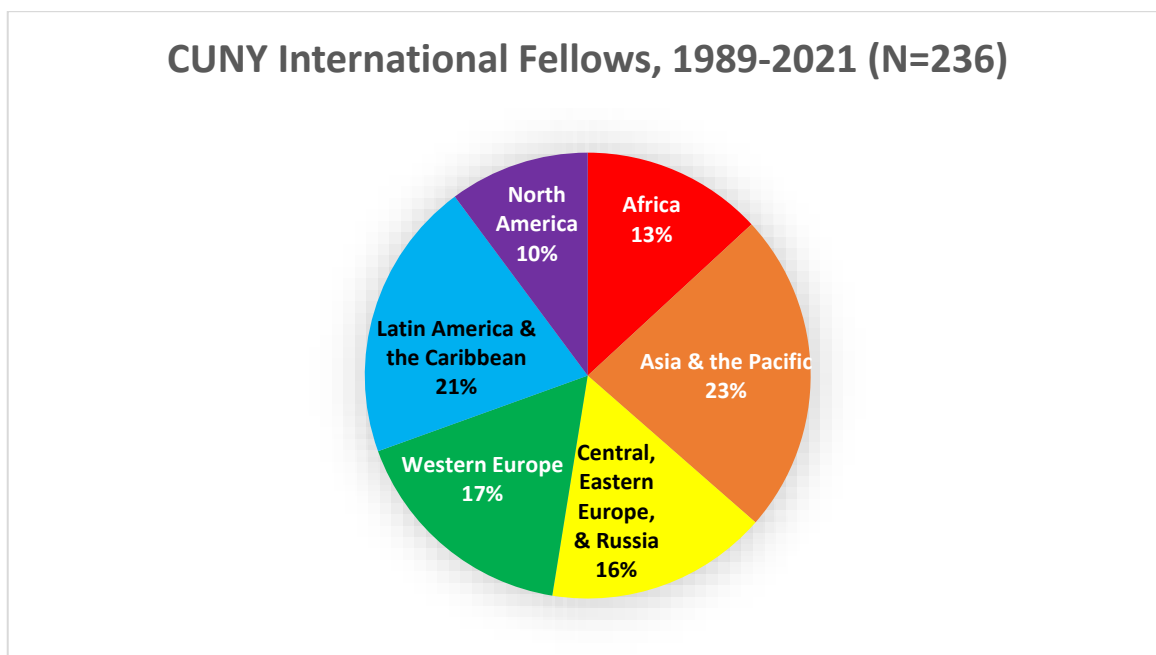
The Fellows' papers also include recommendations and a blueprint for action, a program requirement. All of the Fellows in this study turned their findings into new initiatives on their return, some of which are described in their biographies in the companion volume on "The International Fellows: 1989-2021."

Networking opportunities are a vitally important part of the program, especially for Fellows in the early stages of their careers, as is exposure to different models.

Rather than a tightly focused managerial course, the Fellows Program is akin to a liberal arts program, exposing Fellows to a wide array of institutions and models that they often clone at different stages in their careers. Lecturers in the Fellows seminar have included scholars, IF alumni, private and community foundation officers, philanthropists, and heads of major global, regional and national umbrella organizations.

Another signature aspect is the IFP's global perspective. The CUNY International Fellows Program has had a global focus from the outset. Rather than simply stressing American institutions, the program has always encouraged Fellows to take a global approach in their search for replicable models.

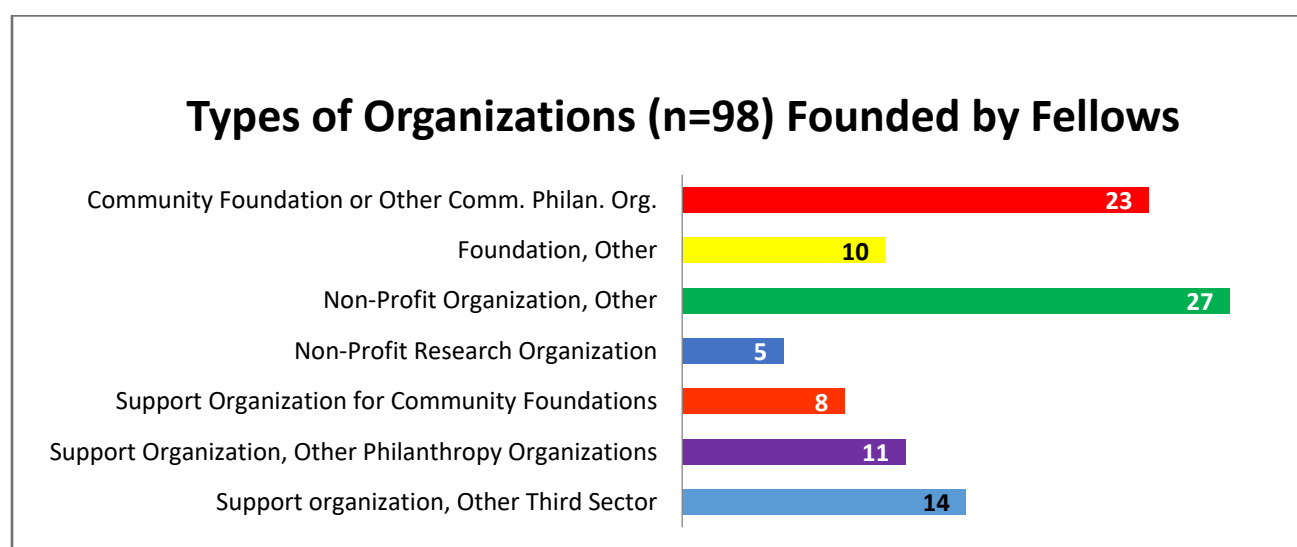
The IFP's global networking opportunities have grown significantly with the alumni network, which now numbers 236 on almost every continent (except Antarctica), providing a major source of models, information, contacts, mentoring, and lecturers in the Fellows seminar. It also affords what one Fellow called "a family in the field," providing ongoing advice, support and camaraderie across cohorts, continents and generations.



A few Fellows have even become "Super Fellows," not only nominating candidates, but raising funds locally to bring them in.

Rather than minting managers, our goal is to train **leaders**, and to give established leaders time to think, and to innovate in new ways. The program also works to turn out **scholar/practitioners** who can speak to a wide variety of audiences, amplifying their influence. Experience has shown that they tend to have the greatest impact both within and beyond their own institutions, because of their ability to teach, and to create and disseminate new ideas.

Many are also **philanthropic entrepreneurs** who have made a major impact on community foundations both within and beyond their institutions. As the following chart shows, our Fellows have spun off a variety of new initiatives, including community foundations. And as **Marion Webster (Australia, 2003)**, **James Magowan (Northern Ireland, 2007)**, **Alina Porumb (Romania, 2014)**, **Bhekinkosi Moyo (South Africa, 2003)**, **Carola Carazzone (Italy, 2017)** and many others can attest, infrastructure organizations matter, especially in times of rapid social and political change.



Rather than defining the term ourselves, we asked the Fellows for their definitions of philanthropic entrepreneurs, providing insights not only into their own philosophies, but what it takes to build new philanthropic cultures.

Charisma is part of it, as are passion and compassion. In addition to a willingness to take risks, “a leader likes the challenge of building a cogent case and inspiring people, setting them on the journey.” They “perceive other people’s needs, feel compassion, and try to address them.”

They are flexible, and unafraid to change things with “courage, energy and vision.” They learn as much from their failures as from their successes. “They do anything they can to move philanthropy forward.”

Entrepreneurs “both understand and change the context.” They have “novel ideas about how to fix social ills” and know the importance of sustainability. They see opportunities to create value by providing “bankable services.”



And their skills and ideas are matched by their passion. A philanthropic entrepreneur “follows their dream. You just see the goal in front of you and you follow it.”

## Change Over Time

A key part of this study examined how the Fellows’ learnings changed over time as the field became more sophisticated and diverse.

In the beginning, everything was new, and its impact was unmistakable. *Andrés Thompson* had to check the term philanthropy in his dictionary after he was invited to apply. *Noshir Dadrawala* had “never stepped out of India” before he came – he had never even taken a plane. *Marwa El-Daly (Egypt, 2001)* was working in isolation, and *Bheki Moyo* was headed for an academic career. For many of the early Fellows, it left “an indelible imprint,” changing the trajectory of their careers.

One of our questions not only for this field but for others, is how the way that people learn changes over time, which goes to how programs need to change to adapt. For example, when the program started, books and articles about philanthropy were in short supply outside the United States, and many Fellows found the materials in New York invaluable.

Fellows still say that the program taught them to “see,” but that has narrowed from seeing a new field after months of total immersion in the U.S., to seeing nuances, opportunities, and new models.

The program’s outcomes have changed over time as well. The first Fellows of the 24 profiled in the companion report used their learnings to develop philanthropy and the nonprofit sector in their own countries, promoting the concept of an integrated sector.

By the 2000s, the pace at which they were spinning off new institutions accelerated. These cohorts used their findings and models gleaned from the other Fellows to create the first community foundations in Turkey, Egypt and Uruguay, and new CF-like initiatives in Mexico, Indonesia and the United States. CF mergers, diaspora strategies, youth programs, enhanced community engagement, and partnerships with local governments all flowed from their papers and their interactions with the other Fellows.

The IFP cohorts from the 2010s used their learnings to strengthen CFs across regions and continents, often in tandem with other alumni. Some worked to enhance community engagement in donor-driven CFs; some increased community participation through Vital Signs and spread CF models to other regions; and some worked across continents to deepen cultures of giving.

They also actively disseminated their findings. Many of the three generations of IF scholar/practitioners represented here contributed to a growing list of publications and presentations from their papers, broadcasting their learnings to the field as a whole.

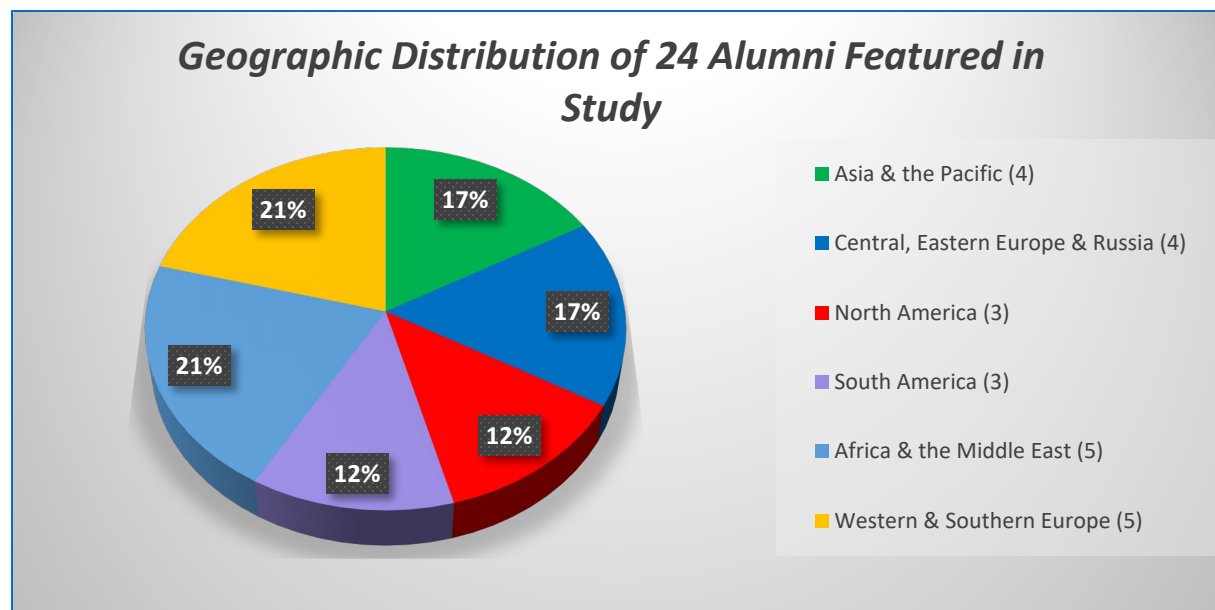
Finally, many teach, transferring their learnings, ideas and experience to new generations.

What has remained constant are the program’s strengths, particularly its emphasis on global models and networking, mentoring by leaders in the field and other Fellows, the opportunities for total immersion in another culture, the breadth of the program content, exposing Fellows to new models well beyond their original research interests, and the “luxury” of time to think.

The IFP has continued to prosper and grow not only because of its flexibility and focus on global models, but because of the Fellows’ sense of ownership in its future.

The program also expanded to include not only emerging leaders but also more seasoned professionals. And it evolved from a broad focus on philanthropy and civil society to a curriculum that focuses primarily on community grantmaking and the globalization of philanthropy, bringing new resources, new opportunities, and new lessons.

In addition to how people learn as fields develop and create a critical mass, we asked what can be learned from a select group of philanthropic entrepreneurs about the challenges and opportunities currently facing community foundations around the world. To answer that question, we polled 24 of the Center’s alumni who participated in the program between 1989 and 2020, casting the net broadly in terms of geographical representation.<sup>2</sup> Some work in community foundations, some in infrastructure organizations, and many have done both, spinning off new institutions over the course of their careers.



And all have had an impact beyond their own institutions. (See biographies in the companion volume.)

<sup>2</sup> The Center’s Director and/or Associate Director met with 21 former Fellows at CPCS-CUNY, the Centre for African Philanthropy’s inaugural conference in Johannesburg, the European Foundation Centre’s Annual General Assembly in Paris, and in Italy, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Mexico, Australia and Indonesia between May, 2019 and January, 2020. Three others were contacted virtually. The impact of the pandemic was discussed in video conferences with a smaller number of Fellows in May and June, 2020, and a general call for comments was sent to all IF alumni through the Center’s Listserv.

## SECTION II: THE FIELD

### The Donor/Community Continuum: A Typology

One of the common themes that they stressed was the field's growing diversity.

When the global community foundation movement began over a quarter of a century ago, it was initially one size fits all, based on donor-centric approaches typical of the U.S. Today, it is a much more nuanced tapestry stretching from donor driven models rooted in big gifts and endowment building to more community-focused approaches built from the grassroots up.

Emmett Carson, then the CEO of the Minneapolis Community Foundation, and **Andrés Thompson** (*Argentina, 1989, 2005*) mapped out some of these differences more than a decade ago.

Carson's influential keynote address at the 2004 community foundation symposium in Berlin urged CFs to forge new kinds of partnerships with business and government as well as individuals, promoting social advocacy and social justice. Lamenting the drift toward "building assets rather than building community," he underscored the need to move from charity to social change.<sup>3</sup>

Thompson's 2005 IF paper was published in *Alliance* as "Community Foundations in Latin America: Can the Concept be Adapted?" Andrés participated in the Fellows Program twice, in 1989, and as a Senior Fellow in 2005. In the interim, he became a regional director with the Kellogg Foundation, charged with stimulating the growth of philanthropy across the continent. He returned to the IF Program to test the applicability of the community foundation model for Latin America.<sup>4</sup>

His paper cast a skeptical eye on the "money approach" that concentrated on raising funds "from the wealthy to distribute to local charities and nonprofits." Instead, he embraced a "community approach" built on a broader portfolio of local assets, from donations to social capital.

Our discussions with the Fellows cast the donor/community continuum in stark relief. The following typology is based on their comments, highlighting some of the challenges surrounding CF development in different countries and cultures today.

Each model reflects not only the mix of local resources, but the distinctive imprint of history and local traditions in shaping community foundations.

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<sup>3</sup> Emmet D. Carson, Ph.D., "The Road Not Yet Traveled: A Community Foundation Movement for Social Justice," p. 7. Paper presented at: Community Foundations: Symposium on a Global Movement, Berlin, Germany, December 4, 2004. (Dr. Carson served on the Center's Advisory Board in the 1990s.)

<sup>4</sup> Andrés Thompson, "[Community Foundations in Latin America, Can the Concept be Adapted?](#)" (*Alliance*, March 2006 11:1).

## Donor-Focused Approaches

### *Wealthy Individuals*

When the first community foundations were launched in the United States just over a century ago, unprecedented fortunes and unprecedented gifts were becoming common, making the idea of “capturing money from the wealthy to distribute to local...nonprofits” through grantmaking and endowment building, sound investment plans, management by professional advisers, and “raising as much in unrestricted funds as possible” particularly appealing.<sup>5</sup>

CFs also provided a great deal of flexibility in an era when practices were rapidly changing. The doctrine of *cy pres* allowed the trustees to shift gifts to projects and programs that were “as near as possible” to the donor’s original intent while reflecting professional innovations.

These community foundations tended to be grantmakers, following the lead of recently established donors such as the Rockefeller Foundation.

American CFs were also professionally managed, inserting growing ranks of trained experts between donors and recipients and restructuring philanthropy *vertically*.

This model has been particularly successful outside the United States in Anglophone countries, former British colonies, and in Northern Italy, where it was seeded by the country’s largest bank foundations. While endowment building has been largely successful, engaging the community as a whole has sometimes been a challenge.

Inspired by American models, **Marion Webster (Australia, 2003)** became a Senior Fellow specifically to study ways to build endowments and a stronger culture of giving.

The Melbourne Community Foundation that she helped to launch in 1996 (and which she later chaired after it went national as the Australian Communities Foundation) built a \$5 million endowment in just two years with the aid of the Murdoch family. After her Fellowship, she helped to move it in a more community-oriented direction with the encouragement of Dottie Reynolds, and findings from her Fellowship paper.<sup>6</sup>

Marion also helped to develop the Auckland Communities Foundation with **Steve Chaney (New Zealand, 2009)** and **Mark Bentley (New Zealand, 2012)** and worked with community foundations in the U.K., sharpening her understanding of private and government support.

In England, massive government funding programs “let community foundations take their eyes off endowment building,” making fundraising seem less necessary for a number of years. But when the government pulled back after the 2008 recession, it left some in the lurch. Solutions proposed and tested by **Cathy Elliott (United Kingdom, 2009)** and her colleagues included CF

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Dorothy Reynolds, a former community foundation president and a long-time consultant on community philanthropy to the C.S. Mott Foundation, served as a mentor and speaker in the CPCS International Fellows Program.



mergers where sustainability was in question. She also helped to stimulate a new emphasis on data collection, including the introduction of Vital-Signs through the UK CF national network to help marshal local support and strengthen CFs' roles as community leaders.

The Auckland Communities Foundation (ACF) had close ties to local governments from the outset. Mark was the first CEO of the newly organized foundation when he became an IF. His goal was to shorten the path to sustainability by coupling private and government donations. Like Vital Signs, ACF's *Macro Auckland* study got them out of the gate quickly, making it the country's largest CF. But after he left in 2013, government funding became a disincentive for aggressive endowment building, echoing Marion's experience in the UK.

The potential for funding is clearly there. Although New Zealand lacks an "endowment culture," donor advised funds are taking off and gifts are rising. There has been a distinctive surge in giving in the last 4 to 5 years, but the ranks of mid-level donors are still weak.

To quote *James Magowan (Northern Ireland, 2007)*, "if you get the governance right and the relationship building right...the money will come."

Whether in Australia, New Zealand or the U.K., CFs need strong leaders, high powered boards, money "on the balance sheet" and a high degree of continuity in the board and staff to attract and hold new donors. They also need to communicate their value added better, or as Mark would put it, better branding. Without that, "people don't know if it will be there tomorrow."

Even in countries with very wealthy families, building an endowment takes time. Marion Webster was inspired by American notions that CFs hit a takeoff point when their endowments reach \$5 million. But James Magowan noted that it took the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland 20 years to reach its full potential as an endowed leader and convener. You have to bring people in at their own pace.

Infrastructure organizations like Philanthropy Australia and the European Community Foundation Initiative (ECFI) can also help CFs to "avoid reinventing the wheel," by providing leadership training, networking opportunities, and political and financial resources.

India has similar lessons for building community foundations around donor models. Although CFs have been slow to take root there, the country has a deep familiarity with trusts through Muslim *waqfs* and British precedents.

India's first community foundation, the Bombay Community Public Trust, was modeled on the New York Community Trust, which *Noshir Dadrawala (India, 1990)* studied as a Fellow. It also had links to one of the country's most philanthropic families, the Tatas. As a result, it got off to a quick start and is still in operation, but it stalled after its chairman died, underscoring the importance of leadership.

Building enduring community foundations in India, as in New Zealand, will require better branding, marketing and fundraising techniques.

Northern Italy developed a crop of well-funded, well-endowed community foundations with the backing of some of the country's richest bank foundations. **Bernardino Casadei (Italy, 2013)** helped to seed many of them as head of the Cariplo Foundation's community foundation initiative beginning in 1997. Seven years later, he also helped to found and directed Assifero, the association of Italian grantmakers.

Northern Italy's CF model was endowment-based from the outset, aided by gifts from the bank foundations. But he feels that they still lack a clear identity. People don't see them as belonging to their communities. Bank funding may have discouraged the local fundraising needed to create local cultures of philanthropy. Even board members don't give. Italy is a rich country, but the challenge is to make giving part of its national identity.

Nonetheless, many of them managed to build considerable endowments. When **Daniele Giudici (Italy, 2014)** became a Fellow, most of Italy's northern CFs had endowments of 5 to 20 million euros. Daniele introduced Vital Signs to Italy to gain visibility and help with branding, and like **Carola Carazzone (Italy, 2017)**, the current head of Assifero, he's working to heighten CFs' awareness of how local initiatives mesh with the United Nations Social Development Goals (SDGs).

Community Foundation models are beginning to change in the US as well, including testing ways to incorporate the SDGs and taking on different leadership roles.

A decade ago, some of our American-based Diversity Fellows such as **Akira Barclay (US, 2012)** noted that CFs had fallen short in incorporating minority donors and grassroots giving. More recently some CFs have begun to explore more participatory partnerships and grantmaking and new ways to tap into social, as well as financial capital, moving them closer to the community-based models described below.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Predominantly Muslim Countries***

Religion has historically been one of the major drivers of philanthropy. Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism and Islam are all rooted in giving and altruism, from tithing to *tzedakah*. *Zakat* (religiously mandated charitable donations) and *waqfs* (charitable trusts) have played an important role in Muslim countries for more than a millennium, bolstering mosques, and aiding weary travelers and the poor.

Widespread giving, a deep familiarity with charitable trusts, considerable pockets of wealth (at least in some countries), and varying levels of government backing have created a favorable environment for CF development in many predominantly Muslim countries. But the number of formally constituted community foundations remains low.

For example, President Nasser ceased the establishment of Egypt's "*ahli*" (family) *waqfs* in the 1950s, creating a formidable barrier to creating "*waqfs*" as autonomous foundations akin to

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<sup>7</sup> See for example, Marjorie Kelly and Violeta Duncan, "[A New Anchor Mission for a New Century](#)," Democracy Collaborative, November, 2014.

donor advised funds. This changed after *Marwa El-Daly (Egypt, 2001)* helped to successfully lobby the Ministry of Social Welfare to allow the creation of independent “*waqf*”-based institutions apart from the Ministry of Awqaf (Endowments).

Marwa applied to the Fellows program to study Islamic diaspora giving. But she also learned about community foundations, creating the pioneering Waqfeyat al Maadi Community Foundation (WMCF) in southern Cairo on her return.

WMCF is a poster child for the ways in which CFs can build community as well as communal resources. Based in a rich suburb surrounded by poorer neighborhoods, it brings together volunteers from both groups, placing them on the same level through common activities and projects. WMCF also recently developed highly entrepreneurial initiatives to deal with the COVID crisis, some of which are described in the following section.

One of WMCF’s strengths is its diversified funding base. But large-scale fundraising is difficult, particularly since recognition by media is given to highly influential religious figures and those NGOs that can afford the exorbitant fees for TV advertisements.

The Mufti (the highest religious authority), religious scholars affiliated with the government, and wealthy institutions in fields such as food distribution and hospitalization also dominate the media. Visibility is key for attracting donors for long-term sustainability, but airtime is prohibitively expensive for community foundations.

Staffing is another problem. Most volunteers only take short-term assignments, they require extensive training, and once they’re trained, they often move on to international NGOs or multilateral organizations, using CFs as stepping stones.

The combined impact of these policies and preferences pose enduring hurdles for CF development in Egypt.

On the surface, at least, the situation in Indonesia is more promising.

Like Marwa, *Amelia Fauzia (Indonesia, 2009)* created a CF-like organization when she returned after learning about community foundations in the program. Because she has a strong commitment to promoting religious tolerance, the Social Trust Fund provides scholarships for Indonesian students of different faiths. She also launched a cash *waqf* to fund it, blending corporate donations with gifts as small as a dollar from individuals, building the endowment from the grassroots up.

Religious giving is deeply woven into the fabric of Indonesian society. Unlike big donor models, Indonesia’s *zakat* giving generates donations from every level of society, spinning off operating foundations, massive fundraising drives, and even some institutions with the potential to develop into community foundations.

Besides a broad donor base, the country also offers tax incentives for charitable donations and foundations.

Investing in endowments is theoretically difficult because of religious prohibitions against earning interest in Islamic banks. But donors can also put their endowments in secular banks.

Moreover, there is a lot of creativity bubbling up around fundraising both within and beyond religiously-oriented groups, with a growing array of apps for online donations and other fundraising sites.

But capturing *zakat* funding for non-Islamic groups is more complicated. As Amelia explains, her goal is to find ways to shift these funds from charity to promoting sustainable change for the community as a whole, ideas that echo Emmett Carson's clarion.

## Hybrid Approaches

### *Eastern Europe*

If religion is the driving factor behind philanthropy in many Islamic countries, CFs in Eastern Europe operate in the lingering shadow of the state.<sup>8</sup> Because traditional philanthropic practices were discontinued under communist rule, many of these cultures of philanthropy needed to be rebuilt.

Big donors are often hard to find in these areas, requiring community foundations to knit together mixed portfolios of business, government and mass donations, unlike donor-driven models that rely primarily on individuals.

Maintaining trust in community foundations and the nonprofit sector is often a major issue as well, especially in countries where the space for civil society is narrowing.

In the Balkans, which went from being socialist states to war-torn communities in the 1990s, people still need to reconnect and work on values of solidarity. Philanthropy and the sense of mutuality that drives it need to be rekindled, requiring CFs to build social, as well as economic capital.

Governments are a factor as well. Several Eastern European states are curbing NGOs' roles and making registration more difficult, hobbling them with budget cuts and discouraging citizen involvement, while others are playing more constructive roles by offering tax incentives.

Endowments are also complicated. While big donor models are often built around the idea that it takes five to ten years to build a sustainable community foundation, hitting a takeoff point when the endowment topped \$5 million to \$10 million, endowment building can be far slower in countries with few big donors and shaky banking systems. To quote *Natalija Simović (Serbia, 2014)*, "strategic philanthropy isn't built overnight."

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on philanthropy and civil society in Eastern Europe, see Barry Gaberman, Merrill Sovner and William Moody, [\*Sustaining Civil Society: Lessons from Five Pooled Funds in Eastern Europe\*](#) (New York, NY, Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, The Graduate Center, CUNY, October 2019).



The community foundation in Togliatti, Russia was one of Eastern Europe's earliest and most successful CFs. Although it began with strong support from local businesses, when two local banks collapsed a decade ago, it ran into difficulties.

It survived on the strength of its reputation, and a board that kept it float after local bank assets were frozen. It also began administering private foundation funds for other projects. For *Svetlana Chaparina (Russia, 2006)*, these personal and organizational partnerships were key.

Several Fellows emphasized the importance of committed leaders and partnerships.

For example, a Ukrainian CF raised \$80,000 from a local credit union because a trustee served on both boards; it also received once-weekly collections from area churches, an arrangement brokered by a Catholic cleric on their board.

Business models can also raise funds and keep staffs employed while endowments are gradually built. *Olga Nikolska (Ukraine, 2019)* noted that the Teple Misto Community Foundation facilitated the development of a social restaurant in Ivano-Frankivsk. Founded by a group of Ukrainian entrepreneurs, the restaurant sought to unite a community around a common cause by reinvesting most of its profits in social projects aimed at the city's development.

To fund it, they persuaded 100 local friends and acquaintances in Ukraine to donate \$1,000 each, underscoring the importance of peer-to-peer fundraising. Eighty percent of the restaurant's profits go to the CF. Before the pandemic hit, the model was even being cloned in Kyiv with five hundred new \$1,000 donors.

In the process, they turned a dependency mentality into a self-supporting communal investment. And because the restaurant is so popular, its diners automatically become much needed donors as well.

The community foundation also joined a broader group of donors to restore an abandoned factory, Promprylad, turning it into offices and other community spaces, another high impact investment.

Finding trustworthy places to invest endowments can be difficult, which is why business models like this may be particularly relevant in the short term. Because Ukraine lacked a stable banking system in the past when many banks were shuttered for corruption, people never knew which ones might fail, highlighting the value of alternative investments.

Providing a sense of ownership is especially important in areas that are just developing widespread giving, another theme that came up repeatedly. To quote *Alina Porumb (Romania, 2014)*, "you have to show people that their input can change things."

Training people to do fundraising in these areas can be a "huge obstacle." Churches attract donations in many countries, but raising money for secular organizations initially made people extremely uncomfortable.

Peer-to-peer fundraising and events that are fun have helped to spur a more sustainable desire to give in places like Serbia, and Romania, where charity swim-a-thons and races showed “that fundraising isn’t always the dark side.” Corporations sponsored the events, and contestants enlisted their friends, building a local culture of mass-based philanthropy.

Leadership training is another way to involve different segments of the community, but it can be challenging. For example, students who joined YouthBanks in Romania often lost interest when they graduated. Because these programs are labor-intensive to manage, the CFs that developed them “haven’t gotten much of a return yet.”

But younger leaders who can adapt to broad cultural shifts are vitally important for staying “ahead of the curve in thinking about how technology will impact the sector in future.”

For example, virtual platforms have made giving and fundraising easier, especially during the pandemic when everything moved online. But technology is “a double-edged sword,” to use Alina’s phrase, because postings on popular sites like Facebook can also feed mistrust, a lesson vividly learned in many countries in recent years.

Community foundations need to find better ways to frame things and share stories, which is why bringing in younger experts skilled in internet platforms matters. To quote Alina, “supporting trust in communities is not just a game of money” anymore.

In the process, community foundations can bring different kinds of stakeholders together to address local needs, giving people a greater voice in managing their own communities even when mistrust in established institutions is growing.

## *Latin America*

Despite a long history of religious giving, community foundations have grown slowly in Latin America. Even the word “philanthropy” is weighted with so many negative connotations in countries like Argentina that it was rarely used.

As **Andrés Thompson** explains, the continent needs far broader definitions of philanthropy, beyond traditional (and deeply tainted) elite charity. Toward that end, he and **Florencia Roitstein** (*Argentina, 2015*) launched the *Generosas* project on grassroots philanthropy by impoverished women. Because philanthropy needs to be redefined in far more inclusive ways, CF models that focus mainly on big donors are problematic.<sup>9</sup>

More imaginative fundraising techniques can help to build a new culture of philanthropy, from giving circles to TFN (The Funding Network) events. Andrés hosted one in Buenos Aires that

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<sup>9</sup> Florencia Roitstein and Andrés Thompson, [\*La rebelión de lo cotidiano. Mujeres generosas que cambian América Latina\*](#) [The Rebellion of the Everyday. Generous Women Changing Latin America]. Findings from *Generosas* project research focused on everyday acts of philanthropy (Colonia, Uruguay: Ellas Mujeres y Filantropía, 2019).

was a “tremendous success,” blending fun and fundraising to prove that Argentines can give generously under the right circumstances.

In his view, community foundations have to focus on the community rather than just their donors, and on both social and economic capital, ideas that echo his *Alliance* article.

The region also needs stronger leaders who can see beyond their own institutions to build new, more broadly etched cultures of philanthropy and new kinds of partnerships. Philanthropic entrepreneurs can move CFs from charity to promoting social change. Andrés noted that there is currently a huge gap between social needs and philanthropy.

Because secular giving by individuals is still developing, business tends to play a major role, especially corporate giving by multinationals. There has been a lot of pressure for companies to increase their corporate social responsibility programs in the Southern Cone. But, as another Fellow noted, business philanthropy often vanishes the second the economy starts to weaken.

For **Marcela Orvañanos de Rovzar (Mexico, 2003)**, education is the key to nurturing effective philanthropic leaders in the business community, including younger generations, and strengthening their commitment to addressing urgent social issues in professional ways.

She was candid about the roadblocks to achieving this, from the lack of information and trust to endemic personalism.

Providing opportunities to learn from experts about local problems and different models can help, as can an emphasis on how business skills can translate into strategic philanthropy.

Younger people tend to be particularly impatient. They dislike traditional philanthropy and want fast outcomes with an immediate impact. Helping them to understand that change takes time is important. Convincing them of the importance of endowments can be particularly challenging, especially when social media programs like GoFundMe promise immediate results.

As she points out, developing a sense of ownership is the key to developing a broader culture of philanthropy. But knowledge about local problems and where to take action to make an impact has to come first. Giving both talent and money instills a sense of belonging through participation. That’s how people get involved and make the concept their own.

**Alma Cota de Yanez (Mexico, 2007)** partnered with local businesses to involve the whole community. Alma directs FESAC, a community foundation in Nogales, a uniquely situated town that straddles the US-Mexico border. In their RoundUp program, FESAC did the administrative backstopping for local supermarkets that encouraged shoppers to round up their bills with small donations to area NGOs.

Shoppers were also given opportunities to learn about the NGOs to build trust, while FESAC earned operating support through the administrative fees. Over \$200,000 was ultimately raised, the media coverage helped to educate consumers about NGOs, and the program built a stronger tapestry of business support and giving by small donors.

As she points out in another oft-repeated theme, CFs' greatest assets are their experience with and knowledge of community needs.

Government funding is also important, especially in the Southern Cone. It can be a blessing when it's part of a diversified portfolio of donors, but in Argentina and Uruguay it often plays an outsized role in underwriting the nonprofit sector, tying the sector's sustainability to political shifts. In Uruguay, for example, every time there is an election and a new government, all of the old contracts have to be renegotiated, leaving staff salaries and programs in the lurch.

The upshot is that professional staffs are hard to build and maintain, often requiring employees to hold second jobs. *Fabiana Hernandez Abreu (Uruguay, 2007)* cited the lack of commitment to sustainable professional careers as the most important barrier to institutional sustainability in the Southern Cone.

"Salaries are low, and it's very hard to survive as a professional." At least one community foundation has chosen not to professionalize at all, running its program with an older, deeply conservative board. Civil Society Organizations have to be able to raise operating support "so people can survive as professionals and have a living wage." Organizations that rely too heavily on volunteers often lack the track records, the accountability and transparency to inspire the trust that the sector needs to grow.

One of the region's most notable community-based CFs is ICOM in Florianopolis, a mid-sized city in Southern Brazil. Headed by *Mariane Maier Nunes (Brazil, 2017)* through 2021, it featured a "try everything" approach rooted in community decisionmaking and a diversified portfolio of individual, business and government donors.

Different groups have a voice in how the funds are spent, and ICOM's programs are regularly evaluated by both experts and recipients. Its programs are strikingly collaborative.

As she explains, "not having money makes you think outside the box. You have to mobilize resources in the short term while you are trying to build an endowment."

To get their board to donate, ICOM held a TFN event, asking board members to bring two guests. It was hosted by a local TV personality, and was a striking success, raising \$7,000 in just two hours. Thirty-five people made donations, including the board members, many of whom continued to support ICOM.

Not everything works the first time. When a project they were developing with local technology companies to train slum kids for tech jobs fell through, the Ministry of Labor heard about it and funded ICOM to do a Vital Signs project on youth and the technology sector. And because the study provided solid policymaking data for the corporate sector, ICOM now has a growing number of corporate donors.

It used another Vital Signs report to highlight what the community is already doing around the UN Social Development Goals (SDGs), which are of particular interest to local corporations. As



Mariane points out, Vital Signs promotes community ownership, as did the TFN event and ICOM's giving circles.

Their social justice giving circle began with LGBT issues, attracting both individuals and corporate leaders. ICOM charged a fee for doing capacity training for the NGOs that submitted proposals, did site visits, and winnowed the field of potential grantees to three. But the giving circle's members made the final decisions.

ICOM also dipped into cause-related marketing with its "burger philanthropy" campaign. Local businesses donated one *real* for every burger sold, and decided who would get the money, while ICOM provided backstopping services. The program earned administrative fees and raised \$10,000 for the community.

The genius of ICOM's approach is that it builds opportunities for people to choose which local nonprofits will receive their gifts and earns operating support for staff. And like many young CFs, its biggest challenge is sustainability. As Mariane notes, it can take at least five to ten years to *begin* to build an endowment.

## Community-Focused Approaches

Community-focused initiatives bubble up from the grassroots, ideally involving the entire community in ways that promote social development and social justice. Donations are often much smaller than in donor-focused models, and social capital plays a central role.

***Bhekinkosi Moyo and Shaun Samuels (South Africa, 2003 and 2013)*** are both strong advocates for this model.

Bheki directs the Centre for African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI) at the University of the Witwatersrand, one of Africa's premier universities. His motto is African philanthropy for Africans.

As he points out, many community foundations have not done well in Africa because they failed to build on Africa's longstanding traditions of sharing and mutual aid. Instead, they tried to introduce a more hierarchical donor-focused format while overlooking indigenous practices such as South African *stokvels* (savings groups where people pool their funds), and *ubuntu*, the idea that "I am because we are," a belief that a common bond unites us all.

Rather than top down giving, *ubuntu* means that villagers share their resources with those in need and won't let people go hungry. This kind of altruism is how Africans address problems at the local level, mobilizing people to give what they can. Community foundations need to find ways to harness this kind of giving.

Since African societies have "one leg in the village, and one in the towns," projects that resonate with villagers can foster community buy-in.

Shaun is working on concrete ways for community foundations to tap into these traditions, but he is also keenly aware of the challenges, as well as the opportunities.

As he explains, in-kind giving, social capital and voluntarism have to be redefined, renamed, and incorporated into CF portfolios. *Stokvels* pool resources for the future in ways that are culturally engrained, but individual members expect to benefit financially from them. CFs have an opportunity to rework this model to benefit the entire community over the long term.

This is particularly important, since sustainability and endowment building have been major stumbling blocks for African CFs, despite the richness of the continent's cultures of giving. Community foundations need to rethink how they can reconfigure these cultures.

For example, North Africans use buildings rather than financial investments as endowments. Communities share a common granary and the grain is saved for times of need. CFs could use communally-focused buildings as part of their endowments, in addition to stocks or bank accounts.

National differences also have to be taken into account, along with the impact of geographical mobility. Communal generosity is deeply rooted at the village level, but it changes when people move to the city, and current predictions hold that Africa will be 70% urbanized in 2050. What will this do to traditional cultures of giving, and how can this be used for community foundations?

Movements across borders are also important. South Africa has 4 million Zimbabweans. Where does the money from the diaspora go? The meaning of giving and non-giving changes with migration.

Then there is the problem of competition: how can community foundations present themselves in non-competitive ways?

As Shaun points out, NGOs tend to deal with single issues, so CFs can mobilize communities in ways that they cannot, unlocking local assets and opening new sources of revenue for them.

Since the European Union is moving out of funding Africa, NGOs have to find other routes to sustainability. Since they haven't repackaged themselves for local donors yet, community foundations can help them to find in-country sources of operating support.

For example, family trusts often go dormant when the donor's children or grandchildren lose interest, and South Africa has a lot of dormant trusts. Transferring them to community foundations can keep them alive without any work on the part of the family.

Africa's growing pool of *nouveaux riches* is another potential source of new donations. But large cash donations can be a problem. CFs can easily accept in-kind gifts such as cars, which they can sell, but big donations can trigger audits, especially if they exceed the donors' salaries. Because banks have to report large deposits and withdrawals, most people keep their funds in cash. But CFs have to be careful about large cash donations if they hope to build trust, which is vitally important in countries with high levels of corruption.

Shaun is also exploring corporate partnerships, donations, and business models to generate income. Like hybrid models, community focused approaches need to raise contributions from a diverse portfolio of donors, from businesses and individual donors at all economic levels to volunteers.

Once CFs build a firm foundation at the grassroots around traditional practices, they can leverage funds from high net worth individuals, building on what the communities contributed. The goal is to forge genuine partnerships, rather than top down relationships. But the perspectives and the buy-in of local communities have to come first.

As Shaun points out, this is genuinely *horizontal philanthropy*.

## Challenges for the Future

The Fellows stressed commonalities as well differences, especially concerning the challenges and opportunities currently facing community foundations.

In particular, they emphasized the need for:

- 1) **Rebranding**: CFs need newer, more compelling ways of envisioning and presenting their work to their donors and the larger community.

In the words of *Alma Cota de Yanez*, if they don't get a "facelift," they'll "be in a museum soon," or, as *Filiz Bikmen (Turkey, 2006)* put it, they run the risk of becoming "dinosaurs." "We need better ways to frame things and share stories."

The pandemic is already helping to rebrand many CFs in ways that highlight their value in far stronger terms (see below).

- 2) **More effective ways to deal with competition**: Donors have many choices, and CFs need to carve out an identifiable niche.

For example, virtual fundraising doesn't build communities, but CFs do because they have a detailed and finely grained knowledge of their local communities and the ability to bring together different groups.

Moreover, as *Carola Carazzone* points out, "No other form is so local" and "they can think long-term."

They can also generate new resources for NGOs. This all needs to be emphasized more strategically.

- 3) **Redefining philanthropy**: The practice of philanthropy also has to be rethought, redefined and reformulated to reach grassroots and mid-level donors.

Capturing mid-level donors and even the contributions of the poor is a vitally important challenge. The field needs new models, as well as new ways to put more fun into fundraising.

For example, TFN events can mix fun, fundraising and donor education, and ICOM provides a template for how these events can be used to bolster CFs rather than just being “one-off” events.

- 4) **Better outreach:** CFs need to do a better job of educating new groups about philanthropy, from business leaders to the young, beyond Youthbanks.

As **Marcela Rovzar** explains, young people are impatient. They want “instant results,” and they dislike charity. Finding ways to get them personally involved in projects – providing ownership beyond simply deciding who gets what – underscores the fact that change takes time.

There are also generational issues on boards. Boards need younger members who, as **Alina Porumb** put it, “can stay ahead of the curve in thinking about how technology will impact us (and the sector) in future.”

The increasing reliance on virtual communications is also opening opportunities to rethink the roles of younger, more tech-savvy people in community foundation development, and provides a rationale for bringing them onto staffs and boards.

- 5) **Wider ownership:** CFs have to show people that their impact can change things, especially in places where large contributions are still rare.

And they have to give more people a stake in decisionmaking.

For example, rather than asking local donors to hand over their funds to professional managers who make the decisions, ICOM makes sure that local donors collectively have a voice in where their money goes. It engages people around local issues, and mobilizes administrative fees by issuing RFPs, mapping and background research, vetting candidates and preparing selection criteria. But then it steps back, ensuring that the community “owns” the results.

- 6) **Diversity:** CFs need to incorporate a wider array of groups.

This means accommodating smaller donors in wealthy CFs, different religious groups in Muslim countries, middle- and working-class donors in countries where big donors are rare, and weaving social as well as monetary capital into their programs in ways that build programs from the grassroots up, as well as top down.

Grassroots philanthropy is challenging older models and helping to recast community foundations in far more inclusive ways. More needs to be done to share this model globally, including with wealthier donor-driven CFs.

- 7) **Enhanced sustainability**: CF's need to think "outside the box" in order to maintain their programs and staffs while they build endowments.

There is a well-known lag between CF creation and financial independence, ranging from five to twenty years, during which staffs still have to be paid. New kinds of investment and business models can help community foundations as they move toward sustainability.

Moreover, placing endowment funds in banking and stocks isn't an option in many countries. Alternative investments and business models that can resonate with business-oriented donors deserve more attention, as do traditional, grassroots models of community investment and sharing.

*Amelia Fauzia's* notion of an online "cash *waqf*" that can build an endowment from business gifts and small donations is another example of "thinking outside the box," as are the business contracts that Maadi's community foundation developed during the pandemic (described below) and the income-generating community center in Ukraine.

Unlocking defunct family trusts is another example of creative thinking.

- 8) **Infrastructure organizations**: These are especially important in countries where the space for civil society is narrowing.

Infrastructure organizations keep members current about changing legislation. They can negotiate with government officials and advise them about what the field can and cannot do. They also provide a sense of community and moral support when the sector is under fire, build communities, facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices, and educate new generations.

- 9) **Funding for social justice**; many Fellows strongly felt that CFs need to move beyond just funding nonprofits to promoting social change and social justice.

*Marion Webster* put it succinctly: they need to "address the big issues [and promote] ...systemic change."

- 10) **Incentivizing SDGs**: SDGs and Vital Signs are important tools for measuring and promoting social change and mobilizing the community around social justice issues.

Many community foundations currently avoid working with SDGs, which they see as costly and burdensome. But, as *Daniele Giudici* notes, the development goals are also invaluable tools for local consciousness raising.

Many Fellows emphasized that CFs won't embrace SDGs without earmarked funds. More thought to needs to be given to this issue, including a better rationale for why CFs should get involved, and how SDGs can strengthen their mission and programs.

## Community Foundations and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced a new twist in community foundation development, inspiring some of the Fellows' CFs to respond in highly innovative ways after the world as we knew it abruptly shut down in Spring 2020.

It was a bleak time – schools closed, offices were shuttered on short notice, massive numbers were thrown out of work, and cities across the globe became ghost towns. Communities staggered as hospital caseloads and unemployment rates soared. Social distancing meant sidestepping neighbors out of a fear of contagion. And life became virtual, at least for those rich enough to afford connectivity, shining a harsh light on the growing chasm between poverty and wealth.

Disasters bring opportunities as well as suffering, a chance to fill the vacuum they inevitably create with something better and stronger for the future.

To capture the early impact of the pandemic on community foundations, in May and June, 2020, we conducted video chats with a select group of Fellows profiled in this report, and issued a more general call for information through the Fellows' listserv, asking four questions:

- 1) How has the pandemic affected your organization?
- 2) What have you been doing to help your communities?
- 3) Are you doing anything new in terms of helping people or using this as an opportunity to strengthen your organization or communities in future?
- 4) How has the way your organization and other CSOs are using technology changed?

Given that this report was being written as hotspots such as Milan and New York City were beginning to emerge from quarantine while others were still firmly locked down, most CFs were still immersed in relief efforts.

But a few highlighted programs and trends that are reshaping community foundations' roles and their relationships with their stakeholders, providing opportunities for the rebranding that many of the Fellows deemed necessary if CFs are to avoid becoming "museum pieces," to quote *Alma Cota de Yanez's* colorful phrase.

Donations skyrocketed in Northern Italy, one of the most brutally ravaged epicenters in the pandemic's relentless march across the globe.

As *Daniele Giudici* pointed out, the region's 16 CFs collectively raised 52 million Euros between February and March, as much as they had raised in the previous five years. The CFs in Como and Milan regularly updated information about how much was raised and donated to different types of grantees, increasing their visibility and bolstering trust in their ability to manage the funds wisely.



Brescia's community foundation partnered with the local business community to raise 16.5 million Euros, the fruit of ten years of relationship building with local businessmen, while those in Milan raised 24.6 million Euros.

Roughly half of the funds supported hospitals, buying masks, gowns and ventilators. The other half addressed other local needs: poverty, the elderly, nursing homes, and those who needed ongoing care. And because the hospitals were known and trusted, this also increased trust in the CFs.

Their grantmaking changed as well. The most successful CFs scrapped their regular grant cycles, application deadlines and RFPs, replacing them with open calls for proposals backed by an immediate response and rapid approvals.

Unlike some Fellows, Daniele (who sits on the board of 3 CFs and Cariplo's CF Strategy Committee) does not regard the role of technology as a major factor once the emergency passes. As he explained, "fundraising is personal," particularly when the emphasis is on large donations.

Their boards were just beginning to distill the lessons learned for strengthening their long-term strategies. For example, Brescia's success in forging relationships with the local business community, which was quickly mobilized during the emergency, promised to be an important model for the future.

**Carola Carazzone** echoed many of Daniele's comments, emphasizing the role of CFs in raising money and spending it effectively with high levels of accountability. They also displayed a great deal of flexibility and willingness to listen to their grantees.

In Egypt, **Marwa El-Daly's** Waqfeyat Maadi Community Foundation (WMCF) was able to act quickly when most civil society organizations closed down, providing a way in which people could respond.

Faced with widespread layoffs and homelessness, the big organizations that were still operating distributed food, some of which wasn't really healthy, and all of which passed through many hands before it reached people, making it a double health risk. People had to stand in line for hours, making social distancing impossible, and came away with barely enough to feed their families for half a day. To quote Marwa, "it's useless to just hand out food. It spreads the virus more quickly."

WMCF found a way to help local women and men who lost their jobs during the lockdown to work from home, earning enough to buy food on their own. It began with online videos from philanthropists and other people in the community challenging their friends and peers to donate funds for sewing machines and other tools to allow people to work from home. Maadi's video campaign raised E£200,000 in the first two weeks (it quickly rose to E£800,000). Marwa also gained governmental approval for diaspora giving, which normally requires multiple steps and a waiting time of around 60 days before the money can be spent.

At first, they produced handicrafts – colorful bedspreads and tablecloths, which Marwa’s students at the American University in Cairo (AUC) helped to market on the foundation’s website and through social media. In addition, one of Egypt’s biggest shopping malls (Dandy Mall) provided a permanent outlet for WMCF to exhibit these products and sell them. This soon developed into a home-factory business-model where people work from home on various aspects of the supply chain.

WMCF forged commercial contracts with the local mall for decorations for Eid-al-Fitr celebrations at the end of Ramadan, and with a local hospital for gowns and masks, creating a replicable business model.

As Marwa noted in our earlier discussions, television ads are prohibitively expensive. But WMCF’s online videos and the project’s growing presence within the community significantly enhanced their visibility, while their ability to act quickly provided new types of aid on short notice.

It also made their mission clear by creating a sustainable business model at a time when most people and other organizations were simply handing out food for Ramadan. And WMCF was able to take online applications for help and grants at a time when many other CSOs had closed down.

African philanthropy witnessed a paradigm shift with the growing reliance on technology. As **Bheki Moyo** recently noted, one of the major roadblocks to cross-border collaboration has been the continent’s patchwork quilt of countries, many of which make movement across borders extremely difficult. In Bheki’s opinion, the shift to technology and online meetings broke down these barriers, opening enhanced opportunities for pan-African collaboration.

Because of the level of need, most of the efforts to date had focused on distributing food, masks and sanitary supplies after the government imposed severe lockdowns in its Phase One response. But when several people were killed for violating the quarantine, some organizations began to shift to social justice issues as well.

As **Shaun Samuels** explained, South Africa’s community foundations have always worked at the periphery, focusing exclusively on local issues rather than participating in national debates. But when the government introduced basic income grants, an issue that had been on the table for years, a few began shifting to social advocacy.

For example, the Initiative for Community Advancement, which works in rural areas, got involved with the government on National Health Insurance, and discussions about whether to continue the basic income grants when the lockdown ends. To quote **Shaun**, “they can’t just work in their local community right now. They have to branch out into networks of influence.”

In South Africa, as elsewhere, sustainability is a key issue, not only for organizations, but for the field as a whole. As he put it, the challenge will be to “harness the goodwill and collaboration” that bubbled up in response to the emergency, not just in terms of government relations and

business philanthropy, but also the extraordinary upsurge of horizontal philanthropy by individuals in local communities.

**Mariane Maier Nunes** took this one step further, parleying collaboration and local emergency relief into a replicable pilot project.

ICOM in Florianopolis, Brazil, responded to the emergency by creating a community bank in partnership with Banco Palmas, a national community bank organization that has seeded them across the country over the past 20 years.

The initial impact of the quarantine was brutal, as the city's schools and the CSOs that aided schoolchildren were shut down by the state government. As in most places, health issues and unemployment went hand in hand. People working in the informal sector had no income.

One common theme in all of our discussions was flexibility and the ability to pivot quickly in response to community needs. When a very vulnerable community asked ICOM for help getting food, the Foundation immediately touched base with its board and donors to repurpose its Social Justice giving circle to cope with the disaster.

Normally, they issue requests for proposals. They quickly shifted to a social media campaign to raise funds, and identified organizations distributing food and sanitary supplies such as soap, mapping the existing community resources. They put this information onto interactive Google Maps, inviting people in the community to add other organizations they knew about. Then they invited these NGOs to apply for small donations to distribute in their communities.

For one month, ICOM gave weekly grants. They also received donations from 270 businesses and individuals in the community, raising \$17,000 in the first 2 days alone, as well a large grant from Itaú, a national corporation.

In addition to input and donations from the community, ICOM convened a committee of local experts to identify the best ways to spend the money each week, helping to strengthen the governance of their relief efforts.

Much like the situation in Egypt, families were being given food that wasn't necessarily healthy or what they wanted. CSOs were getting in-kind donations from the big food corporations, which sometimes offloaded things that failed to sell. At the same time, small businesses were starving.

Community banks circumvented the big corporations and funneled money back into hard hit communities by giving families e-coins that they can spend in local shops to buy the food they actually want. It took one day to set it up, using a platform developed by Banco Palmas.

Seven hundred families received 200 coins a month for three months. ICOM partnered with local community-based organizations (CBOs) to develop spreadsheets with their cell phone numbers, addresses and social security numbers to transfer funds, and helped them open

accounts with local shops. The CBOs identified the merchants, and helped the families set up their accounts, making sure that the initial transactions went through.

Some recipients used their cell phones and an app to pay the merchants; those without phones used their social security number and password to transfer payment. Each of the 3 communities where ICOM set up banks also had a WhatsApp group for those with phones, providing feedback on how the programs were working on the ground.

They began by working with 3 communities and 3 CBOs, while constantly fine-tuning the program as a replicable model for the future. And matching grants from a local business attracted 240 donors to launch another community fund.

In Mexico, migration helped to stoke the pandemic. **Marcela Rovzar** noted that when the U.S. rejected immigrants at the border, many tried to travel back to their countries on foot, helping to spread the disease.

**Alma Cota de Yanez's** community foundation in Nogales, along the U.S. border, provided an in-depth look at how COVID-19 is making an already dire situation worse. Social distancing was impossible in local shelters, where hundreds of migrants clustered without disinfectants, masks, soap or even toilet paper while they waited for the asylum process to reopen. And those who were deported to countries such as Guatemala were being denied re-entry, leaving them stranded in Mexico without resources.

Faced with a dual crisis – the U.S. embargo on asylum and the pandemic – FESAC placed a particularly strong emphasis on transparency and visibility, posting daily pictures and videos of their grantees' work on social media. This is “the new face of philanthropy – small, personal, resourceful, flexible,” and right now “24/7.”

Most of these ventures enabled CFs to raise new funds at unprecedented rates on short notice, and all used technology to engage with their communities on an unprecedented scale, underscoring their transparency, flexibility, responsiveness, ability to pivot quickly, and willingness to throw out the rulebooks to provide immediate aid.

Maadi and ICOM embraced new models, testing them for long term replicability and sustainability. And ICOM used Zoom meetings and WhatsApp to confer widely, cementing new kinds of local and national partnerships, fine tuning the program in response to ongoing community input from the grassroots up, and blending feedback from donors, experts, local NGOs and recipients.

All began using technology in new ways. In Italy, it helped to keep communities in the loop on how the funds were spent. In Egypt, it not only marketed products, but showcased donors challenging their peers by telling them why they should give.

In South Africa, it opened up new possibilities for cross-border collaboration that can transcend nay-saying governments and travel restrictions.

And in Brazil, it provided new answers to the puzzle of who is the community in community foundations, drawing in national and local donors and NGOs, local experts, donors and people and organizations on the ground to collaboratively design replicable programs that will be sustainable over the long term, taking community buy-in to a new level.

The different responses also highlighted the differences between donor-driven and community-driven approaches. Donor-driven CFs report. Community driven CFs cast the net widely, regularly consulting an array of stakeholders on how they're doing, and how their programs can be improved, even in the time of COVID.

Raising funds for disaster relief is easy, especially in the first 48 hours, as *Şenay Ataselim-Yilmaz (Turkey, 2005)* noted. Translating those funds into sustainable gains is more challenging.

The pandemic is providing new kinds of models for how CFs can parley their local knowledge, their ability to convene, and their ability to respond quickly, into new kinds of visibility, and the marketing that many of the Fellows feel the field needs to survive and grow.

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## About the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society

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An integral part of The Graduate Center, CUNY, the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society is committed to strengthening civil society through education, research, multi-lateral exchange, and leadership training. The Center focuses on the philanthropic activities of both institutions and individuals, with an emphasis on civil society, multicultural, women's and international philanthropy.

Through seminars and sponsored research projects, the Center provides opportunities for CUNY faculty, students, visiting scholars, practitioners and the broader public to explore Third-Sector issues across disciplines and across borders.

## About the International Fellow Program

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The Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society ran its first International Fellows Program (IFP) in 1989. Since that time it has trained 236 Fellows from 70 countries and territories around the globe. The current focus of the IFP is on community foundations and strengthening local cultures of giving. The program also explores diaspora philanthropy, governance, foundation boards, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and/or other timely issues.

The Center's Fellows programs emphasize learning about philanthropy and civil society in comparative perspective. They engage the Fellows through readings, weekly seminars, networking opportunities, and site visits. Fellows are introduced to the international literature on philanthropy and foundations, and prepare a research or position paper with recommendations for implementation.

[www.philanthropy.org](http://www.philanthropy.org)



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