

## GLOBAL CHANGE: Funding a Connected World

*“If you have come to help me you can go home again. But if you see my struggle as part of your own survival then perhaps we can work together”*

Australian Aborigine Woman

Probably at no point in history has the truth of this statement been more evident. The world is getting smaller. Products, expertise and ideas are flowing across borders with dizzying speed and ease. New technology has created a powerful communication platform for sharing work and information around the world in ways that we are just beginning to understand and utilize. As big businesses and free markets embrace globalization, social activists and philanthropists are doing the same. Issues of fair wages, human rights, and environmental sustainability have always been interwoven. Today, addressing issues such as women’s rights, economic justice and climate change without a global context seems impossible, as does challenging inequity without addressing it in the world’s poorest communities where its impacts are most devastating.

### From “Top-down Development” to “Globalization from Below”

The past fifty years has seen unprecedented investment in international development and aid, dominated by the top-down development strategies of the World Bank, government aid agencies, and many large non-profit aid organizations. These have largely pursued policies that promote modernization and integration into capitalist economic systems. As Anuradha Mittal of the Oakland Institute put it: *“Foreign assistance programs have helped create major markets for agricultural goods, created new markets for American industrial exports and meant hundreds of thousands of jobs for Americans. In 1995, the director of the U.S. aid agency defended his agency on the basis that 84 cents of every dollar of aid goes back into the U.S. economy in goods and services purchased.”* In contrast, the result for the recipient countries has been ever-widening wealth gaps, social and environmental havoc, and the erosion rather than enhancement of the capacity of people to determine their own future. Clearly a different approach and vision are needed.

That alternative vision is of a progressive global social change movement that has at its center grassroots organizations led by and for marginalized communities, that trusts in communities’ capacity to determine and address their own needs, and that prioritizes communities’ efforts to maintain or regain control of the “commons”: clean water, fertile land, seeds and the resources they need to thrive. It is a vision that creates opportunities to build grassroots leadership, to connect organizations with each other and to enable the voices of grassroots leaders to be heard alongside those of regional, national and global policy and advocacy organizations. This model, characterized by Grassroots International as “globalization-from-below”, can be illustrated as:

Grassroots projects ■ local community activism ■ collaboration across communities  
transnational linkages between community-led organizations ■ systemic change.

There are many powerful examples of the impact of the model: The *Peasant Movement of Papaye* in Haiti combines community-based development projects, with popular education programs that explore U.S. foreign policy in Haiti, economic globalization, and other political, economic and social realities. The *Center for Liberian Assistance* is combining provision of food and resources to displaced women with training in human rights and how to run for political office. The *Center for Development Services* works directly with more than 200 community-based groups in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh, supporting their efforts to promote women’s rights and fight for fair wages and safe

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in conference preamble for speech by Anuradha Mittal at <http://www.girlfestbayarea.org/Conference.htm#Friday>

working conditions, and creating opportunities for them to connect with, and learn from, each other. The U.S.-based partners of these three organizations – Grassroots International, Global Fund For Women, and International Development Exchange respectively – are creating channels for these grassroots groups to receive support, and are bringing visibility to their work, and linking them with progressive partners on a regional, national and international level.

## Opportunities for the Same “Globalization from Below” Approach to Funding Strategies

Although this model offers the best prospect for social change, the reality is that of the less than two percent of U.S. giving that goes to international causes, only a fraction goes directly to support grassroots community-based organizations. Total international giving has risen in recent years but that growth is coming primarily from a few large foundation funders, most notably the Gates Foundation, and the majority of international funding continues to support large-scale top-down development and relief efforts.

The case for investment in the grassroots seems clear. Not so clear is the challenge of navigating the range of opportunities, issues, strategies for investment and regulatory obstacles, as well as deciding where and how to make grants. Technology and communications have lifted some of the barriers to giving directly to grassroots organizations and marginalized communities in the past, and have facilitated the emergence of powerful partnerships between grassroots organizations, and progressive partner organizations and funding networks in the U.S. These different tiers of partnership cross every issue area and offer a framework for integrated funding strategies that can combine to promote social change with local, regional and systemic impact.

## Looking Forward

Here are some issues and priorities to keep in mind in developing global funding strategies:

- **Choosing to focus will lead to more informed and impactful funding** It goes without saying that the opportunities for making grants to initiatives that contribute towards global social change are vast and diverse. Targeting a funding strategy within a specific geographic area and/or towards a specific issue and sector of the community will help provide a focus, will make the task of identifying grantees more manageable, and will help donors to come to grips with the cultural, social and political context in which their grantees are operating.
- **A gender lens is crucial to all giving decisions** In making the case for investment in women’s funds, the Women’s Funding Network puts it like this: *If you give a woman a fish, she will feed her family first and might possibly go hungry. If you teach a woman to fish, she will feed her family until outside forces take away her fishing rights or pollute the lake. If you help a woman buy the lake, she will feed her family, keep the lake environmentally clean and have something to pass on to future generations.* Funding women-led initiatives is vital, but the goal of gender equality is not the realm of women’s projects alone. It requires that every project and program funded be assessed in terms of the power dynamics between women and men and in terms of how it impacts women and men’s access to, and ownership of, resources.
- **HIV/AIDS is not just a health funding issue** The impact of the HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and across the Global South reaches far beyond the tragic loss of life. Families, communities and nations are facing the social and economic toll of the crippling loss of human capacity: in many African countries AIDS has claimed more than half of their trained teachers and one in four of their trained physicians, and many countries have experienced up to 60% decreases in food production and significant reductions in industrial productivity. The crisis represents a major challenge to fundamental human rights, illustrated most starkly by the inequity of treatment access between rich and poor countries<sup>2</sup>. All of this makes HIV/AIDS a priority for direct funding, but also means that it is important to consider how or whether HIV/AIDS is impacting the work of, and being addressed by, all organizations whether

<sup>2</sup> Southern African accounts for 84 percent of AIDS deaths, but just 3 percent of global AIDS spending

focused on health, education, micro-financing, income-generation, food production and more.

- **Social change cannot be separated from addressing urgent immediate needs** U.S. approaches to progressive philanthropy do not necessarily translate across borders. Whereas in the U.S. social change is seen by many as primarily the work of organizations focused on activism and community organizing, rather than the realm of providers of social services, this distinction cannot apply in the context of the global south. As Grantmakers Without Borders puts it:

*“Living truly on the edge, struggling every day for basic survival, the world’s poorest communities first and foremost must meet their own basic needs before they can even think about participating in broader social movements seeking systemic change. In the global South, community organizing is not likely to succeed when it is not in some way coupled with efforts that address the urgent needs of people’s daily lives. On the other hand, if programs fail to articulate poverty in the context of structural issues, and if there is no effort made to organize grassroots communities to fight for their own well being, then the best that can likely be hoped for is poverty alleviation, not poverty eradication.”*

- **Be aware of, but not put off by, the new regulatory landscape** International grantmaking has always been complex, and is even more so after September 11. Fears that charitable giving may be channeled to organizations promoting terrorism have sparked new U.S. regulations with respect to global philanthropy. These regulations — specific details of which are available on Tides Foundation website — mean that due diligence on international grantees to ensure that funds are used for charitable purposes and that all government compliance requirements are fulfilled is more important than ever. But these are not obstacles, only processes. We cannot be discouraged from making international grants including grants to groups that work in areas of conflict, because the need for international funding is greater than ever.

In the following pages, we present funding strategies that offer a framework for progressive global philanthropy that can be applied across a wide spectrum of issues, communities and geographic areas.

## Funding Strategy One: GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

### SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES TO BUILD A BROAD-BASED MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

*“The potential of grassroots work is clear to anyone who has seen how an isolated grassroots initiative can turn into a great collaborative movement with a profound effect on national and international policies, the conduct of global business, and the quality of all our lives”.*

Global Greengrants Fund

As in the U.S., across the globe, marginalized communities are organizing around the immediate challenges they face, whether they be ensuring access to food, water, education, health care, curbing environmental degradation, or creating opportunities to generate income. At the grassroots level, a small grant can have an immediate impact on the lives of those most acutely affected by injustice, and can build a broad and inclusive base for the global movement for social change. Without investments in community-led initiatives, that movement will be dominated by agendas set by the more educated middle classes, whether from the U.S. or from the global south.

Some of the characteristics of grassroots organizations that are successfully integrating efforts that tackle both the impacts and the root causes of poverty include: active community leadership and participatory decision-making; integration of education, skills building, and leadership development into all activities; implementation of strategies that sustain their environment and that are rooted in local resources and knowledge; and a commitment to collaborate with other organizations to leverage their collective voice.

#### Suggested Strategy:

- Provide funding directly to grassroots community-led organizations particularly those in and led by, the most marginalized communities, and those which integrate community organizing and leadership development. A particular priority is a) organizations led by and for women and b) organizations working to protect or regain their access to, and control over, key community-held assets including water, land, and natural resources.
- Support local and regional alliances and collaborative initiatives led by and for grassroots organizations, with a particular focus on alliances that are led by, and for, women, and those that promote community leadership development.

#### Possible Organizations to Fund

While the ideal is to identify and make grants directly to grassroots organizations, that is not always possible, particularly if the goal is to reach the most marginalized communities. Some of the resource organizations that can help with that task, and also help with understanding linguistic and cultural subtleties and navigating local laws and regulations, include:

- The Lambi Fund of Haiti
- International Development Exchange
- Global Greengrants Fund
- Global Fund for Women
- Urgent Action Fund
- Grassroots International

#### What to Look For:

- **Context is everything.** Be as familiar as possible with the cultural, political, environmental and social context in the region and local community in which you make grants, and exercise flexibility in your funding criteria and expectations of grantees based on that local context.
- **Consider multi-year funding and long-term investment.** There are no shortcuts to building the capacity of marginalized communities to advocate for change or to developing strong leaders and collaborations. Quick wins

and immediate results are unlikely, and setbacks and changes of direction are to be expected. Long-term investment in, and partnership with, a community organization is essential and will also enrich the experience and learning for donors.

- **Be aware of the digital divide:** Widespread global connectivity does not instantly create global equity. While technology can help identify and research issues and organizations, it also leaves many of the most effective grassroots organizations out of the loop.
- **Grants for relief and reconstruction also offer opportunities for investment in grassroots organizations.** Natural disasters and other urgent crises require immediate response. They also present opportunities to invest in indigenous organizations and strengthen local community leadership in long-term rebuilding efforts. For example, within days after the tsunami, Tides Foundation was able to distribute funding to Yayasan IDEP-Aceh Aid, an indigenous organization providing direct aid to every family it could reach in isolated areas of Aceh, Indonesia. Support for such organizations in the days, weeks, and years after a disaster can turn short-term aid into long-term change.

## Funding Strategy Two: IN-COUNTRY AND U.S.-BASED INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

### TAP THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF INTERMEDIARIES TO SUPPORT INTEGRATED ORGANIZING

For their efforts to have the broadest impact and to result in long-term social change, grassroots organizations rely on the partnership and support of intermediary non-government organizations (NGOs). It is important to remember that, while in many countries in the global south a strong civil sector (or NGO sector) has been a powerful force for social change, this is only true to the extent that the organizations bring a progressive vision and analysis to their work. Just as in the U.S., there are many organizations whose focus is more on top-down service delivery and poverty alleviation than on systemic change, and many which shore up rather than challenge government policies that perpetuate inequality.

However, there are also many progressive intermediary organizations that can provide needed resources, training, technical support, and skills development, and can build alliances among grassroots organizations and across communities and regions. Their work helps to translate isolated initiatives in individual communities into collective action for systemic change. When they are rooted in, and their agenda is set by, grassroots groups, these organizations also create the mechanism for marginalized communities to have a voice on the issues of human rights and reproductive, social, economic and environmental justice that impact their lives.

### Creating Change in the U.S. to Support Global Change

***“If we are serious about ending poverty, we have to be serious about ending the systems that create poverty by robbing the poor of their common wealth, livelihoods and incomes. Before we can make poverty history, we need to get the history of poverty right. It’s not about how much wealthy nations can give, so much as how much less they can take.”***

**Vandana Shiva**

U.S.-based progressive organizations with a global focus have an equally crucial role to play. As well as helping link donors with initiatives and groups needing support, U.S.-based organizations can also amplify the impact of grassroots organizations by increasing public awareness of global issues in the U.S., and by bringing together partners working on the same issues across regions and borders. Most importantly U.S.-based organizations can develop integrated strategies that link activism against injustice in the global south with activism in the U.S. targeting the practices and policies that perpetuate and exacerbate that injustice.

### Suggested Strategy:

- **Provide operating and capacity-building grants to indigenous intermediary organizations** with a clear social change vision that build the leadership of, and strengthen grassroots organizations. Priorities include: organizations that build networks of grassroots groups, and that engage grassroots organizations in specific campaigns and organizing efforts at a regional or national level.
- **Provide general support grants to support U.S. progressive organizations focused on international issues** that work collaboratively with partners in the global south. Priority activities to support include: public education campaigns and organizing efforts that bring visibility to their international partners; efforts to convene and link grassroots organizations from different regions to develop transnational advocacy strategies; and initiatives which combine support to organizations in the south with activism on the same issues within the U.S.

<sup>3</sup> From odemagazine.com — quoted from an article in *The Ecologist* (July/August 2005).

### What to Look For:

- How are community organizations and leaders involved in the leadership of regional and national organizations and in U.S.-based organizations — do they influence the organizations' priorities and agenda — are they represented in leadership, or, for U.S. organizations, on boards and advisory boards?
- How do in-country intermediary organizations characterize their work and relationship with grassroots groups, e.g. are they working “on behalf of” or “with”, are they bringing projects to communities or supporting community-initiated priorities?
- How does relief and reconstruction work supported by in-country and U.S. intermediaries also have a long-term social change perspective e.g. Ashoka's post-tsunami work includes both helping tsunami victims market their products in India, and supporting national policies to establish standards of care for children affected by the tsunami in Sri Lanka.

### Possible Organizations to Fund

As with the previous strategy, there are so many countries, issues and organizations, that it is neither easy nor wise to single out a few particular in-country intermediary organizations in this list. However, the following U.S. or international organizations, as well as being important to fund for their own U.S.-based advocacy and education activities, also work with strong partner organizations in the global south, and their websites and materials are an excellent source to identify organizations to support.

- Global Greengrants Fund
- Grassroots International
- Global Fund for Women
- International Development Exchange
- Human Rights Watch
- Ashoka
- Pesticide Action Network
- American Friends Service Committee
- Planned Parenthood International
- Oxfam International
- Pangaea Global AIDS Foundation

## Funding Strategy Three: PROMOTING AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY

### BUILDING A GLOBAL NETWORK OF DONORS, GRANTEES AND ACTIVISTS AS EQUAL PARTNERS

Given the relatively small amount of giving that reaches grassroots social change organizations in the global south, and the enormity of the crises that those organizations are addressing, it is of paramount importance both to increase global philanthropy and to get the maximum impact from every dollar given. Achieving impact means applying many of the same criteria emphasized in the other funding strategies — most notably the value of collaboration and alliances, and the importance of engaging community leaders and activists from the global south as equal partners and decision-makers. This vision of philanthropy is central to the work of many organizations:

- The **Global Fund For Women's** Strategic Plan has established a goal to “actively promote an alternative model of philanthropy that brings together grantees and donors working as equal partners in a global network” and prioritizes the expansion and strengthening of international women's funds;
- The **Tides HIV Collaborative Fund** represents the first time that a global coalition of people living with AIDS has developed a funding mechanism that allows them to set funding priorities and implement their strategies
- The **Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Action's** international grants are informed by an advisory panel of LGBT activists and donors from U.S., Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

There have also emerged many community foundations, women's funds and other philanthropic institutions initiated by, and established within, countries of the global south. These, together with many other progressive donor circles and collaborative giving initiatives, have an impact beyond the dollars raised or granted, by breaking down the dominant model of philanthropy and donor activism as a one-way process — with donors in the north and recipients in the south. This is particularly valuable as a counterpoint to many of the mainstream strategies used to increase international donations — particularly those which identify specific recipient children or families — which actually perpetuate and reinforce the stereotype of poor communities as passive recipients of aid, rather than as agents of change.

#### Suggested Strategy:

- **Provide direct funding to community-led philanthropy** in the global south. Priorities include building the capacity of international women's funds, and of grantmaking initiatives that engage donors and activists as equal partners.
- **Invest in organizations that are building the field of global progressive philanthropy** including women's funding networks, and progressive associations of grantmakers.

### What to Look For:

- Choose to make a collective grant with others, and look for opportunities to partner with like-minded donors, particularly in initiatives that integrate grantmaking with research and public awareness strategies, and that strengthen networks of donors, activists, and community leaders around specific issues.

### Possible Organizations/ Initiatives to Fund

- Urgent Action Fund
- Global Fund for Women: International Women's Funding;
- Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice International fund
- Wheat Fund (South Africa)
- African Women's Development Fund
- Tewa for Self Reliant Development (Nepal)
- Africa Grantmakers Affinity Group
- Tides HIV Collaborative Fund
- Women's Funding Network — U.S. Women without Borders: Ending Violence against Women and girls worldwide.
- Women's Donor Network
- International Network of Women's Funds
- African Women's Development Fund