

Beyond the apolitical: private foundations and transformative development in sub-Saharan Africa

Kristin Fedeler¹ and Rachel Hayman, October 2012

Philanthropists and philanthropic foundations are growing in importance in Africa, and are set to play an increasingly influential role within the development landscape. This raises questions for international NGOs and local civil society organisations about how they engage and work with philanthropic organisations, and vice versa. Are foundations viewed as a source of funding in an increasingly squeezed financial environment? Are they seen to challenge or threaten established ways of thinking about development? Or are they seen as activists for social change, as partners, collaborators and co-conspirators who have the same fundamental social development objectives?

This paper sheds light on the changing landscape of philanthropy and development in Africa. By exploring different types of philanthropic foundations and their support networks, we encourage foundations and civil society practitioners alike to think more deeply about who they work with and how. The paper particularly considers the approaches foundations take to supporting human wellbeing. Foundations are often critiqued for being somewhat ‘apolitical’ actors in development in the sense of focusing on material needs and technological solutions to social problems rather than addressing structural impediments to development. This critique is equally levelled at NGOs, often with good reason. However, while there is a vast literature which examines NGO activity in Africa from every angle, the empirical evidence base on philanthropic foundations is much weaker. We believe that foundations and civil society organisations will increase their collaboration in the future. In order to do so well, they must understand each other, reflect on what they have in common and what they do not, and in particular get to grips with how they collectively contribute to the big picture of social, political and economic development.

1. Introduction

In 1994, Salamon observed that “a striking upsurge is underway around the globe in organised, voluntary activity and the creation of private, non-profit or non-governmental organisations” in both the developed and the developing world.² Similarly, a 2001 publication

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² Salamon, L.M. (1994) ‘The Rise of the Non-profit Sector’, *Foreign Affairs* 74 (3): 109

by the Synergos Global Philanthropy and Foundation Building programme found that “while the development of a philanthropic sector in Africa, Asia and Latin America is very much a work in progress, there is no question that institutionalised private philanthropy is a growing and increasingly significant reality.”³ With regard to Western donors, Homi Kharas of the Brookings Institution argued in 2007 that private funders are emerging as crucial contributors to a new international aid architecture, and that the “nature of development assistance is rapidly changing.”⁴ Aside from Western donors, philanthropic foundations, high-net-worth individuals and grassroots movements from the Southern hemisphere are also contributing to this new reality. As the final report of the Bellagio Initiative⁵, released in September 2012, stated: “a radically different cast of players” is creating a “new ecosystem for international development and philanthropic efforts.”⁶

Private foundations play different roles in generating socio-political transformation in sub-Saharan Africa; however, the debate on their potential impacts is highly dichotomised. On the one hand, it has been argued that private funders are inherently problem-oriented and apolitical by virtue of their focus on specific issue-areas, independent of the larger political context.⁷ Similarly, an informant quoted in a 2012 UK House of Commons report on private foundations describes his particular foundation as targeting the most vulnerable sectors of African societies “regardless of most political considerations.”⁸

On the other hand, philanthropic bodies are seen to have “increasing influence on international development policy,”⁹ and some consider the modern concept of private philanthropy as aiming to “tackle the underlying causes of problems rather than curing symptoms.”¹⁰ The latter viewpoint suggests that private foundations indeed might function, either explicitly or implicitly, as agents of socio-political change of a quite structural, systemic nature. This is particularly the case when private foundations accumulate so much power and influence – or “philanthropic governing capacity”¹¹ – that they can single-handedly define, direct and execute development programmes at the same time as relying on their

³ Dulany, P. and D. Winder (2001) ‘The Status of and Trends in Private Philanthropy in the Southern Hemisphere’, available at www.synergos.org/knowledge/01/philanthropyinsouthernhemisphere.htm

⁴ Kharas, H. (2007) ‘The New Reality of Aid. Brookings Institute’, Washington DC: Brookings Bloom Roundtable.

⁵ The Bellagio Initiative, spearheaded by the Institute of Development Studies, the Resource Alliance and the Rockefeller Foundation, brought together policymakers, academics, opinion leaders, social entrepreneurs, activists, donors and practitioners from over 30 countries in a series of reflections on the future of international development (see www.bellagioinitiative.org).

⁶ Bellagio Initiative (2012) ‘Human Wellbeing in the 21st Century. Meeting Challenges, Seizing Opportunities’, September 2012: 6

⁷ Marten, R. and J.M. Witte (2008) ‘Transforming Development? The Role of Philanthropic Foundations in International Development Cooperation’, Global Public Policy Institute: Research Paper Series 10, available at www.gppi.net/fileadmin/gppi/GPPiRP10_Transforming_Development_20080526final.pdf (accessed 18 April 2012)

⁸ The International Development Committee (2012) ‘Private Foundations: Thirteenth Report of Session 2010-2012’, www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmintdev/1557/155702.htm (accessed 18 April 2012)

⁹ The International Development Committee 2012: 3

¹⁰ Anheiner, H.K. and S. Toepler (eds.) (1999) *Private Funds and Public Purpose: Philanthropic Foundations in International Perspectives*. New York: Plenum Publishers

¹¹ Nickel, P.M. and A.M. Eikenberry (2010) ‘Philanthropy in the Era of Global Governance’, in Taylor, R. (ed.) *Third Sector Research*. Springerlink available at www.springerlink.com/content/r0g36p5g10h83832/ (accessed 9 July 2012)

own rules and resources.¹² Such a situation is referred to as “hyperagency,”¹³ and has, for example, been used in reference to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In an earlier paper, INTRAC reviewed private philanthropic foundations in international development in relation to international NGOs.¹⁴ It explored the approaches of private funders, areas of contention in understanding between foundations and NGOs, as well as the opportunities and challenges of collaboration. The paper highlighted and analysed some of the claims frequently made of private foundations in development: that they are issues-focused, often operating in a top-down way, building on a business-oriented mindset, and taking an apolitical approach. This latter claim forms the main focus on this paper. We examine the role of private philanthropic foundations in Africa as agents of socio-political change through a lens of structural well-being and transformative development. Why Africa? Firstly, there is a growing body of literature on philanthropy in international development, but relatively little analysis of private philanthropic foundations in Africa (hence our reliance in this paper on the few sources that exist). Secondly, there is a strong interest in supporting development in Africa amongst private philanthropic foundations involved in international development, and huge potential for deeper and better collaboration between different types of development actor exists. Furthermore, we believe that development cannot happen without addressing systemic issues of governance.

The first part of this paper provides a brief overview of philanthropy and private foundation activity in Africa, looking at a small number of African and non-African foundations, and philanthropic support bodies. We then turn to aspects of how these foundations work, before examining their approaches in relation to theories of human wellbeing. The paper is based on desk-based research, complemented with a small number of semi-structured interviews and correspondence with representatives of philanthropic foundations, academics and consultants. The research is exploratory in nature, based on a small ad hoc convenience sample, and by no means claims to provide a comprehensive analysis of philanthropic activity in Africa, which could only be achieved as a result of much more in-depth investigation.

We observe that while many philanthropic foundations do focus on particular issues, their objectives and funding support go beyond purely material wellbeing. Foundations such as those dealt with in this paper work closely with other civil society actors as well as policy-making bodies and institutions to advocate for systemic change. We need to continue questioning whether they could do more and better to support local processes of change, just as international NGOs could. However, our research indicates that we must push for a more nuanced understanding of the heterogeneous nature of philanthropic activity in Africa, and how African and non-Africa philanthropic organisations could actively or implicitly support social change and transformative development on the continent.

¹² Schervish, P.G. (2003) ‘Hyperagency and High-Tech Donors: A New Theory of the New Philanthropists’, Social Welfare Research Institute, available at www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cwp/pdf/haf.pdf (accessed 3 July 2012).

¹³ idem

¹⁴ Pratt, B., J. Hailey, M. Gallo, R. Shadwick, and R. Hayman (2012) ‘Understanding Private Donors in International Development’, Policy Briefing Paper 31, Oxford: INTRAC. Available at www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/747/Briefing-Paper-31-Understanding-private-donors-in-international-development.pdf (accessed 1 August 2012)

2. Private philanthropy and foundations in Africa

It remains difficult to grasp the extent of philanthropic activity across Africa as a whole. While many foundations have a solid internet presence with extensive websites and resources, theoretical-analytical literature on the current development and specifics of private philanthropy in Africa is limited.¹⁵ The literature on aid, development agencies and NGOs in Africa is vast, but very little of it engages with the role of private foundations, beyond the impact of the high-profile, controversial or politically-charged activities of very large philanthropic organisations or celebrities.¹⁶ With regard to African philanthropy – despite the efforts of bodies such as the African Grantmakers Network and Trust Africa – statistical information regarding the inflows of philanthropic funding to the region is limited. We know, however, that many international philanthropic foundations have a long history in Africa. Large global philanthropies, like the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, have been actively engaged in supporting civil society and development on the continent for many decades. In more recent years, corporate foundations associated with the extractive industries have increasingly engaged in development activities, particularly in the name of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Other corporate foundations also support work linked with their areas of interest in Africa. For example, the MasterCard Foundation funds a range of projects to promote entrepreneurship in East Africa, and IBM supports technological capacity building throughout the continent.¹⁷ In addition to these, there are numerous private foundations established by individuals who set up trusts to support specific initiatives based on personal interests.

More interestingly perhaps, Africa is seeing unprecedented growth in African philanthropy, with the formation of foundations and trusts largely ‘of Africans for Africans’. Rising numbers of foundations are being created by African sports or entertainment celebrities, retired politicians, as well as members of the African Diaspora around the world. Furthermore, foundations, such as Safaricom¹⁸ or the Senegalese Fondation Sonatel¹⁹ are examples of purely African corporate initiatives. Likewise, Christian, Islamic and other religious foundations are increasing on the continent.²⁰

To illustrate this diversity of foundational activity, in the following we look first at horizontal community-level philanthropy; second at foundations established by high net worth individuals (HNWIs); third at pan-African and regional philanthropic organisations which are often supported by external actors; and fourth at foundations which are not African in origin.

Moyo argues that the “term ‘philanthropy’ is not generally understood nor is it preferred in Africa.”²¹ He stresses that traditional African philanthropy differs from its contemporary

¹⁵ This section relies heavily on the work of Bhekinkosi Moyo from Trust Africa who has produced the most complete picture of African philanthropy in recent years.

¹⁶ See, for example, Kharas 2007; Nickel and Eikenberry 2010; Morvaridi, B. (2012) ‘Capitalist Philanthropy and Hegemonic Partnerships’, *Third World Quarterly* 33(7): 1191-1210

¹⁷ IBM Corporation (2011) ‘IBM’s Commitment to Africa’, *Points of View Essay*, June 2011

¹⁸ Safaricom Foundation: www.safaricomfoundation.org (accessed 15 July 2012)

¹⁹ Fondation Sonatel: www.fondationsonatel.sn (accessed 15 July 2012)

²⁰ Sy and Hathie 2011

²¹ Moyo, B. (2010) ‘Philanthropy in Africa’, in H. K. Anheier and S. Toepler (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*, Part 16, 1187-1192. Available at www.springerlink.com/content/j62k806410114239/fulltext.htm

Western counterparts in terms of its communal, cultural and social traditions.²² For example, as opposed to giving away extra wealth, the southern African *Ubuntu* philosophy encourages 'sharing what you have' and reciprocal solidarity – regardless of being rich or poor – as well as collective or individual giving and helping towards a social or public good. A similar philosophy underpins *harambee* (self-help) in East Africa and is prevalent in many cultures around the world. Such *horizontal* concepts sometimes – though by no means always – have the potential to translate into grassroots development.²³ This horizontal philanthropy "of the community"²⁴ is based upon inter-personal relations and community-networks which are fundamental to mutual solidarity and philanthropic reciprocity. A form of institutional African philanthropy which is deeply embedded in this horizontal philosophy of relational, grassroots resource mobilisation is constituted by the organic community foundations which are gaining traction in sub-Saharan Africa (see Box 1).

Box 1: Community foundations

The Kenya Community Development Fund

Dating back to 1997, the Kenya Community Development Fund (KCDF) prides itself on being the "first and oldest indigenous foundation of its kind in East Africa."²⁵

Its work has been facilitated by a long list of current and past international partners which includes the Aga Khan Foundation, the Ford Foundation, USAID, Comic Relief, but also significant African organisations, such as the Chandaria Foundation, the Safaricom Foundation and the African Grantmakers Network. Primarily, the KCDF is concerned with sustainable community development, community ownership of solutions and processes, and community build-up to "initiate their own solutions to development challenges affecting them, harness and grow their own resources to respond to them, as well as tap from other networks that offer relevant solutions."

Broader fields of interest encompass questions of food security, children, youth and education, and livelihoods and economic development.

The nascence of Africapitalism²⁶ is of particular interest in relation to philanthropy in Africa. Not only is there an increased desire by bodies such as Trust Africa and the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) to change gloomy perceptions of Africa as a charity case, but there is also a growing sense that Africans must "decide their own destiny,"²⁷

²² Bellagio Initiative (2011) 'Philanthropy: Current Context and Future Outlook', Background Paper, Draft – Resource Alliance, IDS, Rockefeller Foundation. Available at www.bellagioinitiative.org/resources/philanthropy-current-context-and-future-outlook/ (accessed 18 June 2012)

²³ Moyo 2011: 1

²⁴ Wilkinson-Maposa *et al.* 2006

²⁵ Kenya Community Development Foundation: www.kcdf.or.ke (accessed 15 July 2012)

²⁶ Volume 1 Issue 1 of The Africapitalist Newsletter was commissioned by the Tony Elumelu Foundation in 2012, available at www.tonyelumelufoundation.org/page/africapitalist-newsletter (accessed 3 July 2012).

²⁷ Moyo (2008a) 'Can the New African Foundations Level the Playing Field?' Alliance Magazine. Available at www.alliancemagazine.org/en/content/can-new-african-foundations-level-playing-field (accessed 1 May 2012)

“change, not charity” is a popular slogan, especially in African circles.²⁸ Unlike the common pathologising portrayal of sub-Saharan Africa as the continent of conflicts, political instability, corruption, weak institutions, inequality, unemployment and poverty – all “fault lines in the social and cultural spheres” which have not yet been successfully tackled by conventional development approaches²⁹ – positive narratives are comparatively rare. Yet, sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing increasing wealth, a growing middle class and rising numbers of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), usually from the corporate world, who are engaging in philanthropic activities (see Box 2).³⁰

Box 2: Examples of African foundations established by individuals

The Tony Elumelu Foundation

Guided by the slogan “nobody is going to develop Africa, except us,”³¹ the Nigerian entrepreneur Tony Elumelu established this foundation in 2010, based upon personal resources as well as surpluses from privately owned companies. Elumelu’s primary vision is the promotion and celebration of “excellence in business leadership and entrepreneurship” across Africa in order to foster the competitiveness and growth of the African private sector. The Foundation engages in what are termed ‘impact investments’, seeking to promote entrepreneurial rigour in order to create both financial and social returns. The Foundation also issues a quarterly Africapitalist Newsletter informing about recent developments and trends which suggest an economic transformation in Africa through socially responsible investments.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation

Founded in 2006 by the British-Sudanese mobile communications entrepreneur, Mo Ibrahim, this foundation functions as a stimulator of debate on the quality of government and governance issues in Africa, as well as a forum for discussion, learning and exchange. “Good governance and great leadership in Africa” is the Foundation’s primary vision and political figures contributing to its realisation are honoured with the Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership. Specific criteria for the award are laid out in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation also dedicates a significant part of its resources to capacity building, especially targeting young, aspirant individuals through the Ibrahim Scholarship Programmes or through Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships.

The TY Danjuma Foundation

As opposed to the two previous foundations which have a pan-African outreach, the TY Danjuma Foundation, established in 2008, concentrates its work on issues affecting the quality of life of Nigerians, with a particular focus on Danjuma’s home state of Taraba. Grants are issued to NGOs that are specialised in the Foundation’s focus areas, including community health, education, income generation, policy advocacy and philanthropy. Usually

²⁸ Bellagio 2011

²⁹ Moyo 2011: 3

³⁰ Bellagio 2011: 82

³¹ The Tony Elumelu Foundation: www.tonyelumelufoundation.org (accessed 3 July 2012).

NGOs are entitled to implement projects in communities identified and ratified by the TY Danjuma Foundation; however, discretionary grants may also be issued. Since 2010, the phenomenon of philanthropy at the national Nigerian level and in general has been taken up in the Annual Nigerian Philanthropy Forum hosted by the Foundation.

There is of course a risk that these more *vertical* forms of philanthropy “for the community”³² are characterised by a charity approach and what Salamon terms “philanthropic paternalism.”³³

The most recent manifestation of *institutional* African philanthropy combines traditional relational transfer models with slightly more vertical ways of functioning.³⁴ The largest pan-African and regional philanthropic organisations, detailed in Box 3, are simultaneously related to horizontal philanthropy and exist in partnership with non-African foundations and donors. These externally-supported African bodies stand in contrast to the exclusively self-funded foundations, addressed in Box 2, which arise from the philanthropic initiatives of African HNWI.

However, they play a significant role within the philanthropic landscape in Africa, acting as grant-givers, collaborative organisations and intermediaries between external and indigenous philanthropic endeavours. While several authors have pointed out that external philanthropy never constitutes a neutral concept because of the social, political and religious incentives influencing funders and because of the influence that *money* has on its own,³⁵ these organisations seem to be actively seeking to promote African philanthropy for Africa. By means of a mixture of donor support, but also their own endowment building and exclusively African resource mobilisation, these organisations are involved in a number of activities beyond pure grantmaking and therefore occupy something of a hybrid space in the development picture.

³² Wilkinson-Maposa, S., A. Fowler, C. Oliver-Evans, and C.F.N. Mulenga (2006) *The Poor Philanthropist: How and Why the Poor People Help Each Other*. Cape Town: Compress

³³ Salamon, L.M. (1995) *Partners in Public Service*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 47

³⁴ Sy, M. and I. Hathie (2009) ‘Institutional Forms of Philanthropy in West Africa’, IDRC Canada available at www.idrc.ca/EN/Programs/Donor_Partnerships/Documents/Institutional-forms-of-Philanthropy-SY-HATHIE-Formatted.pdf (accessed 5 July 2012)

³⁵ Blum, D.E. (2002) ‘Ties That Bind: More Donors Specify Terms for Their Gifts to Charity’, *The Chronicles of Philanthropy* 14(11), available at www.philanthropy.com/article/Ties-That-Bind/52015/ (accessed 3 July 2012); O’Halloran, K. (2007) *Charity Law and Social Inclusion: An International Study*. London and New York: Routledge; White, D. (2010) *The Non-Profit Challenge: Integrating Ethics into the Purpose and Promise of Our Charities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Box 3: Pan-African and regional philanthropic organisations

Trust Africa

Trust Africa was launched in 2001 under the 'Special Initiative for Africa' of the Ford Foundation. Five years later, independent headquarters were opened in Dakar, Senegal, making Trust Africa a purely African organisation. Nevertheless, its assets are still partly developed by virtue of external philanthropic resources, with special support from the Ford Foundation, which are then aligned with African agendas. At the same time, Trust Africa also pools indigenous resources. Democracy, civil society and equitable development are key focus areas of Trust Africa. Additionally, it seeks to strengthen African philanthropy and resource mobilisation, as well as to enhance African enterprise and institutional collaboration. For that purpose, long-term relationships with grantees are fostered and further strengthened through the formation of global Diaspora alliances for Africa.

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)

Since 2001, the African Women's Development Fund has advocated pan-African women's and human rights, economic empowerment and livelihoods. Further, the AWDF is committed to issues of governance, peace and security, health and reproductive rights, HIV/AIDS, but also arts, culture and sports. The Fund relies largely on a mixture of its own fundraising campaigns and donations. Thus, apart from the independent mobilisation of financial, human and material resources within Africa, the AWDF is supported, among others, by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (HIV/AIDS Fund) and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation (Campaign 13).

The Southern Africa Trust

Through the support of donors, such as Oxfam, the Flemish Government, the Department for International Development, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as well as Trust Africa, the Southern Africa Trust was founded in 2005 as a grant-making body to civil society organisations addressing a wide range of problems, including: poverty, rural women, urban youth, unemployment, marginalisation in the global political economy, public policy on HIV/AIDS, institutional capacity, participatory and accountable governance, as well as international financial and trading systems, and southern African regionalism. Part of the Southern Africa Trust's efforts comprises not only targeted grant-making to organisations and specific programmes, but also discretionary support alongside open interest group and policy dialogues.

Moreover, throughout the past decade, we can observe the emergence of philanthropy support organisations which function as pan-African as well as regional fora for coordinated networking, alliance formation, and African agenda-setting through discussion and exchange. These further encourage philanthropic organisations to seek collaborative, sustainable mechanisms for African resource mobilisation (see Box 4).

Box 4: African philanthropy support organisations

The African Grantmakers Network (AGN)

Established in 2010, the African Grantmakers Network is governed by an African-only board of trustees with representatives from the AWDF (Ghana), Trust Africa (Senegal), Southern Africa Trust (South Africa), the Foundation for Civil Society (Tanzania), the Akiba Uhaki Community Foundation (Kenya) and the Tony Elumelu Foundation (Nigeria). Aiming to facilitate a continent-wide network of African grant-making organisations, the AGN advocates sustainable African philanthropy through partnerships and linkages. It endeavours specifically to strengthen the civil sphere, to promote an African voice and agenda for philanthropy, to foster peer learning and good practice, as well as to harmonise relationships between state and non-state actors. The AGN functions as a platform for explorations of the identity of African philanthropy, but also as a reference point for Africans in the Diaspora or philanthropic organisations interested in working on the continent. At its annual conferences and general assemblies, the AGN moreover discusses issues such as research and capacity enhancement regarding aid agendas and the legal environment in philanthropy (e.g. tax regimes), organisational and leadership capacities of African philanthropic institutions as well as strategic interventions to support African citizens.

The East Africa Association of Grantmakers (EAAG)

Nine years senior to the AGN, the East Africa Association of Grantmakers, first convened in 2001 under the umbrella of the Ford Foundation's East Africa Foundations Learning Group (EAFLG) initiative, is similarly comprised of different trusts and foundations working across East Africa. The EAAG was established as an independent institution in 2003, but is still supported by the Ford Foundation as well as, among others, the Safaricom Foundation, KCDF, the Chandaria and the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation. Key objectives are shared learning within the network of members and grantmakers, logistical and technical support to grant-making organisations, inspiration and stimulation of philanthropy across the region and increased local giving. Overall, the EAAG sees itself as a knowledge base for organised philanthropy and organisational development in East Africa.

Finally, beyond the purely African or the hybrid, externally-funded but local philanthropic organisations, are the huge numbers of non-African private philanthropic foundations active in Africa. In a recent study of UK foundations involved in international development, 37% (of 160 foundations that participated in the research) supported activities in Africa, with East Africa receiving the highest proportion of funding for international development overall.³⁶ Many provide grant funding directly to local organisations, government departments, quasi-government bodies and institutions, or through the intermediary of international NGOs or other bodies. Some are direct operators. Box 5 provides examples of three non-African private foundations.

³⁶ Pharoah, C. and L. Bryant (2012) 'Global Grant-Making: A Review of UK Foundations' Funding for International Development', The Nuffield Foundation, available at www.nuffieldfoundation.org/global-grant-making-foundations-international-development-funding (accessed 5 June 2012)

Box 5: Non-African private foundations' initiatives in Africa

The Oak Foundation's Child Abuse Programme in East Africa

Established in 1998 as a purely grant-making foundation, the Oak Foundation supports not-for-profit organisations which are concerned with “issues of global, social and environmental concern, particularly those that have an impact on the lives of the disadvantaged.”³⁷ One programme addresses child sexual abuse and exploitation by supporting initiatives to protect children both before and after maltreatment. Grants have been made to organisations in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania over the last nine years, and the programme is being rolled out regionally to “move from smaller individual projects towards trying to see what impacts they can have on a larger scale.”³⁸

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund's Palliative Care Initiative

The Fund was established in 1997 as a grant-making body with the mission to secure sustainable improvements in the lives of the most disadvantaged people in the UK and around the world. ensure that its initiatives “leave the best possible lasting legacy, measured in opportunities for the most disadvantaged to change their lives.”³⁹ Its work involves giving grants, conducting strategic work with partners, evaluation and learning, and, in some cases, calling for changes in policy and professional practice. In 2001, the Fund launched its Palliative Care Initiative as a major advocacy-campaign and grant-making scheme to raise awareness of the significance of palliative care and ensure it is integrated into the care and treatment of people with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other life limiting illnesses in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Baring Foundation's Programme on Long-Term Forced Displacement

The Baring Foundation was established in 1969 as a non-operating, grant-making body for the voluntary sector “to improve the quality of life of people suffering disadvantage and discrimination.” One type of grant issued by the Baring Foundation seeks to “address problems arising from the long-term forced displacement of people”⁴⁰ and provides funding for UK-based, and particularly African-led, INGOs working to enhance capacity-building partnerships with related African CBOs and NGOs. When selecting potential grantees, the Foundation places a high value on the relationship between the UK-INGO and the African partner. As the Director of the Baring Foundation puts it: “We try to determine as best as we can that the work is actually coproduced with our African partners, rather than a plan dreamed up in Edinburgh or London.”⁴¹ The Baring Foundation's communication with and integration of African civil society representatives are key to ensuring effective co-production in tackling the various specific challenges of long-term forced displacement.

³⁷ Oak Foundation (2012) www.oakfnd.org (accessed 29 May 2012)

³⁸ Interview with Blain Teketel, 31 May 2012

³⁹ Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (2012) www.theworkcontinues.org (accessed 30 May 2012)

⁴⁰ The Baring Foundation (2012) www.baringfoundation.org.uk (accessed 1 June 2012)

⁴¹ Interview with David Cutler, 21 June 2012

3. Foundation approaches to development in Africa

The above demonstrates that the foundation sector in Africa is growing both in size and heterogeneity. This is equally reflected in how these foundations approach their development activities. Organisations such as Trust Africa, the African Women's Development Fund, the Kenya Community Development Fund, or the intermediary support networks are working to connect horizontal with vertical forms of philanthropy by building upon African approaches to wellbeing, culture and social dynamics.⁴² They claim that this allows for a context-specific and sensitive handling of local needs and structural constraints to development. However, the external philanthropic foundations we looked at also display similar tendencies in their approaches. The following sections begin to tease out the contribution of these organisations to facilitating social change in Africa by focusing on four key areas: first, what they are doing to mobilise community resources and promote sustainability; second, how they are trying to build capacity of local people and organisations; third, what types of partnerships, collaborative relationships and networks they foster to advance their work; and fourth, how they approach awareness-raising and advocacy activities, including engaging with policy-makers.

3.1 Mobilisation of communities and endowment building

In line with its efforts to unite and strengthen horizontal in addition to vertical forms of philanthropy, the KCDF encourages communities to mobilise their own resources and to strategically invest or store these for the long term. By supporting communities in planning and managing their own resources and in creating income-generating activities, the KCDF strives to foster grassroots leverage in decision-making as opposed to donor-controlled funding. The AWDF, KCDF and the TY Danjuma Foundation have all established community or personally financed endowment funds to sustain their interventions. These endowment groups are able to engage in policy-advocacy and lobbying which, in Moyo's view, are areas that need a local and legitimate agenda and sometimes should not be funded from outside.⁴³

3.2 Capacity building and technical assistance

Capacity building and technical assistance are central to much of the work of the foundations we have explored. For example, the Tony Elumelu Foundation is involved in capacity building and providing opportunities for junior professionals in the private sector, alongside policy work with governments and business stakeholders. The AWDF approaches capacity- and movement-building in various sectors. The Fund follows Sen's capability approach, considering that both certain basic needs and non-material freedoms must be fulfilled for the optimal use of individual capacities, but it also appreciates the importance of harmonious communal life.⁴⁴ One of its activities is to facilitate the African Feminist Forum, providing an autonomous space for agenda-setting and reflection as well as mutual support, learning and exchange. Trust Africa provides technical assistance to civil society partners in crisis. Examples of this are institutional and project funding for Zimbabwean civil society as well as post-conflict reconstruction and policy engagement with Liberian civil society.

⁴² Moyo 2008a, 2011

⁴³ Moyo 2011: 18

⁴⁴ Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund strives to build capacities particularly through working closely with district offices to influence national governments, but also with national and regional health associations, such as the Kenya Hospices and Palliative Care Association (KEHPCA), the Palliative Care Association of Malawi (PACAM), and the African Palliative Care Association (APCA).

The Baring Foundation particularly concentrates on capacity-building partnerships between African community-based organisations and NGOs. Because it considers displacement a socio-political problem, the Baring Foundation's grants also address issues dealing with capacity building of African NGOs and their ability to provide the *infrastructure* for systemic transformations.⁴⁵ Some examples of the Foundation's grantees include the South Sudan Women Concern, formed by African women in the UK, which targets capacity building of women in South Sudan as well as former child soldiers, in order to address their needs and integrate them into local, national and international discourses. Another grantee is the UK-registered charity Transform Africa, which works to strengthen African NGOs in various community projects in politically sensitive post-conflict contexts with an emphasis on displaced young people. As a final example, Akina Mama Wa Afrika is a pan-African NGO aiming to build the capacities of female-headed organisations dealing with displaced people across Africa. This INGO envisions a strong network of African women who form a feminist constituency in order to advocate for change and women's political participation throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

3.3 Partnerships and collaboration

Strategic partnerships with civil society actors, the business sector, intergovernmental agencies and the media, among others, help to creatively pool diverse resources, competencies and expertise. The African Grantmakers Network is one particularly transformative partnership, and the premier pan-African platform for philanthropy. Not only does it externally represent a unified African body, but it also functions as a forum to exchange African ideas, experiences and visions. This could enable cross-regional learning and sharing by seeking to harmonise community-participation with development processes, as well as informal types of philanthropic activities.

From his own experience, Moyo gives an insight into the partnership between Trust Africa and the Zimbabwe Alliance – a group of donors funding in Zimbabwe – that was established in 2007. Given the sensitive political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe, collaborative philanthropy has proved vital in terms of exchanging knowledge, experience and political consciousness. Moreover, by virtue of Trust Africa's pan-African reach and cross-border networks, resources could be mobilised despite the politically sensitive context. Trust Africa and Zimbabwe Alliance see their main task to be building a solid civil society network because: "Only partnerships and collaborations have the potential to address the underlying causes of political and economic malaise in a country like Zimbabwe. And civil society is key to such an intervention."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Interview with David Cutler, 21 June 2012

⁴⁶ Moyo 2011: 19

The Oak Foundation also actively seeks to enhance collaborative learning and exchange. In 2010, a consultant conducted a policy assessment on progress in the child protection realm which resulted in a conference, jointly funded by the Oak Foundation, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in Uganda and UNICEF, where information and recommendations for relevant actors were shared, and close cooperation between Oak's partners and the Government ministry fostered. The Oak Foundation also supports an initiative to integrate child protection issues into the curricula of several universities in Uganda. A programme was implemented to raise awareness of child abuse, in cooperation with, and providing financial support to, the NGO Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO Uganda). This opened further avenues for critical research on how to combat violence against children which could be disseminated and shared with other philanthropic organisations.

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund works directly with partners and organisations in the global South.⁴⁷ It supports development partners – usually local organisations and associations – to implement the Fund's projects with respect to context-specific needs and challenges. This entails elements such as an emphasis on learning, improvement and long-term involvement seeking sustainable impact beyond the Fund's own grantees. The Palliative Care Initiative is indicative of such a creative approach⁴⁸ to bring about change, both in the immediate material, and in a long-term structural-systemic, sense. Another example of its creativity is its engagement in the Funders' Collaborative for Children, Malawi initiative, which was developed by four grant makers (the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (UK), Comic Relief, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and the Elton John AIDS Foundation) to support children and communities in Malawi affected by HIV/AIDS.

“Rather than talking about collaboration, the Baring Foundation focuses more on *relationships* and effective *coproduction*.”⁴⁹ A good relationship between the funded INGO and the African partner as well as a good relationship between the Baring Foundation and the INGO are considered essential “because it is harder for us to be involved in work in Africa.”⁵⁰ Moreover, “in lots of ways the Baring Foundations considers itself as an integral part of civil society”⁵¹ and thus aims to enable horizontal partnerships and coproduction of development outcomes. Although the Foundation has grant-making and thereby decision-making power, it claims that it does not impose itself on its grantees, but coproduces development projects that are influenced by those whom they affect.

⁴⁷ Interview with Olivia Dix, 7 June 2012

⁴⁸ Compare Anheiner and Leat 2006

⁴⁹ Interview with David Cutler, 21 June 2012

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

3.4 Awareness-raising and engagement with policy-makers

The organisations explored here are engaged in different ways with political and administrative institutions in the countries they work in, and are often actively involved in awareness raising and advocacy work.

In many cases, small grassroots movements are not able to fulfil conventional organisational requirements for grants and are thus excluded from funding. The AWDF has adopted an approach of flexible grant-making to previously marginalised recipients. Investments are made at the community level, especially in rural areas. Here, the AWDF provides participatory platforms for women to voice concerns and display their achievements at the same time as they are integrated into national discourses. By including less formal recipients in the grant-making scheme, the AWDF seeks to break down barriers for otherwise excluded members of society and to influence national debates on legal, economic and political issues.

The target groups of the Oak Foundation aim to raise awareness of the most disadvantaged; in the programme under consideration, of children suffering sexual abuse and exploitation. For example, the Oak Foundation supports a working group that is seated within the Ugandan Ministry of Labour, Gender and Social Development and incorporates various nongovernmental stakeholders. This group mainly aims to harmonise child protection activities among civil society and the Ugandan government. A core realisation within the programme management of the Oak Foundation is the fact that sexual abuse is not an isolated problem and that there is a need for a holistic approach that tackles both general violence and its related structural factors. The Oak Foundation seeks to support partners and NGOs to work with local governments. While the Foundation does not directly fund governments, it seeks to strengthen civil society and NGOs in cooperating with the public sector, and in building up a pool of knowledge that might be essential for policy making.⁵²

In 2001, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund launched its Palliative Care Initiative as a major advocacy campaign and grant-making scheme and it has sponsored various conferences to raise widespread awareness of its concerns. The Initiative not only “overtly seeks to change health policies and health governance,”⁵³ but it also advocates its position alongside national and regional associations which work closely with governments, hoping to achieve the inclusion of palliative care in national medical and nursing training curricula. At the same time, the Fund recognises that while a political approach might be more acceptable when working with partners within the UK, politics in sub-Saharan Africa is a highly sensitive matter and the Fund does not consider itself to have any “democratic mandate.”⁵⁴ Rather, it considers itself to constitute a “neutral convenor” of different partners with the asset of having a “less threatening, not politically-biased identity.”⁵⁵ In the international arena, the Fund could be described as a social justice funder on specific pieces of work. Thus, it implicitly contributes to socio-political change, by funding implementers of it.

The Baring Foundation’s grants also have a more implicit influence over socio-political structures. On the whole, the Foundation’s grants to NGOs tackling long-term forced

⁵² Interview with Blain Teketel, 31 May 2012

⁵³ Interview with Olivia Dix, 7 June 2012

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

displacement in Africa can be seen to address a complex niche area. However, while some of the grantees strive for political or policy change to protect disenfranchised parts of society – either within a district or on a national level – others work to achieve cultural awareness and change, for example with regard to the inclusion of women and gender equality. A third category of grants does not seek to change legislation, but rather to help implement it, raising awareness of the fact that “there are many good pieces of legislation, constitutions, and African Union frameworks in Africa, but they are frequently not implemented.”⁵⁶

Advocacy and political engagement is more explicit amongst the African foundations we looked at. For example, the Tony Elumelu Foundation is currently in partnership with Tony Blair’s Africa Governance Initiative to “support transformational governments and advance Africa’s economic development.”⁵⁷ The Mo Ibrahim Foundation is particularly well-known for its endeavours to encourage and reward good political leadership and governance.

4. Wellbeing and transformative development: foundations and socio-political change

As the preceding section demonstrates, when we examine foundations the similarities to other civil society actors involved in development work stand out, notably in terms of advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity building activities. Philanthropic organisations are also clearly working very closely with a range of actors.

Nevertheless, we need to probe deeper if we are to understand foundations as agents of socio-political change, not merely as grant-making bodies, to consider how collectively civil society actors involved in international development – including philanthropy-based actors – can advance development. To do this we step back slightly to review what we have described thus far through a more theoretical lens.

Moyo argues that so far both foreign and local institutional forms of philanthropy have struggled to translate their activities into social progress or the reduction of inequality, dictatorships and poverty across Africa. He advocates that “[a]ll philanthropic efforts should be geared towards *transformative development*”⁵⁸ taking a holistic perspective of a person’s or society’s wellbeing within the political economy. His concern is that institutional philanthropy often focuses on short-term problems and material aspects of wellbeing, similar to apolitical, merely instrumental types of charity-philanthropy.

Thinking through our comprehension of philanthropy is a necessary first step. Originating from the Greek language, philanthropy can be translated generally as the ‘love of humankind,’ while in practice it implies an effort to increase human wellbeing in a particular

⁵⁶ Interview with David Cutler, 21 June 2012

⁵⁷ Blair Elumelu Fellowship Programme: www.tonyelumelufoundation.org/page/blair-elumelu-fellowship-programme-befp (accessed 27 July 2012)

⁵⁸ Moyo, B. (2008b) ‘Optimising the Institutional Philanthropy in Africa by 2020’, Salzburg Global Seminar: Discussion Paper, available at www.bellagioinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/OIP-in-Africa.pdf (accessed 5 July 2012)

way, essentially by engaging in “private funding in the public interest.”⁵⁹ Private philanthropy thus plays a welfare-enhancing role both within the realm of the state, and in those areas which seem unattended by the state but which are in the interest of society.

Nickel and Eikenberry argue that “the factor common to governance, social policy and [private] philanthropy is the politics of human wellbeing.”⁶⁰ However, the basis for governmental and philanthropic ‘social policy’ approaches – understood as implementing the redistribution of wealth and other resources in order to enhance human wellbeing – is fundamentally different. In the ideal case, democratically elected governments redistribute taxes from their constituencies in order to take action according to collective understandings of human wellbeing. Philanthropic social policy, by contrast, is built on the actions of an individual or organisation, having accumulated enough surplus wealth to extend their own understanding of wellbeing to others.⁶¹ The latter might result in a single-handed production of social outcomes with a particular political stake, raising the question of who gets to interpret people’s individual needs and collective wellbeing.⁶²

Given that philanthropy shares an interest in human wellbeing with other social actors, what does this mean when thinking about philanthropy and international development? Wellbeing has re-emerged as a popular lens through which to understand development. Gough and McGregor outline three dimensions of human wellbeing, namely a material, a relational and a subjective realm.⁶³ *Material* wellbeing denotes the objective resources a person is able to command, including the fulfilment of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, health and education. *Relational* wellbeing is the extent to which a person can engage, communicate and exchange with others in order to achieve particular needs and goals. *Subjective* wellbeing deals with a person’s self-perception in the context of and in comparison to other people’s wellbeing.

In recent work, White et al. take forward the work of Gough and McGregor and propose seven domains of wellbeing: enabling environment, participation and agency, social connections, close relationships, physical and mental health, competence and self-worth, and values and meaning.⁶⁴ They loosely categorise these seven domains into objective and subjective wellbeing. Objective wellbeing focuses on the material and economic conditions of peoples’ lives, while subjective wellbeing is more concerned with quality of life and psychological aspects of peoples’ lives. Emerging from this later work by White et al. is an important aspect that we feel was lacking from Gough and McGregor’s three-dimensional wellbeing model, namely the *collective* prerequisites for wellbeing and the environmental

⁵⁹ Edwards, M. (2011) ‘The Role and Limitations of Philanthropy’, The Bellagio Initiative: Commissioned Paper, available at www.bellagioinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Bellagio-Edwards_CP_online.pdf (accessed 23 April 2012)

⁶⁰ Nickel, P.M. and A.M. Eikenberry (2010) ‘Philanthropy in the Era of Global Governance’, in Taylor, R. (ed.) *Third Sector Research*. Springerlink, available at www.springerlink.com/content/r0g36p5q10h83832/ (accessed 9 July 2012)

⁶¹ Nickel and Eikenberry 2010: 271

⁶² For an early normative discussion on power imbalances and decision-making practices, refer to Fraser, N. (1989) *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press

⁶³ Gough, I. and J.A. McGregor (eds.) (2007) *Wellbeing in Developing Countries: From Theory to Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

⁶⁴ White, S. C., S. O. Gaines Jr., S. Jha, and N. Marshall (2012) ‘Wellbeing Pathways Report: India Round 1’, June 2012. Available at www.wellbeingpathways.org/resources (accessed 4 September 2012)

factors which profoundly affect peoples' abilities to access their rights, which we can term *structural* wellbeing. Structural wellbeing captures the socio-political conditions, or enabling environment, which must be fulfilled in order to give individuals and communities a voice to determine their own needs and targets to achieve wellbeing.

These understandings of wellbeing can be loosely grouped into two categories:

- (i) *Material* needs whose fulfilment tends to be more related to apolitical issue-areas or direct interventions, for example the provision of mosquito-nets, vaccines or school equipment. This loosely corresponds with White et al.'s category of *objective* wellbeing.
- (ii) *Individual, relational* and *structural* prerequisites for collective human wellbeing, which will touch upon – either implicitly or explicitly – aspects of mobilisation and participation in decision-making, inclusion and the enabling environment for citizens to exercise their rights. These forms of wellbeing are closely associated with the sort of *transformative development* that Moyo is advocating, or the category of *subjective* wellbeing outlined by White et al.

How a private foundation approaches the different dimensions of wellbeing will determine its role as an agent of socio-political change. This is valid for all development actors, be they official donors, multilateral agencies, civil society actors, or networks and associations. If a foundation – or NGO for that matter – focuses on human wellbeing in a purely *material* sense, and addresses shortcomings with a charity-philanthropy approach or technical innovations alone, there is little likelihood of socio-political change and indeed there is a risk of depoliticising issues that governments were once responsible for addressing.⁶⁵ A concentration on material wellbeing ignores the systemic problem of economic, social and political structures that increase the inequality between those living in poverty and those able to accumulate wealth and philanthropic governing capacity.

However, if *relational* and *structural* dimensions of human wellbeing are taken into account and dealt with in an inclusive way, overt socio-political transformation is more likely to be set in motion. In this respect, private philanthropic foundations may be able to positively shape the structural-political and policy-making landscape either explicitly or implicitly.

As our examples show, not only African HNWI, but also grassroots associations are increasingly forming private foundations and grant-making bodies as an alternative to or in collaboration with existing – both public and private – development agencies. It is striking that many of the African foundations claim that they explicitly seek to tackle political issues. Indeed, there are various cases in which African philanthropy overtly advocates political inclusion in policy and decision-making processes, rather than absence from the political sphere. The AWDF is a prime example of this with its support for integrating women into national debates; moreover, Trust Africa works, among others, to strengthen civil society in politically sensitive environments; and both the Tony Elumelu Foundation and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation explicitly aim to improve political governance.

As to the external foundations active in Africa, there are numerous private foundations which primarily address the material, objective forms of wellbeing or narrow individual, subjective

⁶⁵ Fraser 1989

wellbeing, focusing on specific issues amongst particular groups in defined geographic areas, with no ambitions or orientation towards the more relational and structural aspects of wellbeing. However, others do consider their wider role and impact. Our examples all see themselves as a step away from explicit political engagement, working more to *catalyse* change through their activities and support for local civil society organisations. For example, the philosophy of the Oak Foundation is to “refrain from telling people what to do.”⁶⁶ Not wanting to be at the forefront is a decision made by Oak’s Trustees and grant-makers, who, rather, aim to work through the grantees’ relevant expertise and experience. By funding the work of NGOs and other partners, the Oak Foundation seeks to be a *catalyst* for change, not a *dictator* of it. The approach is consultative and collaborative, instead of prescriptive, and inclusionary instead of hierarchical.

However, these primarily positive observations emerging from the work of African philanthropy networks and our discussions with foundations working in Africa require more critical reflection. Even the most horizontal type of philanthropic organisation or network, which aims to give voice to its beneficiaries and grantees and not dictate agendas is driven by organisational imperatives and power dynamics. Other development actors – public institutions, official aid agencies and local and international NGOs – have been subjected to extremely critical analyses of the impact of their work, including the intended and unintended consequences of their actions and how they understand and engage with governance institutions in Africa at local, national and international levels. Such analysis is limited to date for philanthropic foundations.

In particular, we need to consider how and whether philanthropic foundations utilise their business profiles, financial muscle or independence from public institutions and external donors in order to address the major structural problems in many African countries. How do they interact with policy-makers and the political elite? Indeed, how do emerging philanthropists ‘fit’ amongst the political elite in their respective countries, where lines may be blurred between the economic and the political spheres? Are the social development motivations as clear-cut as they seem? Because of their profiles, are they able to leverage change and challenge systems and structures that other development actors cannot? This might be particularly important regarding what philanthropic foundations might do to open up space for civil society, which in many countries is being squeezed.⁶⁷ Our examples are focused on fairly uncontroversial areas of policy and development, e.g. women’s voice, the needs of vulnerable groups, and niche social policy areas. What about more controversial areas, such as space for political opposition, freedom of expression or gay rights? It is telling that the Mo Ibrahim Foundation – which focuses on a carrot-style approach to fostering better leadership and peer-pressure through its governance index – has often struggled to find a worthy contender for its annual Leadership Prize.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Interview with Blain Teketel, 31 May 2012

⁶⁷ Tiwana, M. and N. Belay (2010) ‘Civil Society: The Clampdown is Real. Global Trends 2009-10’, CIVICUS, December 2010 available at www.civicus.org/content/CIVICUS-Global_trends_in_Civil_Society_Space_2009-2010.pdf (accessed 1 August 2012)

⁶⁸ Laing, A. (2011), ‘£3.2 million African Good Governance prize awarded for first time in three years’, The Telegraph, 10 October 2011. Available at www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/capeverde/8817971/3.2-million-African-Good-Governance-prize-awarded-for-first-time-in-three-years.html

5. Conclusion

Across the vast continent of Africa a huge number of private foundations with very different origins and perspectives are active, from the highly politically engaged to the purely issues-focused, and this paper only offers a snapshot of this bigger picture. The profile of philanthropy in Africa is changing, particularly with the growth of local philanthropic foundations and support networks. Non-African foundations and other civil society actors need to consider how they will engage with the changing landscape of development of Africa.

This paper has demonstrated that there are African and non-African philanthropic organisations which are seeking to foster transformative development in Africa, going beyond the purely material domain to addressing more subjective, relational and structural aspects of wellbeing. Rather than being apolitical, vertical implementers, these foundations do actively attempt to shape and influence the political and policy-making sphere in different ways. In the examples given the tendency seems to be that African philanthropists are more explicit about their political objectives, whereas non-African foundations are more likely to be implicit agents of socio-political change, providing support for local organisations and institutions to act. What is harder to assess, in the absence of larger, independent studies, is whether philanthropic foundations are able to leverage change because of their origins, approaches and relationships in ways that other civil society organisations cannot.

Our interest in examining the role of private foundations as agents of socio-political change resonates with the thinking emerging from other bodies. Through its work on *A Funder Conundrum*, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund encourages private foundations to consider where they locate themselves in relation to bringing about systemic social change: whether they see themselves as just grant-givers; or whether they engage closely with the work of their grantees in 'Funder Plus' type relationships, which might involve working closely with grantees to support their needs or being very active 'agents of change' in not only supporting grantees, but also convening different stakeholders, building expertise, and seeking to influence public opinion, policy and behaviour.⁶⁹ The final report of the Bellagio Initiative, an 18-month collaborative reflection on the future of international development, poses a challenge to philanthropic foundations and development actors:

The essence of this challenge for change is for development and philanthropic organisations to accept the political nature of the development policy process and to get involved in it. It calls for a move away from a technocratic development agenda to one which recognises that the challenges of protecting and promoting human wellbeing on a global scale will inevitably entail difficult political debates and challenging political trade-offs, rooted in the realities of current economic, social and environmental change.⁷⁰

Similarities in terms of the choices facing philanthropic foundations and other civil society organisations involved in international development are evident in these reflections. Indeed, the tensions between purely apolitical, instrumental objectives and those seeking to facilitate structural, socio-political transformation are as prevalent for private foundations as they are

⁶⁹ Association of Charitable Foundations (2012) 'A Funder Conundrum: Choices that Funders Face in Bringing About Positive Social Change', DP Evaluation and The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, September 2012. Available at www.theworkcontinues.org/page.asp?id=1791 (accessed 24 September 2012).

⁷⁰ Bellagio Initiative 2012: 11

for NGOs. Such tensions have characterised development approaches in Africa for decades, and are by no means resolved.⁷¹ The question is whether the shifting landscape of development, which is likely to include a larger role for private philanthropic funding, will provide for a better environment in which real structural change can happen.

In our previous briefing paper, we outlined general assumptions within the traditional development community about new private foundations being somewhat concentrated on apolitical issue-areas, with a faith in technological and business-like innovations meant to solve complex social problems.⁷² We also noted a widespread concern that collaboration between private funders and NGOs or civil society was considered rather tricky due to dissenting philosophies, approaches and theories of change. However, the analysis offered here indicates that there is also much that private foundations share with civil society organisations when they approach development through a broader wellbeing lens. The Bellagio Initiative encourages groups to not see different value systems as a challenge, but rather to embrace them as “a reality with which international development agencies must operate”; it places great emphasis on attempting to overcome the ‘gulf’ between different development actors.⁷³

No one foundation, philanthropist or civil society organisation can tackle the challenge of holistic development alone. Partnerships and collaborative networks between different development actors, civil society, foundations and individual philanthropists – each offering specialised expertise, human, financial and social resources – are essential for achieving larger-scale structural change and socio-political development. With this in mind, the following lessons can be drawn from this paper:

- We encourage philanthropic foundations and organisations to interrogate their approach to development, and particularly whether they look beyond the material to more structural aspects of human wellbeing. Furthermore, foundations need to consider how they relate to political elites and power-bearers in the contexts in which they work, explicitly and implicitly. Those they partner with and support need to likewise interrogate the approaches of foundations and not be afraid to critique private grant-givers in the same way that they critique other donors. This is particularly important for accountability to ultimate beneficiaries.
- It is important that foundations, international NGOs and local organisations question their assumptions about philanthropy in Africa and its role. The evidence presented here demonstrates that it is a very heterogeneous environment which is changing rapidly and the relationships between different development actors need to respond to this context. As an NGO, what does ‘private funder’ mean to you? As a private funder, what does ‘NGO’ mean to you?
- Questioning the wider impact of given projects and programmes is crucial, particularly how individual projects or funding schemes might contribute to wider systemic

⁷¹ Pearce 2010: 625, 631; see also Hickey, S. and S. Bracking (2005) ‘Exploring the Politics of Poverty Reduction: From Representation to a Politics of Justice?’ *World Development* 33(6): 851-865

⁷² Pratt et al 2012

⁷³ Bellagio Initiative 2012: 6

change. Like all actors in development, philanthropic foundations – whether of African origin or not – need to continually question their motives, accountability and legitimacy, but they should also not shy away from advocacy, lobbying and using their relative financial and political power to challenge governance and policy positions. Indeed, if their objectives are to bring about transformative development then this should be a more central focus of attention.

- The legitimate role of international NGOs in Africa is continually under debate, especially in relation to local civil society organisations and their sustainability. In a similar vein, we need to reflect on the legitimate role of external philanthropists in Africa, particularly in relation to emergent African philanthropic organisations.
- Finally, we urge philanthropic foundations to make more information available about their approaches and activities, and to support independent investigation into their role. We have to question why so little public empirical data and analysis are available. While we recognise that this is a new and growing field, philanthropy is by no means new to Africa. By encouraging more critical enquiry into the role of philanthropy in development, understanding and therefore impact could be greatly enhanced.

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Blain Teketel, Programme Officer, Oak Foundation Child Abuse Programme, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Skype interview, 9am, 31 May 2012.

Olivia Dix, Head of Palliative Care Initiative, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. Phone interview, 3pm, 7 June 2012, 3pm.

David Cutler, Director of Baring Foundation. Interview at London offices, 10am, 21 June 2012, 10am.