



# SHIFTING THE POWER

How can working in  
partnership  
help?

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## **PARTNERSHIP BROKERS ASSOCIATION**

A non-profit, social business registered in the UK exploring and promoting new approaches to sustainable development partnerships so that they can become truly transformational in their impact [www.partnershipbrokers.org](http://www.partnershipbrokers.org)



# Community Philanthropy: The Changing Landscape

*Community philanthropy no longer languishes in shadows. As the external environment for civil society and donor funding undergoes dramatic changes, community philanthropy and its emphasis on local resources and local accountability has assumed a new relevance as a central pillar of a framework for effective development shaped by new principles.<sup>1</sup>*

The Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) is at the forefront of promoting new approaches to community philanthropy in the light of significant changes in the international development landscape. Such changes include:

- **Serious questions about the way international aid is being allocated and managed** – having to do more with less. The increasing trend for government aid to be directly linked to trade and a deepening concern about the proportion spent on INGO's rather than by local entities themselves
- **The growing global movement towards devolution**, self-governance, locally-evolved solutions where decision-making is located as close to those affected by those decisions as possible
- **Local voices becoming more confident and more insistent** as disenchantment with leaders and global institutions grows and the desire for rights-based approaches, local resilience and self-reliance drive local leadership and a desire for a more inclusive and collaborative mind set

The working hypothesis underpinning this paper is that partnering has an important, perhaps central, part to play in this changing landscape because it is an approach that, at its best, builds on a number of core principles that are wholly in line with the aspirations and values at the heart of locally owned and community-driven development.

*The theme of community philanthropy is more than just a question of international development – it is about universality. Local agencies are, understandably, critical of global level initiatives in international development and we will not get traction if the perception persists that it is all top-down. Communities in both developing and developed countries need a framework that embeds trust, relies on capacity and on local assets in ways that provide an institutional vehicle, organisation and process.<sup>2</sup>*

We have positioned our findings and observations within some wider frames of reference including the:

- Central role of partnering (SDG 17) in delivering the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals
- Global moves towards more intentional and purposeful partnering approaches that require organisations to challenge and change their assumptions and 'business as usual' approaches
- Emerging views of those operating in community-based organisations about what they want and need to be able to partner effectively in the rapidly changing development landscape in which they operate.

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<sup>1</sup> *Shifting the Power* (Alliance, December 2016) a paper by Jenny Hodgson (Director) and Barry Knight (Adviser), Global Fund for Community Foundations

<sup>2</sup> Nick Deychakiwsky, Mott Foundation

Systematic, principled and purposeful partnerships can help to:

- Bring together a far wider range of assets (non-cash as well as cash)
- Challenge mental models and mainstream frameworks
- Build new skills (including the vital skills needed to collaborate effectively across sectors – business, government and civil society – as well as across cultural boundaries and complex contexts)
- Emerge a new way of working based on open, mutually supportive and respectful relationships

These are, in essence, what is embedded in the evolution of a common narrative for community philanthropy using the metaphor of a ‘three legged stool’ (see below).<sup>3</sup>

*Although there is still work to be done to strengthen a common narrative that captures both the essence and diversity of the field, and which positions it as a value-driven rather than a mechanistic proposition, there is a new enthusiasm... to unite in pursuit of a shared purpose. The basis of the common narrative is the ‘three-legged stool’ consisting of a framework of assets, capacities and trust.<sup>4</sup>*



In our work with the GFCF and in support of the work of the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GCAP) it is increasingly clear that the role of collaboration / partnering / alliance-building is becoming an important feature in responding to the rapidly changing rules of the community philanthropy game.

*The Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy is a group of diverse funders that are trying to get to grips with the new challenges by deepening our understanding of community philanthropy as a field and to ask questions about how external donors can develop programmes and apply resources in ways that foster – rather than undermine – more bottom-up approaches.<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> The importance of these three factors emerged from an analysis of data collected through the Global Fund for Community Foundation’s grant making work

<sup>4</sup> *Shifting the Power* (Alliance, December 2016) (as above)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid



The Summit is an ideal opportunity to explore the interface between community philanthropy and partnering. As one of the GACP members says:

*We should be bold about bringing attention and influence to community philanthropy and making it straightforward to grasp. We should be able to show how the field is moving – how it is a powerful way of describing what local ownership really means, how it has the potential to positively promote power sharing, re-frame governance and empower communities. Lots of building blocks for community philanthropy exist and the Summit should make it possible for people to share examples of the power of local ownership.<sup>6</sup>*

What the author<sup>7</sup> aims to do in this brief paper is to explore how partnering experience can usefully be adopted by, and adapted to, the field of community philanthropy helping to **drive transformational change** and to **sustain that change** long after the power has shifted.

## Partnering in Practice

*Rather than a linear silver bullet approach, a better way forward involves nurturing the ecosystem in which community philanthropy organisations operate. Many such organisations are small and fragile and the appropriate way of working with them is to support their development according to the rules and priorities that they set themselves, rather than norms and standards set from outside.<sup>8</sup>*

Partnering is a mechanism that enables those involved to work together in new ways that build on the diversity of interests, skills and types of contribution each is able to bring. It is a way of re-structuring where possible, and co-creating where necessary, the ecosystem that is needed to support inclusive and sustainable development.

The term ‘partnership’ is widely – and often inaccurately used – to the point of relative meaninglessness. Partnership is not a new Northern-based imperative devised by international agencies (though some of those agencies behave as if it is and many of those on the receiving end resent it for that reason), rather it is a way of giving credibility to the human (and humanitarian) principles of purposeful collaboration.

What is being proposed here is that community foundations and local communities – who may well have ‘partnered’ effectively for a long time – look at how they can build on their own experiences of collaborating and work together with external agencies to emerge the kind of partnering approaches that meet the genuine needs and interests of all those involved.

Every partnership is unique. Every partnership has to be built from scratch by the partners. Those involved need to ‘grow’ the partnership that is most appropriate for their circumstances and within the realities of what is possible.

It is becoming increasingly clear that partnerships are highly context-specific and will vary considerably in how they work and what they are able to achieve. For some, working with new partners is a way to address conflict and / or hidden agendas. For others, partnering provides an alternative mechanism to working within a mainstream system that is corrupt or that has failed to reach those who need help most.

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<sup>6</sup> David Jacobstein, USAID

<sup>7</sup> The author, Ros Tennyson, is widely regarded as a pioneer in promoting understanding of what it takes to partner and building capacity to partner effectively based on 25+ years experience in this field.

<sup>8</sup> *Shifting the Power* (Alliance, December 2016) (as above)

However partnerships are initiated or constructed, it is important to think of a partnership as an on-going process in which the partnership itself adapts as necessary and matures over time. Partnering at its most potent is far more than just ‘quick fix’ deal making.

Whilst no partnership ever works in the orderly, predictable and sequential way that the diagram below suggests, this partnering cycle does provide a useful framework to help partners (and those brokering or managing the partnership) understand the different phases a partnership is likely to go through over its lifetime: scoping & building, managing & maintaining, reviewing & revising and sustaining outcomes.

## The Partnering Cycle



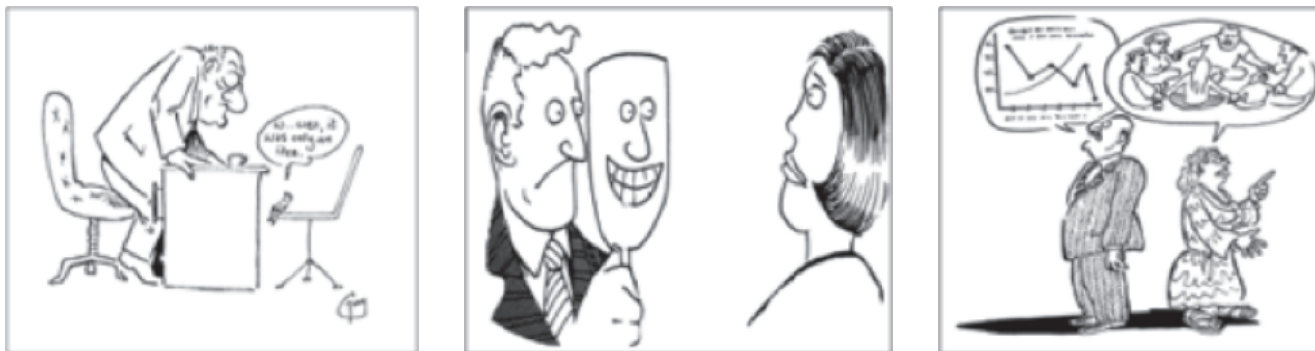
Diagram adapted from: Tennyson, R. *The Partnering Toolkit* (2002) available in a number of languages for free download from [www.thepartneringinitiative.org](http://www.thepartneringinitiative.org)

Evidence suggests that partners often have to work quite hard to understand each other – their different values, priorities, interests and ways of working. They may also require some co-developed ‘ground rules’ or agreed ‘operational principles’ to ensure a level of equity, transparency and mutuality. New, or different combinations of existing skills may be needed to navigate difficult conversations, negotiate for everyone’s benefit, ensure that ways of working are truly inclusive and to enable partners to carry a level of risk and uncertainty as their partnership emerges over time.

Partnerships are also likely to need some skilled process management (‘partnership brokering’) to ensure their efficiency and that all those involved fulfil agreed roles and abide by decisions taken.

The issue of power imbalance is often cited as the main reason for the failure to build trusting, inclusive and long-term relationships. But a fear of hidden agendas or divergent values can be equally responsible for partnerships failing to reach their full potential or breaking down altogether.

Practitioners report that partnering can all too often feel like this:



To add to the complicated picture, there are many different and distinct forms of partner relationship – some ‘horizontal’ and some ‘vertical’.



A horizontal partnership is either an **inter**-sector partnership (comprising players from different types of entity or constituency based in one location working together) or an **intra**-sector partnership like GACP (comprising players from different organisations from the same sector).

A vertical partnership, for example donors and their grant recipient organisations whether at local or international levels, has the added complication of one-way financial accountability and reporting requirements that make it quite challenging to get beneath the power imbalance and to reap the deeper benefits of flexibility, co-creation and shared risk.

Shifting the power means addressing these endemic and sensitive power issues.



## Critical Success Factors in Effective Partnering<sup>9</sup>



### Efficiency / Effectiveness:

- Clear, well articulated **shared vision**
- Partnership is **well managed** with role descriptions, clear accountabilities and regular reviews for any staff / consultants
- Partnership has strong / appropriate **communications** in place
- There is **senior management buy-in** to collaboration as a paradigm
- Systems in place to support a collaborative approach

### Approach:

- All those involved **have understood and acknowledged** what each person / organisation brings to the partnership
- Individual **expertise and preferred ways of working** are understood and incorporated consciously and constructively
- Those involved are **flexible** (whenever and wherever they can be) and **clear about their constraints / 'non-negotiables'** (if there are any)
- Collaboration **processes are understood and adhered to** by all those involved
- Programmes of work are **jointly designed and implemented** or are undertaken on behalf of the wider group by agreement / mandate
- Partners have a **genuine voice** at the table and their **contribution is respected**

### Attitude & Competencies:

- Willingness to devote enough time to **relationship building, development and maintenance**
- Individuals involved have the necessary collaboration mind set
- Individuals involved have the necessary knowledge and skill set
- There is tangible evidence of each individual's / organisation's **engagement** – including clear and informed handovers to newcomers

### Results / Productivity:

- The partnership is highly action / results oriented
- Individual organisational goals are achieved whilst also achieving shared goals
- The partnership is **maximising value** to each organisation / individual involved
- Through joint advocacy, partnership is achieving wider impact & influence

## Donors as Partners

*We need to the shift emphasis from the Global North to the Global South. This means shifting from endowment model interventions to harnessing local wealth and assets. Like other foundations, our role has evolved over the past 20 years to a focus now on leveraging local wealth and assets. We believe, this movement can be driven from the global South with deeper participation of leaders from there.<sup>10</sup>*

Donors have a vitally important part to play in supporting genuine partnerships / collaborative approaches in the field of community philanthropy and it is impressive that the six donor organisations that have come together to form the GACP<sup>11</sup> have committed to an 'alliance' model

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<sup>9</sup> Copyright: Partnership Brokers Association

<sup>10</sup> Chris Cardona, Ford Foundation

<sup>11</sup> See page 15 for the full list

for their work together to challenge, change and grow the way community philanthropy is perceived and operates.

*GACP is a good story for the Summit. Before GACP, there was a more conventional funders' conversation about community philanthropy. We came together with GFCF leading the initiative and GACP members being the cheerleaders for change by bringing their different experiences to the table. The GACP Alliance is less about funders and funding and more about the field. It is also an ego checking exercise.<sup>12</sup>*

It is increasingly clear that there are a number of potential ways in which donors can engage more deeply in promoting effective partnerships – over and above providing funding – so that collaboration helps them as well as their grant recipients to achieve their important and ambitious sustainable development goals.

*GACP aims to develop the research and understanding necessary to support local mobilisation of resources for locally owned development. 'Local solutions' is a common theme in international development conversations these days, but there are few organisations actually looking to advance this practice instead of only talking about it. It's great to be a part of something that is actually driving for solutions.<sup>13</sup>*

The potential roles for donors in the partnership paradigm could include the following:<sup>14</sup>

- **Promoting** partnering as a delivery mechanism
- **Investing** in building partnering capacity and processes
- **Brokering** new partnerships
- **Engaging** as genuine partners
- **Modelling** high standards in partnering practice
- **Evaluating** added value of partnering
- **Building** constituencies / networks for partnership action
- **Influencing** national and international policies
- **Sharing** learning about partnering challenges
- **Providing** perspective (the long view)

*Mott has been involved in community foundation development for 30 years. We still see it as an evolutionary, not a revolutionary development. We grapple with why so many other donors and development actors stay away from community philanthropy. We do not fight impact measures or metrics but prefer to show why community philanthropy can enhance impact and why it is so important to take longer-term time frames.<sup>15</sup>*

**The time is right for donors to help change the rules of the game.**



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<sup>12</sup> Hope Lyons, Rockefeller Brothers

<sup>13</sup> Brian Haupt, Aga Khan Foundation

<sup>14</sup> This list was compiled for a meeting of the members of the GACP in Haiti in December 2015

<sup>15</sup> Nick Deychakiwsky, Mott Foundation

## Aligning Interests and Commitment to Change

*This recent growth (in the field of community philanthropy) has been organic and hence somewhat messy and unorganised, characterised by the nuances of local context and emerging community philanthropy practice and values. It has also marked a healthy loosening of tight definitional ties to the U.S. community foundation model – signifying a shift from the close relationship of siblings to that of a larger extended family. <sup>16</sup>*

To have impact requires innovation, influence and scale that is almost certainly better achieved when those involved join forces and commit to an agreed change process. But ensuring alignment, which essentially builds from complementarity of interests and capacities, is more layered and comprehensive than just reaching agreement – it takes time. It also tends to have more ‘sticking power’ if the commitment to working together is articulated and written down in some form of document.

Two years after its formation, the GACP partners adopted a ‘Statement of Intent’ (see extract below which is taken from a larger document compiled in April 2016).

### **PRINCIPLES AND AGREED APPROACHES FOR OUR COLLABORATION**

Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy

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

- **Collaboration** among and between organisations, communities, and funders;
- **Engagement** with the community philanthropy field, its institutions and networks, through the inclusion of local practitioner voices and the promotion of context-appropriate approaches;
- **Working** with others from across the nonprofit, philanthropic, academic, and private sectors in a community of practice
- **Sharing** learning among members, and sharing learning across sectors;
- **Exploring** in a “spirit of enquiry” that will shape the range and scope of the work through our appreciation of diverse perspectives, experiences and models of community philanthropy.

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

- **Leading from behind**, with a view to enhancing locally driven messages about the role of community philanthropy;
- **Cascading** GACP experiences and thought leadership with regard to community philanthropy as widely as possible among key players / stakeholders;
- **Being open** to change and to being challenged as the community philanthropy field itself develops

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<sup>16</sup> *Shifting the Power* (Alliance, December 2016) (as above)



Whilst this is relatively new and still needs to be implemented and assessed against metrics that are yet to be determined, it does indicate a strong commitment to working collaboratively. It is a useful model for others seeking to work collaboratively as partners or in consortia or alliances within the community philanthropy field.

The suggestion is not that these specific principles be widely adopted, more that every new collaborative initiative should co-create the principles that will articulate the aims and underpin the partnering approach of those particular partners in that particular context.

*Is change occurring as an outcome of our Alliance? Has it grown because of our intervention? How do we as a group create more energy around community philanthropy? Has the Alliance benefitted the wider donor community yet? Is the Alliance able to convince others that community philanthropy is a way of life and not just a specialism? How can we help to ensure that community philanthropy becomes the 'how' and not just the 'what'?*<sup>17</sup>

## Shifting the Power – How Can Partnering Help?

*We need to explain what is meant a power shift – not just normatively and intellectually but also how it looks and feels like and what it will deliver for community philanthropy at the grassroots level. Although as external agencies we may choose to take a strong role in helping shift power dynamics, this has to be done with sensitivity to local power relationships. Our task as external donors is not to disrupt or advocate change, which may be against local power structures – especially where they represent local assets and sources of wealth for community philanthropy.*<sup>18</sup>

It is clear that shifting the power in the community philanthropy field can apply at different levels – perhaps the most obvious being large donor institutions making a conscious and committed choice to working less like reactive parents and more like responsive partners. But, of course, this can also apply locally where there is a risk that community foundations operating as grant-makers can themselves mirror their international counter-parts.

*Our view is that each experience by any local community depends on how the community foundation relies on / is connected to the local power structure. Community foundations tend to be more amorphous organisms and so more difficult to shift.*<sup>19</sup>

Power is, of course, not just a question of who has the money. Power can be felt in a number of ways (sometimes useful and not always divisive) through the exercise of new forms of facilitative leadership having positive influence on decision-makers or changing laws, frameworks and systems to be more inclusive and collaborative.

*A partnering mindset brings a genuine curiosity together with the ability and willingness to explore diverse perspectives and experiences. It establishes equity and respect where little may have existed before. It builds openness and enthusiasm for all voices (even those without perceived power) to be heard. It explores and validates both individual and mutual interests and seeds courage to make a difference on issues that are important to those involved.*<sup>20</sup>

### Power shifts when power is shared.

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<sup>17</sup> David Jacobstein, USAID

<sup>18</sup> Chris Cardona, Ford Foundation

<sup>19</sup> Marcy Kelley, Inter American Foundation

<sup>20</sup> Marcia Dwonczyk, PBA Associate

<b>EIGHT PILLARS TO SHIFT THE POWER</b>	<b>THE POTENTIAL PARTNERING CONTRIBUTION</b>
Developed by the Global Fund	Developed by PBA

### **1. PARTICIPATION AND MOBILISING PEOPLE**

People based development is central to shifting the power	Develop locally-based, inclusive, co-created partnerships that are mutually accountable
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### **2. ADDED VALUE**

Strengthening processes (how development programmes are delivered) and outcomes (what is delivered)	Collaborate across traditional boundaries and build new ways of working that celebrate and build on diversity
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### **3. NEW RESOURCE MODELS**

Resources need to be used in different ways, testing new models and assumptions	Partners are also ‘donors’ because they all contribute something – but non-cash contributions must be properly valued and attributed
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### **4. EVIDENCE AND DATA**

Build evidence for the work and using data to grow and drive it	Partner-gathered evidence is able to capture layers, complexities and what it takes to drive change
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### **5. GOVERNANCE**

Enhancing the work of other institutions by demonstrating new forms of governance and decision-making	Partnerships are at the forefront of evolving and testing new governance models worldwide
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### **6. EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS**

Our methods can bring better results and capture emergent practice	Effective partnering requires new brokering / intermediating skills and a focus on <i>how</i> not just <i>what</i>
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### **7. NARRATIVE & COMMUNICATIONS**

Words and meanings matter and we need new and better descriptions	The best partnership approaches avoid jargon and evolve a language that includes rather than alienates
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### **8. ARCHITECTURE & HYBRIDITY**

Structure matters – we need to encourage new forms whilst encouraging existing institutions to go local	Partnerships provide an alternative to centrally controlled structures that limit genuine co-ownership and inhibit collective action
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## The potential of partnering to help shift the power

There is a huge opportunity for partnering to help drive community philanthropy in ways that build greater local ownership, resilience, influence and reach. The social innovation movement increasingly uses partnership models to embed and / or scale initiatives – so there is a useful precedent.

At its best, partnership can be a great leveller by bringing together new players each with a different type of contribution to make and part to play. The past twenty years of promoting partnership approaches to development have provided a wealth of knowledge and experience – the wheel does not have to be re-invented.



These are exciting times to be doing things differently – but it takes determination, persistence and courage!

*The Summit is a great time to take stock, make connections, and build on some productive meetings of community philanthropy actors. We have enough solid evidence to take community philanthropy to actors who do not know much about it, do not support it or are, as yet, unconvinced about why community philanthropy is such an effective vehicle for local change. The Summit will help establish new relationships and create an opportunity for sharing knowledge and information with both the supporters/champions of community philanthropy and those who are new to this movement.*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Nick Deychakiwsky, Mott Foundation







The Partnership Brokers Association (PBA) has been working since September 2015 to support and evaluate the collaboration of six US-based foundations working together as the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP). These are:

**Aga Khan Foundation • Ford Foundation • Inter-American Foundation  
Mott Foundation • Rockefeller Brothers • USAID**

It is our on-going work with this group and its parent body – the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) – that prompts this paper as a contribution to the Shifting the Power: Global Summit on Community Philanthropy in Johannesburg in December 2016.

It is important to warmly acknowledge the inputs that have informed this piece of work (from GACP members, GFCF staff and others). It is also important to state that all interpretations and conclusions are, ultimately, our own and do not represent the formal views of any the organisation we represent or those we have consulted or cited.

We hope that this paper stimulates debate and plays its part in challenging current practices so that future community philanthropy partnerships will be genuinely co-created and co-owned by those who benefit from them and those who resource them.

Partnering, at its best, is one of the most potent ways we know of shifting the power.

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**Global Summit  
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