

Philanthropy in transitions

Transitions: an opportunity like no other

Mark Freeman, Barbara Ibrahim
and Hilary Pennington

Following the January 2011 revolt in Tunisia against the regime of President Ben Ali, the country's transition leaders adopted an open-door approach to foreign aid. An avalanche of mostly uncoordinated aid followed. Donors – private and bilateral – arrived asking questions like, 'Who is your Mandela?' They produced an event overload, sponsoring dozens of conferences and hotel-room trainings on identical topics. Funding opportunities and partnerships were concentrated in the capital, Tunis, and in few other parts of the country. Grant applications were often English-only. Talent was drained from local organizations to produce repetitive mappings of civil society for external donors who rarely shared them.



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Photo on p1:

Libya, March 2011. A Qaddafi supporter holds a portrait of the Libyan leader as fireworks go up in the background on a soccer field in a suburb of Zawiyah where government minders took a group of foreign journalists to attend a staged celebration.

Within a short time, the exhilaration over international support became a source of confusion and then frustration for many Tunisians.

Regrettably, stories like this have repeated themselves all too often in the early years of transitions out of armed conflict or authoritarian rule – despite the fact that private philanthropy has engaged in transitions around the world for over 40 years. Only recently has the sector become serious about a collaborative process of self-reflection and sharing of the lessons learned.

In late 2014, most agree that the harvest after four years of Arab transitions has been disappointing. Conflict, sectarianism and economic struggle have



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replaced the collective euphoria of early months when opportunities for positive change seemed unlimited. Cross-border philanthropy cannot be blamed for all of these setbacks. Yet, as the world reflects on mistakes made on many sides, there are success stories that also deserve closer attention. In every transition private donors emerge who do things smartly – coordinate more, adapt better, venture further, stay longer. These philanthropists prove that there is nothing inevitable about failure in the rebuilding phase after civil conflict or repression.

Genesis of this special feature

In November 2013, the Institute for Integrated Transitions and the Gerhart Center at American University in Cairo published *Supporting Countries in Transition: A framework guide to foundation engagement*. In a series of roundtable discussions with international foundation leaders to prepare the guide, some consensus was reached on guidelines for effective grantmaking and other forms of social investing in transition environments. Inevitably, though, some issues remained unresolved. How should we define and measure 'success' when it comes to transitions? What is the optimal mix of international versus local donor support? How can the new philanthropic landscape be better leveraged to support emerging actors on the frontlines of change when their societies enter promising but risky periods of transition?

To explore these and other questions, *Alliance* magazine invited the authors to organize this special feature. As guest editors along with the Ford Foundation's Hilary Pennington, we were privileged to be able to commission articles, conduct interviews and engage with some

of the leading voices in the field. All of these contributors believe that private philanthropy has a crucial role to play in successful transitions. At the same time, they point to important ways in which philanthropy could do better.

Several articles focus on the Arab region and its troubled transitions. They review why the experiences from other regions have provided limited guidance and reflect on the fragility of civil society groups after 40 years of repression. Finding and investing in young talent is a recurring theme, as is the need for raised appetites for risk. And the report on a summer 2014 expert roundtable convened in New York confirms the importance of using the opportunity of transition to foster inclusive political dialogue and nation-building.

Other interviews take a close look at the journey the Open Society Foundations and the Berghof Foundation have taken in their work with particularly difficult transition settings. A couple of the pieces in this issue also point to ways that transitions are changing in the 21st century – subject to closer media scrutiny, more threatened by identity politics and the closing of public space, but also benefiting from a younger generation that utilizes technology and networks to build creative social change movements. Key lessons from the experiences of past and present transitions in places like South Africa, Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland and Colombia are examined, as are new ideas and practices that can help inspire donors to bring their best to these turning points of history.

The transition mindset

If you are in philanthropy because you want to change *systems* and not just practices – and because you want to confront the *causes* and not merely the symptoms of violence and exclusion – transitions are for you.

Transitions represent those rare moments when the rules of the game are open to reform; when citizens take up the challenge of building a new social contract rather than struggling against a broken one. They are periods in history when change happens swiftly and dramatically. They are, in short, invitations to action for systems-minded philanthropists.

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Yet, looking at the map of the world today, one sees many examples of transitions gone wrong. Places where hopes rose when society took to the streets to demand dignity, only to see revolutions hijacked by violent spoiler groups or political infighting. Places where carefully managed national dialogues culminated in renewed conflict rather than peaceful consensus. Places where, decades after a successful break with authoritarianism or mass violence, crude one-party rule has re-emerged. Places where peace dividends never reached those on the margins of the economy and broader society.

At the same time, the risks of failure present in transitions are merely the flipside of the disproportionate opportunities they create for economic, social and political progress. In transitions, risk and reward go hand in hand. As Avila Kilmurray of the Global Fund for Community Foundations writes, 'Independent philanthropy has been most important when it funded risk-taking initiatives.'

The ABCs of transitions

In a way, we all have clear intuitions and opinions about transitions. There is a vernacular we tend to use. For example, we generally associate 'success' with the transitions that took place in countries such as Spain, Northern Ireland, Chile, Brazil, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Ghana, South Korea and Indonesia. Likewise, we tend to associate 'failure' with countries such as Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Afghanistan. Even today's 'failing' transitions tend to elicit quick consensus: Egypt, Libya and Yemen, among others.

However, the authors' view is that labels like this do not hold up well under scrutiny. In every instance of transition, some system change *has occurred*, and some *has failed to occur*. A transition is anything but black and white.

The more typical examples of transition are the ones that do not lend themselves to easy characterization – El Salvador, Hungary, Serbia, Uganda, Liberia, the Philippines, Lebanon and Algeria – places where there is a very mixed balance sheet of progress and retreats.

Getting to why

The reasons that some countries do better than others in transitions are varied. One reason centres on starting conditions. All else being equal, a country that enters a transition with a solid middle class is likely to do better in transition than one without (eg Uruguay versus Kosovo); one that has functioning public

institutions is likely to do better than one without (eg South Korea versus Tajikistan); one that doesn't have deep sectarian divisions is likely to do better than one with them (eg Poland versus Nigeria).

Geography and neighbourhoods matter, too. Some countries have better luck than others in terms of the risk of violent spillover caused by problems in countries with which they share borders or other historical ties.

Moreover, there is broad consensus that today's transitions are embedded in a more volatile global context marked by rising economic disparities, democratic deficits and disruptive technologies which, combined, challenge the tasks of nation states.

Yet, these hard-to-control factors should not eclipse another basic fact. The decisions taken during a transition by political, civic and business leaders – as well as the process for reaching those decisions – are just as important determinants of the direction a transition can take. It is precisely in this arena that philanthropy can play a crucial role in influencing outcomes for the better.

Rules to live by

Transition-focused philanthropy will look different from one place to another: the last kind of philanthropy worth defending in these contexts is one that comes from a pre-set template. At the same time, there are some basic rules of engagement that – if followed with intelligent adaptation – can help increase the chance of positive impact in any country emerging from war or oppressive rule.

Be there early

There are reasons to be apprehensive about involvement in the unpredictable, and sometimes violent, transition taking place in a country one cares about. It can be tempting to say: 'Let's wait this out and see how the transition unfolds before we engage our funds.' The lesson from decades of philanthropic engagement in transitions, however, is that while it's important to think long term, it is the early interventions that have the greatest possibility of setting a positive course. Local decisions taken in the first months and years of a transition frequently establish the rules, structures and systems that facilitate or constrain political,

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economic and social advances for years to come. Thus, a small grant to civic leaders to promote their vision for an inclusive constitutional drafting process can leverage national impact that would not have been possible a few months later. As Ariadne's Jo Andrews puts it: 'Timing is everything: the right sum of money (often quite small) given at the right time to the right people is the most powerful social accelerant available on this planet.'

Be adaptive

Transitions are, by definition, periods of change. As the old saying goes: 'When the music changes, so does the dance.' Smart philanthropy in transitions adjusts by, for example, making grantmaking terms more open to informal and emergent citizen groups, seeking out new partners, measuring impact with more flexibility, and welcoming failure as an opportunity to learn and do better next time. A transition demands a spirit of trial and error – but one that is based on realism about the fluidity of change, not wishful thinking about guaranteed progress. 'No matter how exhilarating and inspiring an initial transition moment is, and how wide the apparent consensus for change, outside actors should assume that the transition is precarious,' warns Thomas Carothers of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Be politically attuned

The work of civil society matters before, during and after a transition. However, when change is the agenda, politics matter as much – or more. If the maximal goal is to support a transformation in power relations, then the minimal obligation must be to get closer to the edge of what is political – without touching the rail. Supporting arts and culture groups that subsequently gave voice to aspirations for political inclusion, for example, had a catalytic effect on Egypt's 25 January revolution.

Yet even if one sets a much lower overarching goal – for example, seeking merely to 'do no harm' – one's minimal obligation is to understand the politics of the transition. For *all* fields of grantmaking to succeed – from education reform to healthcare to youth unemployment – an awareness of the political situation and its shifting dynamics is essential. 'Foundations would considerably increase the impact of their actions if they acknowledge that every aspect of life is coloured by politics,' writes Arab Reform Initiative founder Bassma Kodmani, 'and that democratic forces need financial and organizational support if they are



Iraq. May 2008. A woman recovers at the Imam Hussein Hospital in the Sadr City district of Baghdad after suffering shrapnel wounds in a rocket attack fired from US forces into a residential building, during clashes between the Mahdi Army and American forces.

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to structure serious parties, build constituencies and articulate their agendas.'

Be brave

In a transition, two dynamics are taking place at once: the deconstruction of an old order and the construction of a new one – with all the tensions that such a process naturally implies. The easy path for a grant-maker is to fund conferences, trainings and the like, at which attendance is dominated by people who already agree with each other. That kind of effort has its place. Yet, those who are in it to help achieve systems change need to be willing to take on some of the heavier lifting, which involves building or supporting neutral spaces where ideological opponents can engage in dialogue. In Northern Ireland, supporting the self-organization of the survivors of violence and of recently released political ex-prisoners, both extremely sensitive issues, was risky but critical to the underpinning of the peace process (see p48). When such processes succeed, they can create the foundation stone for a transition to advance

Smart transition philanthropy doesn't look the same as a lot of other philanthropy. It is not based on grand strategies set in boardrooms; it is bottom-up and responsive to new facts and fluid changes on the ground.

and deepen; but when they are avoided as being 'too hard' or 'too sensitive', the precondition for realizing all other ambitions is more likely to be absent.

Be organized

While some donors prefer the safety of the sidelines, others rush into transitions with inadequate information and understanding about the changing local structures they want to engage with. Donor networks have a crucial role to play here. By convening novices and experts alike, and pooling knowledge and contacts, they can help convince boards or reluctant officers that an unfamiliar but alluring country situation is indeed compatible with a foundation's mission and comparative advantages. Networks can likewise help identify hidden opportunities and joint funding strategies for smaller donors that could enable them to have a bigger impact. The exercise takes time and can appear to slow down decisions and actions. But in reality it speeds up knowledge acquisition and enables everyone to make quicker – and better – choices.

Be multidisciplinary

If transitions are about forging new social contracts among social groups and between citizens and the state, the parameters of engagement need to be

broader, not smaller. Donors that typically support established fields through fixed programme categories will find that transitions intensify the connections among all parts of the political and social order and therefore require a far more multidisciplinary lens. Systems change requires a systems perspective: the specialized boxes of grantmaking, which may work perfectly well in more predictable political environments that are conducive to log frames and results matrices, can be an enemy of transformation in contexts of transition. 'We must be willing to look beyond the usual suspects for those who are connecting the

multiple, segregated parts of the system,' writes Ellen Friedman of the Compton Foundation.

Be different

Smart transition philanthropy doesn't look the same as a lot of other philanthropy. It is not based on grand strategies set in boardrooms; it is bottom-up and responsive to new facts and fluid changes on the ground. It asks how standard donor procedures need to be modified rather than relied upon as though they were custom-built to suit any situation. Adjusting to the difference of transition contexts also implies allowing for greater flexibility in relations with partners



and reaching beyond the usual suspects to support informal, untested actors and projects that appear promising but are anything except 'sure bets'.

The case is clear

This special issue of *Alliance* presents a diverse compilation of ideas and experiences about what it means to 'get philanthropy right' in transitions out of armed conflict and authoritarian rule. There are no standard answers – and it would be dishonest to suggest otherwise.

Yet, there is one abiding theme in all of this. It has to do with the huge philanthropic opportunity that

transitions can offer for changing the rules – precisely in the places where a disruption and reorientation of past dynamics and rules is most needed.

Naturally, the resolution of social, economic and political problems involves a long haul. That is why strengthening local partners and local philanthropy is an especially good bet. Yet a national transition will also offer possibilities for tackling other pivotal problems in a shorter period of time – while helping to put in place the essential building blocks for sustaining improvements well into the future. We hope this issue of *Alliance* contributes to that.

Even for philanthropists whose work stays closer to home, the experiences reflected in these pages should spark fresh thinking. Far from an isolated occurrence, transitions seem set to become the 'new normal' – and, as a sector, we need to be ready for that. As Berghof Foundation chair Johannes Zundel remarks, 'For philanthropists prepared to take bold risks, transitions offer the chance to be at your best.' @

Afghanistan, March 2005. A boy covers his eyes during a sandstorm in the southern city of Kandahar.



MOISES SAMAN, MAGNUM PHOTOGRAPHER



Moises Saman is the contributing photographer for this special feature. He is a Magnum

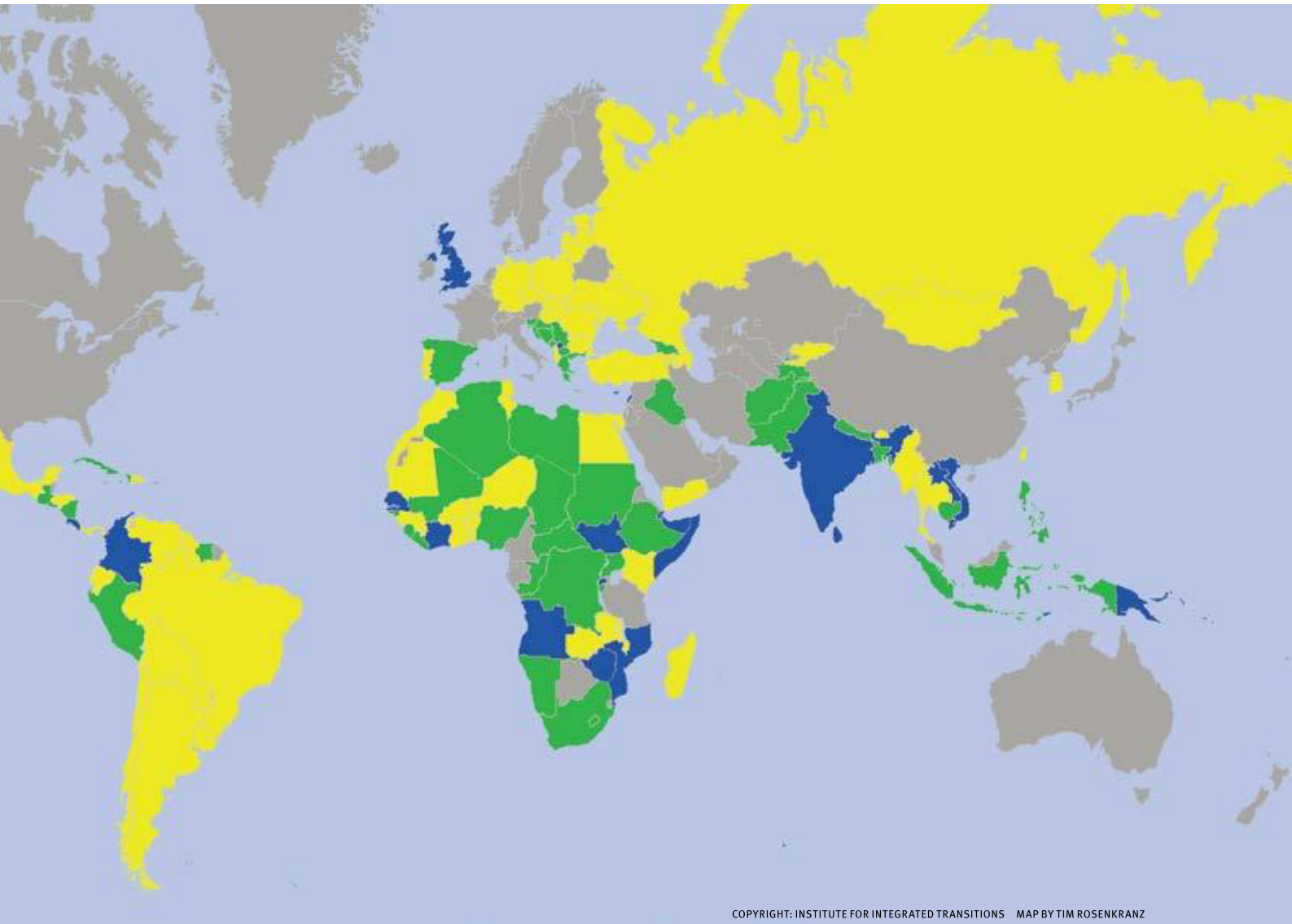
photographer based in Barcelona, Spain. He has been covering news and longer-form narrative stories for over 17 years, across the Middle East, Latin America, Europe and other parts of the world. Moises worked for seven years as a staff photographer at *Newsday* (2000–07), covering the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has been a regular contributor to the *New York Times*, *Human Rights Watch*, *Newsweek*, *TIME* magazine and other international publications and NGOs. In 2010, Moises moved to Cairo to start covering the Arab Spring.

Moises is currently working on a new project, titled DISCORDIA,

which tells the story of his personal journey through the Arab Spring. DISCORDIA covers four years of Moises' work in Egypt, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Lebanon and Iraq. Through a series of intimate photographs, it chronicles these countries' attempts to make the transition out of dictatorship, capturing the exhilaration, anger and despondency generated by the Arab Spring's triumphs and failures. Moises recently received the prestigious W Eugene Smith Memorial Fund Fellowship for his work on DISCORDIA, and he hopes to publish the project in book form next year. Over the years, Moises' work has also received awards from the World Press Photo, Pictures of the Year International and the Overseas Press Club, and his photographs have been shown in several exhibitions worldwide.

For more information

Magnum website at <http://tinyurl.com/MoisesSaman>



COPYRIGHT: INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATED TRANSITIONS MAP BY TIM ROSENKRANZ

Transitions map, 1945–present

Explanatory notes

■ No transition
out of internal
armed
conflict or
authoritarian
rule

■ One or more
periods of
transition out
of internal
armed conflict

■ One or more
periods of
transition
out of
authoritarian
rule

■ One or more
periods of
transition
out of both
internal armed
conflict and
authoritarian
rule

1 Covers
transitions out of
authoritarian rule
and internal armed
conflict that have
occurred since
September 1945.

2 Includes
countries that
previously
experienced
transitions or
are currently
in transition.

3 Does not
include transitions
following
inter-state
conflicts or
anti-colonial
conflicts aimed
at national
statehood.

4 Includes
transitions out of
internal armed
conflicts that
occurred in one
part of a country if
the conflicts had
a truly national
impact.

5 Excludes
countries currently
experiencing
internal armed
conflict or
authoritarian rule
if they have not
experienced any
transition since
September 1945.

6 Includes
countries that
have been through
transitions
irrespective
of whether the
transitions led
to sustained
democracy and
peace.

Chris Stone Interview

Experience in both Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East shows that democratic gains made when authoritarian regimes fall are often fragile. How can they be protected? Can institutions that work elsewhere be exported into transition states? And what can foundations do to nurture independent institutions? Barbara Ibrahim and Mark Freeman discussed these questions with Chris Stone, president of the Open Society Foundations.

Chris Stone is president of the Open Society Foundations. He is an international expert on criminal justice reform and on the leadership and governance of non-profits. Prior to joining OSF, he was the Guggenheim Professor of the Practice of Criminal Justice at Harvard University's John F Kennedy School of Government and director of the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations.

The early days of the Arab Spring seemed to suggest that philanthropy's biggest asset could be its agility and freedom to move quickly when opportunities arise and that foundations should be prepared to take more risks to support movements for democracy. However, the setbacks have made us wonder: were we too optimistic? Replicating things that appear to have worked in one place seems almost never to be successful, yet that's what seems to still happen in practice. The impulse to emulate rather than to innovate is huge. What's your experience of this?

When Mandela became president of South Africa in the 1990s, there was a big problem with rapidly rising organized crime. The government wanted to adopt a law that allowed the state to seize the proceeds as part of a prosecution. American advisers showed them the RICO statute in the US and they promptly adopted a version of it. When the first five or six cases were all overturned or thrown out on appeal, they realized that the RICO statute depended on a code of evidence that existed in the US but not in South Africa. When they complained to their advisers, they told them they should have adopted the code of evidence, too. What looks like an individual innovation is actually tied to countless elements of a society's culture and history, so it's very hard to make replication work.

There is a famous story, probably apocryphal, that McDonald's used to re-jig the formula for a Big Mac in each new country they moved into. But this approach wasn't working for them and they finally decided it was easier to change the tastes in each country than

to customize the product. Things don't work that way with government reform: you're not going to remake everything in the society. I'm not sure it works with cuisine, either, but I'll leave that for others.

So how do you respond if people from a transition country ask you, 'What do I need to know from other places?'



'Over the last two decades, it was often said that we could get change to the point where it would be irreversible. I think we've learned that there is no such point.'

people advising them. They were the only ones with the transnational experience.

In drawing up its non-profit law in the 1990s, the South African government under Mandela asked the British for help, and they learned about the Charity Commission. They asked the Americans for help and they learned about 501(c)(3)s and (c)(4)s and then they adopted their own version, with elements of each. So if you're trying to help new governments, I think the first lesson is to help them to understand a range of possible experiences, and the weaknesses as well as the strengths of each, rather than to find the model that they ought to adopt.

The second lesson is, whatever they do, it won't work completely. So don't try to find the perfect solution and implement it, but rather start somewhere and

Let me illustrate that with a story from China. When China began to open up in the 1980s and early 1990s, and they reopened their courts and began to draft new codes, the American Bar Association translated various codes from the US and the European Union did the same. If you walked into a court ten years later, none of those things were present, because they were irrelevant to the Chinese justice system. The Chinese realized this before the people providing the assistance did.

In the early 2000s, they decided they should ask different countries to advise them about how they dealt with a particular crime in their jurisdiction. After six months, the Chinese knew more about solving the problem than any of the

adjust it with the benefit of experience. In China, there's now what we're calling the Empirical Legal Reform Movement: instead of going abroad and looking for models, people are now going around inside China, gathering data about what is happening, and trying to fix problems that way. In the US, when we have a problem in one of our institutions, we don't ask the French to send us a translation of their code and adopt it. We try and work out for ourselves what's wrong. The important thing is the method of reform, not the content.

Are there other lessons to be taken from the setbacks in democratic transitions that we've been witnessing?

With the end of communism in Eastern Europe, many people unconsciously assumed that change was moving in one direction: you could get countries out of the Soviet orbit, fund new institutions, and encourage new governments which would eventually join the EU, and that would somehow protect democracy and open society. That assumption has proved to be false.

Working in the justice sector, you know that progress is easily lost. Even countries that imagine they are the world's greatest democracies can have horrendous injustices in their institutions. OSF is very worried about Hungary, an EU member, which is slipping into a frighteningly repressive state, and the EU is doing next to nothing about it.

What, to me, is harder to explain is why these things ever succeed, not why some fail. Why is Tunisia hanging in there and why has Euromaidan in Ukraine, at least so far, gotten further than anybody would have imagined?

Do you see anything unique about the transitions of this last decade?

Many believed that social media explained why the protest in Tahrir Square happened so quickly. Obviously that was a factor, but we saw a lot of the first revolution in Ukraine happen without it. The whole world is communicating and participating in events in different ways, but I don't know that the fundamental dynamics are that different. The Open Society Foundation in Ukraine was founded in the late 1980s, before the Berlin Wall fell, so its staff and board went through the end of the Soviet Union and the Orange Revolution. I think the ability to learn from those early experiences has been vital for them.



Chris Stone in Martissant Park, Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, a project of Open Society's local foundation FOKAL.

'The second lesson is, whatever they do, it won't work completely. So don't try to find the perfect solution and implement it, but rather start somewhere and adjust it with the benefit of experience.'

We are supporting an effort, in partnership with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to build a group of Ukrainian economists and other political scientists to advise the transitional government on reforms. This group is supported by an outer ring of international economists, government reformers and experts. And the whole thing is then integrated with the prime minister's and president's offices. This is a deliberate shift from the more international expert group that was established in 2005, which didn't work. They won't get it all right, but it's impressive to see that kind of deliberate, studied approach to making this transition more successful than the last one.

The OSF 'hybrid' form of local foundation is a good way of supporting effective local philanthropy with international input. Do you think of trying that in really tough places like Egypt?

We can't operate national foundations in countries where the government is actively hostile. We used to have a foundation in Azerbaijan, for example, which we can no longer operate because of the hostility of the government. But we do support civil society organizations in lots of countries where we don't have foundations. We do a lot of grantmaking in China, for example. The government is aware of this, but we don't have a national foundation there and I don't think we will any time soon.

Regardless of whether we have a national foundation, we always try to ground our work in local knowledge and direction. We have a regional foundation in East Africa with a headquarters in Nairobi, which has just selected a new director. The board consulted with me, but the choice was theirs. They approve their grants, and the director will report jointly to them, all East Africans, and to the regional director for Africa in the global foundation. There are over 400 board members in the OSF network of entities. That's a lot of different decision-making loci and for me it's a huge strength: if you're trying to support transitions, it's crucial to be really grounded in the local context and to trust the people you have there.

How do you see OSF's engagement when transitions happen in the really hard places, the fragile states where there are deep divisions and key public institutions are lacking, where there's barely even an idea of a society that everyone is part of?

What I've learned in the last couple of years is that there are some fundamental building blocks that OSF works on, even in the most difficult of environments. It stems from George Soros's confidence that information and the ability to communicate are the starting point for both political and socioeconomic progress. I think it's symbolic that during the war in Yugoslavia, when governments were vainly trying to relieve the siege of Sarajevo, he ran three things through the tunnels into the city: water, seeds and newsprint. The idea that newsprint would be the third essential element to keep a society alive under siege says a lot about OSF, and I think that's certainly one of the starting points.

Similarly, scholarships to enable students to study and expand their knowledge is one of our starting points even in some of the most closed societies. And when we can't do anything else, funding the arts and funding storytellers – whether through film, photography, dance, theatre, fiction or comedy – are probably the elemental building blocks that we try to support wherever we can.

There's an impression that OSF gets closer to politics than philanthropy normally does. Is that because you feel you have to do so in order to be relevant in a period of national transition?

I think we focus on transitions because we are more political. We're not more political because we focus on transitions. In the US we're political as well and it's not about transition.

A lot of American philanthropy avoids politics for a number of reasons. Although the law is sometimes cited as an excuse, US law allows you to be much more political than most philanthropies choose to be, as the Atlantic Philanthropies, Pierre Omidyar and others have shown. But I think this is easier for a single active donor and founder. Take the Koch brothers, Mike Bloomberg and George Soros: very different ideologies, very different places on the political spectrum, but all three are pursuing philanthropy in an explicitly political way. We don't support individual party candidates, though legally we could, because of George

'I think we focus on transitions because we are more political. We're not more political because we focus on transitions. In the US we're political as well and it's not about transition.'

Soros's philosophy of pluralism. Our version of politics is that no one party is right or wrong, and that the truth is almost always in the views of the different parties. But we also believe that you can't make real change while you're ignoring the political realm.

What role do you see for civil society in times of transition?

One issue here is the division of roles. Civil society groups built around individual dissidents or victim groups and campaigning globally need different skills for collaborating with a transitional government in the implementation of institutional changes. There's often a division of labour in a transition between those who continue to criticize and those who collaborate, and that's an awkward division to work out. Some advocacy you can do from inside, but sometimes there's criticism that needs to be made that you can't do if you're also trying to work in partnership. Not that this is just a transitional question. The campaigning/governing division is an old cliché of American politics. You can see it as an individual candidate tries to move from a campaigner to a governor.

Ukraine is more ambiguous because of the war. But in Tunisia, Indonesia and Senegal, there's real optimism about progress towards an open society. But that doesn't mean we're going to import programmes or laws or legal institutions from longer-standing democracies, and there is less of an idea that government will be the answer. That happened in South Africa, and civil society lost its edge. In the next ten years, civil society in South Africa is heading into a second adulthood. There was the adulthood of struggle, followed now by the adulthood of democracy.

Are there any developments in the philanthropy world that give you hope that we'll respond better in future to these very unique historical moments?

Over the last two decades, it was often said at OSF and elsewhere that we could get change to the point where it would be irreversible. I think we've learned that there is no such point, that there is no change that is irreversible. But, paradoxically, I think that's a cause for hope. Because knowing that allows you to act, with humility but also with persistence.

Which means that we should not say that transitions have failed after merely two years?

Exactly. @

For more information

www.opensocietyfoundations.org

Johannes Zundel Interview

Founded in 1971 at the height of the Cold War, the Berghof Foundation is dedicated to preventing violence and creating lasting peace in conflict situations. Its mission statement is 'creating space for conflict transformation'. Johannes Zundel, whose father created the foundation, talks to Mark Freeman about the genesis and development of its work and explains why he thinks transitions offer philanthropists prepared to take bold risks the chance to be at their best.

Johannes Zundel is chair of the board of trustees of the Berghof Foundation, based in Germany, and established by his father, Georg Zundel, in 1971. www.berghof-foundation.org

Could you tell me something about the Berghof Foundation and your involvement in it?

The foundation was set up by my father, Georg Zundel, in 1971. He was a physicist and the grandson of Robert Bosch, who founded the company of the same name. My father inherited a very small part of the company and started a number of ventures, of which the foundation was one. He often showed a certain stubbornness about what he considered right and necessary, but that stubbornness was fundamental to this really unique organization. I think that, working in transition environments, it's important that you don't give up too easily, that you are able to cope with backlashes.

The Berghof Foundation also came out of the very strong feeling in postwar Germany that the Second World War must not be repeated, and this feeling intensified against the backdrop of the Cold War and German rearmament. The idea behind it was simply to finance a bunch of smart people to think up solutions to the most pressing conflict-related issues. Nobody thought too much about its structure.

Do you think an institution like this needs to begin with a strong impulse and a big general idea, and evolve in its own way?

A creative impulse is definitely the key. But a smart idea is not sufficient to make a project sustainable. What you need is both refreshing inspirations and supportive structures for their implementation.



'Our mission statement is "creating space for conflict transformation" and what is essential is that we accept others, not ourselves, taking centre stage.'

An important challenge for Berghof is to maintain a dynamic balance between the two.

What are the characteristics you feel have to be maintained?

When Berghof was established, peace research in Germany was very controversial, and my father helped to establish a field which today has become mainstream. Obviously there is some risk-taking, and you have to take risks again and again if you want to stay relevant. He also wanted to bring to the debate the voices of people who had something to say but lacked the resources to make themselves heard. Again, I see continuity with what we are doing today.

Have there been particularly important chapters in the story of Berghof that illustrate its development and the values you are describing?

There certainly have been turning points. At the beginning of our grantmaking operations, the focus was on the Cold War, on issues like arms control, disarmament conversion and technology, and conversion played a much greater role. That also reflected my father's scientific background.

When the Cold War ended, conflict realities changed. We gradually refocused on the very broad theme of ethno-political conflicts, social and identity questions that concern the relationship between society and state. We started funding and organizing dialogues in the Caucasus, for example, and reflective workshops in former Yugoslavia.

The refocusing also changed the way we worked. Initially, Berghof was primarily a grantmaking organization but over time, and because of the changes in the nature of conflicts, we increasingly developed a presence on the ground. This experience of providing direct hands-on support to conflict stakeholders in different regions led



us to develop the conception of ourselves as an international organization.

What's the balance now between operational work and grantmaking?

I would say that what matters at the end of the day is not the balance between the two, but whether you are able to provide conflict stakeholders and actors with the resources they really need.

What are the guiding values of the Berghof Foundation's approach, particularly in relation to transitions?

I think there are implicit values – values that are simply rooted in our culture. As part of our refocusing process, we have tried to make those values explicit. We try to provide support to conflict transformation processes, which basically means preparing the ground for reaching a peace settlement in a way that violence can be avoided. To do that successfully, all stakeholders have to be involved without us taking control of the process.

That has a number of implications for how you present yourself. You have to be modest, because such processes are essentially based on trust, and you don't want to undermine that. Our mission statement is 'creating space for conflict transformation' and what is essential is that we accept others, not ourselves, taking centre stage. You don't want to be seen as intervening, which is why I like the acupuncture analogy mentioned in your *Supporting Countries in Transition* guide, the idea of creating targeted pressure that enables what is already there to develop in constructive ways.

Conference organized by the Berghof Foundation for female members of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan and political advisers to the Joint Secretariat, Berlin, March 2014.

'When you use metrics as substitutes for continuous and critical reflection, they can become harmful and counter-productive; they can become instrumentalized for bullshitting yourself. I think that is especially true in transition contexts.'

You mentioned risk-taking earlier. If you're willing to take risks, does that mean you're also willing to accept a certain amount of failure?

Yes. Failure is a possibility, and in the short term, it's almost certain. For example, we had a big project in Sri Lanka and then the government decided to give up the peace process and resolve the conflict on its own terms. We failed to understand that in time, so we were not well prepared when the process failed and we had to leave the country and we even had death threats. But we learned from the experience that it is absolutely essential to continuously reassess conflict situations on the ground. This is also one of the reasons why we see reflection as a core value in our work.

What do you mean by that?

We understand that transitions are learning processes in which conflict stakeholders come to interpret and understand their own role and experience from new vantage points. That started with the action-research projects and reflective workshops which we supported and organized in the 1990s, and it continues to this day. There's one project we did where we brought members of non-state-armed groups together and had them reflect on their own experiences, for example in negotiation processes. At the same time reflection is an inherent part of our work in that it helps us to learn from failure and do better next time.

What are the boldest risks that you've taken as a donor, either as an individual philanthropist or through Berghof?

The two are related, and the project we've just been talking about provides a good example, because starting out with the value of inclusion means that you engage with difficult, hard-to-reach and stigmatized actors. That involves reputational risks and sometimes even legal risks; moving into that field of activity right after 9/11 was a challenging and controversial thing to do.

In retrospect, I can say that it was absolutely the right thing, because the trust and the network that we have managed to build since provides us with a significant lever in supporting such actors in transition contexts today. However, at that time, it was a huge challenge, and there has to be a committed philanthropist who says, 'I know this is risky but it is hugely important – and if you don't do it there is going to be no reward.' That's definitely how it felt for me. It's so easy to get people together

who already agree but no change comes out of it, and you go home frustrated.

Another theme we wanted to discuss with you is impact and what you think it is important to measure.

It's difficult to apply quantitative indicators in transition contexts. Sure, if you are running a huge foundation and it's not your own money then accountability matters a great deal. I understand that. But at the same time I find it sad. Generally speaking, I don't have a problem with metrics and I think developing them can be helpful: the rigour involved forces you to think about what you really want to achieve.

But when you use metrics as substitutes for continuous and critical reflection, they can become harmful and counter-productive; they can become instrumentalized for bullshitting yourself. I think that is especially true in transition contexts because they are very complex situations, with non-linear developments which are hard to grasp through linear metrics.

There's also the problem that there's a certain credit-taking attitude related to impact measurement which could undermine the trust and ownership of actors on the ground. To put it in a nutshell, you can try to develop metrics, but sound principles and values, and a critical and questioning attitude, are far more important.

Looking ahead, what are the new challenges and opportunities you see for conflict transformation and post-conflict transition?

For me two lessons sum up the things I have been talking about. One lesson is that it's about more than the money. Plain vanilla grantmaking reduces the relationship with your grantee to a financial one, and then if you try to act as a partner, it doesn't work. I think that at Berghof, we've understood that it's also about networks, facilitation, process know-how and all kinds of things that we can provide. Money is a part of it, of course, but acknowledging the need for the operational side has been hugely beneficial, even though some people find it hard to understand because it doesn't fit into any box.

'The transitions topic is absolutely important, because this interconnected, globalized world is a world of extremes and there will be a lot of transitions to come. The good news is that, for philanthropists prepared to take bold risks, transitions offer the chance to be at your best and build the basis for more lasting peace.'

Enumerator from Berghof partner organization in Afghanistan interviewing a farmer.

The second lesson: try bold things. We've just been talking about impact measurement – there's this tendency to transfer concepts from the business world to that of philanthropy, and that has led to a focus on scalable, linear models with a limited set of measurable variables. This has led philanthropists astray and they have started focusing too much on simple linear problems, while more important issues that are systemically complex and non-linear don't get the attention that they deserve. Private philanthropy – unlike government – has the flexibility to address those hard and controversial issues. If that is lost, then a huge potential in terms of innovation and impact is lost, and nowhere is that truer than in the transition context.

I would also like to say that we should look beyond those post-conflict and post-authoritarian environments. I think that there is something in the transition idea that goes far beyond that. In our western democracies the legitimacy of political institutions is increasingly questioned. I wonder if current transitions, for example in the Arab world, are not part of a larger, more global phenomenon. While I am convinced that our democratic institutions are better equipped to deal with that, I think it's quite possible that what we learn today in post-conflict environments could acquire a wider relevance for conflict prevention in other contexts.

The transitions topic is absolutely important, because this interconnected, globalized world is a world of extremes and there will be a lot of transitions to come. The good news is that, for philanthropists prepared to take bold risks, transitions offer the chance to be at your best and build the basis for more lasting peace. @



Learning lessons on lessons learned

Thomas Carothers

Following the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, Egypt experienced a surge of conferences, workshops and other events featuring comparative lessons about democratic transitions, sponsored by a wide range of foreign organizations. Many of these events highlighted experiences from post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe, invoking the optimism that ensued after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Transition veterans arrived from other parts of the world as well – including South African experts on transitional justice, South American specialists on civil-military relations, Indonesian politicians knowledgeable about democratic inclusion of political Islamists, Indian advisers on transitional elections, and UN and EU advisers on constitutional and legal reform. Several years down the road the results of this wave of lesson sharing appear uncertain, at best.



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He is the author (with Diane de Gramont) of *Development Aid Confronts Politics: The almost revolution* (Carnegie, 2013).

Undoubtedly some Egyptians gained useful pieces of knowledge from other countries about post-authoritarian pitfalls. But the larger picture with regard to impact is not encouraging: Egypt's principal political actors have repeatedly violated almost all of the received 'best practices' of democratic transitions. In fact, the very lessons that the visiting experts most frequently emphasized – such as the importance of transitional justice, civilian control over the military, inclusive political approaches, and avoiding winner-takes-all strategies – are among the most glaring failures of Egypt's attempted democratic transition to date.

Falling short

How did the efforts at lesson sharing fall short? To start with, they inadequately addressed the natural resistance among many people in almost any country to embrace foreign ideas about sensitive political issues, even at a time of political opening. Such resistance was especially marked in Egypt, given the country's strong sense of national identity combined with the negative legacy of past episodes of foreign involvement in the country's political life. Visiting transition experts typically appealed to what they believe to be a spirit of universality about political values. Although well intended, such appeals were not crafted to speak effectively to Egyptians.

Various shortcomings afflicted the basic methods of these initiatives. The countless conferences and workshops sometimes attracted significant numbers of serious participants. But they rarely fostered badly needed dialogues within the different segments of the overall political scene. Participants were usually the converted or at least the curious with respect to the featured issues. They were infrequently drawn from those circles unenthusiastic about or actively opposing the issues at stake, whether it was transitional justice, gender equality, or civilian control of the military. The audience often did not include the political actors who would be necessary to create a broader political will to absorb lessons or senior and middle management in the very institutions that needed to apply those lessons.

Moreover, the events often presented transitional lessons as generalized wisdom extracted from multiple national experiences rather than focusing on the specific features of the Egyptian scene. Thus, for example, presentations of how Brazil managed to put its military 'back in the barracks' failed to examine the significant differences between the role of the Egyptian and Brazilian militaries in the formation of each country's state. Lectures on Indonesia's incorporation of moderate Islamists did not probe the significant differences between Indonesia's and Egypt's political Islamists.

A related shortcoming was the tendency of outside actors seeking to support democratization in Egypt to assume that those who had mobilized and driven Mubarak out of power would continue to drive the new post-Mubarak political process. In fact, others, especially the Muslim Brotherhood and 'deep state' power structures, actively contested for and took over control of the transition process. As a result, assistance efforts designed to help moderate, pro-reform actors identify and choose appropriate policies neglected the much more basic need to help strengthen these actors vis-à-vis tenacious challengers.

Lessons to be learned

Various lessons follow from this brief retrospective look:

- ▶ Notwithstanding apparently common features of transitions like massive citizen protests or the dramatic flight of dictators, each new transition must be approached in terms of its own specific political dynamics, not an imagined natural transitional path. This is especially true concerning the continued

existence of underlying power structures that may appear to have been swept away but in fact are lying low, waiting for the opportunity to reassert themselves.

- ▶ No matter how exhilarating and inspiring an initial transition moment is, and how wide the apparent consensus for change, outside actors should assume that the transition is precarious, subject to capture by predatory actors or to going off the rails in other ways very quickly.
- ▶ Knowledge-related undertakings should not just look at foreign experiences of political change but help citizens relate the new moment to their own country's history of political change, avoiding the tempting idea that 'all has

No matter how exhilarating and inspiring an initial transition moment is, and how wide the apparent consensus for change, outside actors should assume that the transition is precarious, subject to capture by predatory actors or to going off the rails in other ways very quickly.

changed' and that the country's history is no longer relevant.

- ▶ Funders should design conferences and workshops not as ends in themselves but as first steps towards the creation of lasting relationships with local civic and political actors and local implementing institutions.
- ▶ Every effort should be made to make conferences and workshops bridge-building events that include actors left out of or hostile to transitions.
- ▶ Receptivity to ideas from abroad should not be assumed, but rather viewed as a challenge to be addressed.
- ▶ Funders should pace themselves, avoiding the tendency to support a burst of activities in the first year of the transition and then move on to other transition countries. Lessons from abroad will still be relevant for years after a political opening occurs. Moreover, local receptivity to them actually tends to increase not decrease over time, as the initial transition optimism fades in the face of continued countervailing realities. @

Comment

Nadine Sherif



Nadine Sherif is international advocacy officer at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS). Email nadine@cihrs.org

In his article 'Learning lessons on lessons learned', Thomas Carothers uses the lens of the Egyptian transition to illustrate some of the major shortcomings of initiatives in support of recent democratic transitions. A central problem he highlights is the idea that one can predict the path of democratic transitions based on previous experience in other countries, and that 'best practices' are always going to be applicable on the ground. Democratization initiatives thus in effect assume a 'right' path to democracy. The Arab uprisings have clearly disproved this theory. Carothers rightly argues that each transition should be examined within its own political context and that analysts should not assume a natural path to transition.

However, the article does not go far enough in its critique of democratization initiatives. Such initiatives do not simply fall short in engaging all parties or taking into consideration the local milieu; they tend to lack a long-term strategy for supporting civil society. Many initiatives have included only pro forma consultation with local actors on project goals, and have ended up imposing badly timed and ineffective programmes in various areas. Initiatives focused on security sector reform, for example, have sometimes distracted from more immediate concerns like the crackdown on civil society. Security sector reform is undoubtedly

important, but not if its timing fails to take into consideration local priorities and political realities.

In addition, democratization initiatives are often based on a narrow interpretation of what democracy means. In Egypt, initiatives focused on election monitoring and voter turnout missed the problematic political context and alienated individuals who sought to postpone the election to ensure that the democratic transition stayed on course.

Supporting the development and protection of a public space and a vibrant civil society should be the primary goal during a transitional period. Local, well-networked, grassroots actors, both national and regional, should be the ones to develop the foundations of a democratic state. If the strategic goal is shifted from democratic transition to the protection of public space, even failure by local actors becomes success because every action by civil society actors expands the space. This shift will build capacity for local actors to make and learn from their own mistakes and to build towards success. Such initiatives require patience, a long eye to identifying goals, and a shift to seeing local actors as partners rather than beneficiaries. They offer the best chance of sustainable progress.



MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM

A man selling pretzels climbs the wall of a destroyed house in Cairo damaged during clashes between youth protestors and Egyptian police near Tahrir Square on the second anniversary of the 25 January revolution.

INTERVIEW WITH AKWASI AIDOO

Philanthropy and risk taking in transitions



Akwasi Aidoo is a Humanity United senior fellow. He was the founding executive director of TrustAfrica from 2006 to 2014. Email aaaidoo@humanityunited.org

By their nature, national transitions are unpredictable and fast-moving. What is the case for donors taking risks and engaging in these historical moments?

Across Africa, there are three broad categories of country: conflict-ridden countries, post-conflict countries and stable countries. Of these, it is often the post-conflict countries that present the best balance of needs and opportunities for donors.

First, transitional situations, such as post-genocide Rwanda, post-apartheid South Africa, post-civil war Liberia and Sierra Leone, and newly independent South Sudan, present rare opportunities for achieving game-changing developmental impact. The priorities are never in doubt, and the drivers and levers of change are often self-evident. As the saying goes, *'When it's dark enough, you can see the stars.'*

Second, because the challenges are daunting and beyond the capacity of any single donor to respond to alone, donor collaboration becomes an easier sell, with the possible advantages of peer learning and heightened impact. Third, the unpredictability and fast-moving nature of national transitions may foster the innovation and creativity that so often eludes us.

What are some of the key lessons from successful transitions that could inform the way private donors shape their support to other transitions?

Countries such as South Africa and Liberia show us that success comes from working on all fronts and levels simultaneously: the ground level of citizen engagement and advocacy within country; the policy level of social justice institutional strengthening and reconciliation; and the international level of mobilized alliances for effective and credible transition.

Another key lesson is the importance of paying attention to 'anti-impunity'. In Liberia, Rwanda and South Africa, the perpetrators of crimes against humanity were not completely ignored, even as reconciliation was vigorously pursued. Finally, we've learned that successful transitions are always a work in progress. Twenty years after the end of apartheid, South Africa still has unfinished transitional

business. As Florynce Kennedy, the American civil rights activist, once aptly put it, *'Freedom is like taking a bath; you have to keep taking it every day.'*

Are there general lessons to be learned from stalled or failed transitions?

Over the last 50 years, the overriding imperative in national transitions in virtually every African country has been to build a unified nation with a credible state out of disparate ethnicities. The single most important lesson from the stalled transitions in countries such as Zimbabwe, Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic is that the best philanthropic investments are in supporting civil society organizations to demand accountable, transparent and responsible governance.

We see a troubling rise in attempts by states to control the use of international private aid. Can the philanthropic community make a better case for international support to strengthen citizen engagement? Is this an area where TrustAfrica is venturing?

The philanthropic community can do a lot to address this challenge, starting with collaborative outreach to African regional organizations such as the African Union and subregional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which provide space for dialogue and for standard setting on governance issues.

TrustAfrica is addressing this through knowledge building and dissemination, and strengthening civil society networks for concerted advocacy across borders. A first step was publication of a study called *(Dis)Enabling the Public Sphere: Civil society regulation in Africa*.

What can donors engaging in North African countries learn from the way democratic transitions in Africa reflect specific cultural and historical realities?

Successful democratic transitions are all about context and texture. The cultural factors that have tended to stall successful transitions in Africa are patriarchy and gerontocracy. The extreme dominance of politics by men and the old is a deeply entrenched cultural reality across the continent. It is no accident that virtually all the stalled or failed transitions are in countries led by very old men (half of the oldest heads of state in the world are African!). The transitions under way in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Mauritania could all greatly benefit from donor support focused on enhancing the civic engagement of women and youth in building a just and secure future for all. @

Connecting the disconnected

Ellen Friedman

'Our task is to make whole what is broken, unite what is separated, heal what is wounded, and connect across divides.'

Louise Diamond

I can vividly remember a site visit to Sierra Leone shortly after the war in that country ended, when I was a trustee of the New Field Foundation. In one small village we must have seen 40–50 signs denoting all the international donors working there. Even to a casual observer, it was clear that in the absence of any coordinating body the 'helpers' were likely to be tripping all over each other. This was confirmed as we heard the frustration from local residents who had had their expectations raised by the arrival of so many disconnected forms of assistance, only to have most of it subsequently withdrawn after a time-limited engagement.



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As was the case in Sierra Leone, the challenge of coordinating aid can be significantly exacerbated in times of transition immediately following armed conflict or the collapse of a despotic regime. The ensuing chaos can be intimidating to a private donor.

We believe that private foundations can play a critically important role in incentivizing connectivity and coordination of these disparate elements to facilitate the rebuilding of societies. The crisis is an enormous opportunity for radical social change. As Mark Freeman of the Institute for Integrated Transitions¹ has observed: 'Transitions should be viewed primarily as invitations to action. They are critical junctures of history when, rather than moving by steps, a society can potentially spring forward and redefine itself for the better.' Even if our dollars are small, we can act quickly, in a way that governments and large international donors cannot. Being prepared to capitalize on our relative freedom to act at those critical moments can have outsized impact.

If foundations are to use their resources well during transitions a fundamental adjustment in their approach is needed. As 'strategic' funders, we are often tightly focused on one organization, one leader, one sub-population or one approach, rather than attending to the entire ecosystem. We may talk about wanting to 'smash issue silos', but transitions really put that aspiration to the test. We must be willing to look beyond

the usual suspects for those who are connecting the multiple, segregated parts of the system.

Our work has been informed by an early experiment in applying a systems lens to complex global problems. The Global Systems Initiative's Himalayan/Tibetan Plateau project brought together key actors from diverse sectors affected by the melting of the Himalayan glaciers and explored the resulting political, social, environmental and economic impacts. That experience strongly suggested that it is essential to look at the whole system before drawing conclusions; that concrete and transformative change will result when programmatic and policy walls are eliminated and people have the space to work across differences to identify shared solutions to complex problems. This work has influenced the following practical strategies we have adopted for our grantmaking:

- 1 Know the ecosystem of actors and funders; understand the flow of money from all sources and use philanthropic and/or investment dollars to shore up those aspects that are underfunded, so that the whole system can participate in transitions.
- 2 Provide general support grants to actors trusted by the foundation and by the network on the ground. General support funds are the only funds that can be adapted in rapidly changing circumstances.
- 3 Provide grants to support relationship building, convening and other activities that 'connect the disconnected'. This is critical both before, during and after conflict.

A time of transition provides the perfect opportunity to apply a systems approach to grantmaking. It forces funders to look at the whole ecosystem and the movements of many actors ... not just civil society actors, but all the people and institutions influencing the system. Sometimes we have to drop individual organizations to which we have ties because they are struggling to adapt to working in a systems or movement structure, or it becomes clear that their work is ultimately about the preservation of their own institution and not the overall mission of building an inclusive transition to peace.

At the Compton Foundation we are still a work in progress; we have much more to learn in order to refine this approach to our peace-building portfolio. But we continue to be inspired by Louise Diamond's question: what would our world look like if we *acted* as if everything is interconnected? Because it really is. @

¹ The Compton Foundation is supporting the start-up phase of the Institute for Integrated Transitions.

INTERVIEW WITH JO ANDREWS

Human rights funding in transitions



Jo Andrews is director of Ariadne – European Funders for Social Change and Human Rights. Email jo.andrews@ariadne-network.eu

Is the subject of post-conflict and post-authoritarian transitions of special interest to human rights funders?

I can't think of more than a few that have a publicly stated mission to support transitions. But nearly all human rights and social change funders that support work internationally do become involved in these kinds of transitions, for two reasons. First, this field, like every other, is susceptible to fashion, and fashion is often the country or region uppermost in people's minds. Second, because boards and grants officers rightly see these transitions as moments of great opportunity, when they have a role to play in supporting civil society to secure and entrench the rights and dignity of local people.

How fast can human rights funders respond when such an opportunity arises? And how easily can they work together?

Let's take these two separately: how quickly funders can get their act together depends on the circumstances. If it's been a long-running struggle, as it was in South Africa or Northern Ireland – where it was possible to establish some useful civil society groups in and outside the country, and where the transition did not mean a complete breakdown in institutions – funders often have established relationships and can power up their support relatively quickly (though the funding world is never the fastest-moving!). But where the rule of law and society may have broken down completely and only diaspora groups have been funded, like in Iraq, then it's harder for human rights donors to find something useful to support, so it takes longer.

How collaboratively can they operate? Funders are getting better at this. There are more vehicles around that make it easier for them to act collaboratively, and funders' networks like Ariadne and the European Foundation Centre can play a role in enabling people to share information about strategies and promising approaches and in helping

them to create pooled funding mechanisms. But all of this takes time, so at the moment collaboration often comes at the price of speed. We need much more work and much greater levels of trust for funders to have collaborative plans on hold ready to be deployed when a transition happens. There have been some tentative attempts at this in the case of Syria, but this is complicated by the very rapidly changing nature of the conflict there.

What are the main concerns of human rights funders when engaging in a country undergoing rapid change after years or decades of conflict or repression? Does the risk appetite tend to rise or fall, as compared to more 'ordinary' times?

The appetite for risk definitely increases. Human rights and social change funders are more prone than most to flights of optimism. If they weren't, they couldn't go on working in this field! They feel it is an important part of their mission to respond when a region or a country undergoes a period of rapid transition. But how they do that is more problematic. If the groups aren't there, then they can't be funded, so to start with there may be not be anything useful to do. The other difficulty that grantmakers face is how to get funds safely to the groups they want to support. Is everyone else going to fund the same small groups because they are the only ones there? How long will they be able to fund for? Will it continue to be possible and will their boards continue to be interested?

What can a funders' network bring to members who are interested in becoming involved in efforts to support a country's successful transition?

It depends if funders understand that their own support will have greater impact and be less likely to do harm if they make use of networks. Not all do, but if they accept that they can't do this alone, then they are likely to use the resources that funders' networks offer right through the process.

Ariadne's support, for instance, starts with helping funders to gather information via the Ariadne online portal, which is like a private Facebook for funders. It will tell you who has already done work in this particular field and help you find out who is familiar with the region. Then we provide, in partnership with the International Human Rights Funders Group in the US, a suite of online tools to help funders scope the field, including Advancing Human Rights – the State of Global Foundation Grantmaking and The Global Map of Human Rights and Social Change Grants, available free to funders through Ariadne and IHRFG.

The Global Map shows, down to grant level, who is, or has been, funding which groups, where and for what.

Grantmakers can also use Ariadne to convene meetings and experts, consider pooled funding or other joint or aligned strategies, and use the Policy Briefing or Grant-Skills Days to spread knowledge and approaches among other foundations. Finally, they can use the online portal to store lessons learned so that when the next transition comes along other funders don't have to reinvent the wheel!

How has your network responded to the Arab region's transitions?

Ariadne started off by holding a number of transnational tele-briefings for funders in Europe and the US in collaboration with the International Human Rights Funders Network. The aim was to find out who was interested in the different transitions and gather intelligence from experts about what precisely was happening and what the space was for funders. Ariadne set up an online community on its private portal focusing on the MENA region, to allow them to hold discussions via blog, to upload useful files and to ask for help.

We convened a number of face-to-face meetings, so the funders could begin to establish trust among themselves. With the International Human Rights Funders Group, we organized a funders' learning trip, which took place in Tunis over three days in May 2012, to which we invited experts from across the region. More than 30 funders attended. Since then we have supported the development of various resources to assist funders working in transitions and helped to disseminate them, and we will continue to look for ways to do this as the Arab region's transition changes shape and develops.

What have been the most important lessons so far for you?

The primary lesson for me from these transitions, and from the many others I have seen, both as a grantmaker and as a journalist, is that timing is everything: the right sum of money (often quite small) given at the right time to the right people is the most powerful social accelerant available on this planet. Judging that timing is a matter of experience and a willingness to experiment and take risks.

'The primary lesson for me from these transitions is that timing is everything: the right sum of money (often quite small) given at the right time to the right people is the most powerful social accelerant available on this planet.'

I think the recommendation that funders interested in supporting change hold a fund in reserve to deal with transitions is an excellent one. It saves time at the crucial moment, and makes it easier to take a sensible risk, as the funds are already dedicated to the transition and not being taken out of another pot where they might have been more safely spent.

Two short examples of getting funding in a transition wrong and getting it right. First, getting it wrong. Some years ago, I was approached by the director of a small NGO that was setting up a programme to teach income-generating skills to women in a country that had emerged a few months before from a long period of terror and war. It wasn't exactly what we were looking for, but there was interest in the country and there wasn't a lot of choice in terms of providers. The board gave the NGO a substantial grant by its standards (over £70,000). A week later the NGO received \$10 million from the US government! Was our grant needed or even noticed? I doubt it.

I think this sort of mistake is common in transitions, where there is often very little that can be funded. Unless private funders are clear about their own specific niche in these events and what they are hoping to achieve, their support can be overwhelmed by governments or aid agencies coming in, or simply by events on the ground.

And doing it better: Turkey is a country that has been in transition for many years. Ten years ago, the Turkish government passed legislation allowing local groups to receive funding from international donors. The Sigrid Rausing Trust set up the Strategic Fund for Turkey with the aim of offering core grants from £500 up to £30,000 to new and established civil society groups dealing with women's rights, minority rights and human rights. The fund, administered by Global Dialogue, attracted other donors, and for the past seven years has supported the growth and strengthening of locally led human rights groups. In particular it has seen, for the first time, the emergence of a network of Roma-led NGOs and the creation of a number of new NGOs supporting LGBT rights. It's an example of how quite moderate sums of money, applied at the right time and in the right way, had a considerable impact.

The final lesson is a simple one: live and learn! Transitions are a time when mistakes can easily be made, but if the mistake or the failure can be honestly acknowledged and examined, then it could be more valuable than any success. @

Holding it together in Northern Ireland

Avila Kilmurray

The societal rollercoaster of political transition can be exhilarating but it is not comfortable. How can philanthropy offer a steadying hand? Over 30 years of political violence a small number of largely UK charitable foundations made courageous investment in integrated education (children from divided communities/religious identities); in civil society initiatives to chart pathways out of violence; in supporting the protection of human rights, including the documentation of abuses; and in funding community-based initiatives to build local advocacy, confidence and capacities.



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Most importantly, the long-term members of ACF's (UK Association of Charitable Foundations) Northern Ireland Interest Group were there for us. When we felt consigned to pariah status, their engagement said 'We care'. For those of us working and funding in Northern Ireland this was immensely important.

The advent of the 1994 ceasefires meant the pace of transition was both rapid and uncertain. The question posed was invariably 'What can we do to consolidate peacebuilding?' One critical contribution was to keep faith with community activists that had been grafting away over the years of violence (women's groups, human rights defenders, etc). All too often attention fixes on the latest media-glossed prodigal spokesperson and/or organization, sidelining local communities that have a diversity of needs, hopes and fears. Peace processes must include this diversity of voices if they are to be sustainable. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, for one, recognized that.

Notwithstanding a backdrop of generous and courageous funding from the European Union through its PEACE Programme, responsive philanthropy made a vital contribution. Atlantic Philanthropies and the Ireland Funds supported delegations to share learning from other societies emerging from violence. Speakers, from South Africa in particular, helped shift the paradigm of political possibilities. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland collaborated with Harvard University-based Project on Justice in Times of Transition to share grounded experience with community-level leaders from Central America, Asia and the Middle East. The message was

invariably that change was possible, but needed to be understood and transmitted in accessible language. Then there were those Irish American philanthropists who took involvement to a different level, lobbying the US administration to provide visas for previously demonized Republican and Loyalist representatives, thereby enhancing the credibility of both with their home constituencies. Equally, the £10,000 grant from the non-charitable Rowntree Reform Trust helped the emerging Northern Ireland Women's Coalition elect two women representatives to the peace talks.

But independent philanthropy was most important when it funded risk-taking initiatives – and there were many of them. There was the tentative reaching out when divided communities developed integrated plans to work for joint development across the 'peace walls'. There was the self-organization both of the victims/survivors of violence and of recently released political ex-prisoners – both extremely sensitive issues, but critical to the underpinning of the peace process. Philanthropy supported community restorative justice initiatives (originally roundly condemned by the British Government), which worked to replace paramilitary punishment shootings of alleged 'anti-social elements' with non-violent community mediation – an initiative that later helped create more positive discussion around policing. It funded mobile phone networks to provide communication across peace walls in order to alleviate inter-communal violence. Grants for challenge and innovation resulted in the establishment of Healing through Remembering to address the still very divisive issue of how to deal with the past in a region that still fails to agree on its name – Northern Ireland, the North or Ulster!

With the passage of time what comes to mind is the importance of patient capital, well prepared for the flexibility of one step forward, two steps back. Philanthropy turned out to be an intelligent listener, ready to ride out the transition with us, but not afraid to ask probing and challenging questions. It was able to say, 'Lift your head and recognize how far you've come', while offering resources that enabled us to respond to that fleeting moment of opportunity when the next step could be taken. @

Three ways for foundations to help Arab societies

Bassma Kodmani

The uprisings of 2011 did not feel so much like spring – rather like a new birth: the birth of democracy, no doubt. These kids who took to the streets carried the vision of democratic citizenship. We celebrated the courage of the activists, their civility, their unexpected maturity, the moderation with which all groups from different political backgrounds behaved. We realized it was a fragile, vulnerable newborn, knowing nothing, eager to learn, likely to fall at every step before she (democracy in Arabic is feminine) learned how to walk. Who would protect her? And what part could philanthropy play in this? After three years of descent into hell in Syria, a reignited war in Iraq and chaos in Libya, this question is all the more pressing.



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The safest direction is to stand behind the original aspirations of the activists for dignity and freedom in every country. Dignity starts with equipping individual citizen with the right skills to face life's challenges; empowering local communities; and building the space where democratic values can be articulated and organized to serve an agenda for action.

First, transitions need competent individuals in key positions and foundations can help make this possible. When institutions are weak or corrupt, the role of individuals becomes decisive. In countries such as Libya, Iraq and Syria, finding the individuals with the right vision and skills turned out to be harder than anyone could have imagined. Saddam, Kaddafi and Assad kept their people in the dark ages with no exposure to the outside world, and no relevant skills that people could apply in their professional lives or in public affairs, much less in building a polity.

In Egypt and Tunisia, the lack of experience of the new ruling elites was arguably more problematic than their ideological orientation. The Muslim Brothers of Egypt, for example, did not suddenly turn extremists when they reached power. Their only experience was of the former regime's authoritarian practices, and they were too stubborn to realize that legitimacy could derive only from consensus-building.



Tunisia, October 2011. Women look out of a train window.

With these challenges in mind, foundations have an opportunity to make a serious difference to the future of Arab societies in a relatively short period through creative higher education and professional training programmes, delivered in Arabic. They can help prepare a young cadre of professionals in each country to address security sector reform, public and local administration, rule of law, transitional justice, urban planning and sustainable development. Equipping citizens with practical and professional skills is also the surest way to contain sectarianism: the more individuals possess the skills to be productive citizens, the less they will cling to their primordial ties. Offering scholarships to a 'happy few' is not enough. Initiatives such as web-based teaching, open universities in Arabic and connecting Arabic-speaking professionals from the diaspora to their society of origin can serve to accelerate learning.

Second, civil society organizations need support, especially at the local or community level. Where the state is failing and security collapsing, nothing else seems

to succeed. This is especially true in Syria. Funding local groups to respond to priorities as they themselves define them is empowering to those groups, and the surest way to respond to rapidly changing real needs. These groups carry out a vast range of activities, from buying vaccines for children, repairing electricity cables and organizing local security to holding discussions on democratic citizenry and using humanitarian relief funds to coach families to start micro-projects and generate income. In addition, corruption remains minimal because anyone found guilty of mismanagement of funds is immediately uncovered and expelled by the community.

Third, democratic groups need support – an area where foundations may feel they are venturing outside their comfort zone because it could be labelled as political. Foundations would considerably increase the impact of their actions if they acknowledged that every aspect of life is coloured by politics, and that

Foundations would considerably increase the impact of their actions if they acknowledged that every aspect of life is coloured by politics.

Egypt, August 2013. A local resident stands amid the charred remains of the Virgin Mary church in the village of Al Nazla, about 120 kilometres outside Cairo. The church was burned and looted by a mob of alleged pro-Muslim Brotherhood villagers.

democratic forces need financial and organizational support if they are to structure serious parties, build constituencies and articulate their agendas.

While political groups with a religious identity are generously supported by a variety of local sources, no local foundations, political or otherwise, exist in the Arab world to support the democratic groups – those fighting for the protection of open and diverse societies and for social justice. Their only support comes from a handful of businessmen. While for obvious reasons these groups may be reluctant to accept foreign funding, there are many ways of providing politically acceptable forms of support by helping to connect them with local sources of money. If foundations are not willing to embrace these democratic groups, they risk missing out on a critical area at a decisive moment for the future of Arab societies. We have seen insane alliances being sealed across the region. It is more than legitimate for democratic groups and institutions from different parts of the world to join forces, and with modest funds foundations can help make it happen. @



MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM

INTERVIEW WITH YASMIN SOOKA

Private philanthropy in South Africa and Sierra Leone



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Has private philanthropy mainly been on the 'right side of history' in South Africa or other transitions you have been part of, taking smart risks at the critical junctures?

In the main, philanthropy in South Africa has supported good causes, which have sought to build democracy. A pivotal time for giving in South Africa was during the government's denial of HIV/Aids, when external support was crucial. A key negative was the lack of rules and accountability, which characterized private philanthropy during the years of apartheid. While the secrecy was necessary to preserve the lives of individuals and ensure that their organizations could survive unscathed, it also produced a lack of accountability and the beginnings of corruption. During the transition, many organizations were unable to understand why donors who had previously turned a blind eye to corruption were no longer willing to do so. Governance issues remain a challenge for funding in South Africa.

Shelagh Gastrow, executive director of Inyathelo, the South African Institute for Advancement, has written about the new vistas being opened in the creation of a healthy philanthropic sector in South Africa. She has noted that philanthropists can take risks, as they are not answerable to the voter or the shareholder. They can invest in cutting-edge initiatives or support new discoveries that push the boundaries of knowledge. New ideas generally develop on the fringe – and that, in my view, is often where the 'right side of history' is located, both before and during transitions. And the funds for their issues, whether women's rights or international justice, come not from government or the private sector but from philanthropy – from people, rich and poor, who are passionate about the issues. Funding for such issues is not charitable, it's strategic; it is about changing society for the good, about social justice.

According to Gastrow, universities are also recipients of philanthropic money and are often the anchor institutions that sow the seeds of change. In addition, philanthropy need not demand the immediate results expected by business, but can take its time to measure impact.

What distinguishes the actions of private philanthropy from aid agencies in South Africa's and Sierra Leone's transitions? Does philanthropy have a unique role to play, despite its smaller resources?

Aid agencies are compelled to support the government's national agenda. In South Africa, providing support to treat the AIDS pandemic was very difficult in the face of the government's AIDS denial. It was only much later that the situation eased for the aid agencies.

Philanthropists, by contrast, have no such restrictions, which makes it possible for them to support civil society organizations that take on unpopular issues against the state – an important issue since 2009, as the state has attempted to close down spaces for building an open society. As civil society becomes more critical of the state, private philanthropic support to civil society and the media becomes increasingly important.

One of the challenges for civil society organizations in South Africa has been that many of them who receive their funding directly from government departments take on the role of the state. This makes them vulnerable and restricts their ability to criticize the state and failing policies.

In Sierra Leone, it is mainly aid agencies that have made a difference – both during the transition and today. While there have been private philanthropists, they have mainly spent their funds on causes such as building houses for amputees, addressing the plight of the war wounded, dealing with child soldiers and re-integration, and on support to organizations building democracy. In recent years philanthropy has focused on jobs for young people and on assisting local chiefs in dealing with the extractive industries. In the main, on causes that would be described as being on the right side of history.

Can you give a couple of examples of something that private philanthropy has contributed to these transitions, and what made the interventions work?

In South Africa, one positive example of private philanthropy has been the contribution made to

voter education. It was important that South Africans, particularly in rural areas, learned how to vote.

Another example is support around the constitution immediately after the transition. CSOs and the faith communities in South Africa contributed to the drafting of the South African Constitution, which was approved in December 1996 and took effect in February 1997, and is widely regarded as one of the most advanced and progressive human rights-based constitutions in the world. CSOs supported by a range of private and public donors lobbied strongly for the inclusion of socio-economic rights, making them actionable in law. CSOs have maintained their vigilance in promoting and protecting the principles and rights enshrined in the constitution. These interventions worked because they were appropriate to what South Africa needed at the time.

In Sierra Leone, Rocco Falconer, founder of Planting Promise, an agricultural and educational charity, wrote in a global philanthropy blog in November 2013 about his early focus on building an educational charity in Sierra Leone. He felt that the only way for people to escape the poverty trap was to give them the capacity to change their own lives and the inspiration to do it.

‘When we talk about poverty, we need to also talk about the poverty of aspiration. Planting Promise’s belief is that we need to invest in people, and help them realize anything is possible.’ The school he built in Freetown’s poorest area was a start. Falconer said that the test of success for Planting Promise would not be the number of school places that it could offer, or even the quality of the education in the schools, but rather its sustainability. His questions were: could the charity survive? Could it give confidence? Could it inspire with its product and its message? He concluded that the best stories about Planting Promise changing the life of African people are stories illustrating that programmes like this, when judiciously applied and effectively managed, do more than give a service or a product to an individual.

George Soros also became involved in Sierra Leone and indicated that he wanted to assist in building a free and open society. While Sierra Leone is a country with enormous mineral wealth, hardly any of it benefits its citizens. Soros has been involved in initiatives to assist

this previously war-torn West African nation in the arena of ‘extractive mineral industry transparency policy formulation’ and in ‘the development of civil societies’. He maintains that natural resources belong to the people but rulers often use them to benefit themselves, creating what is known today as ‘the resource curse’. Soros’s funding assisted with the restoration of the website of Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and it is now live and accessible to all.

Can you also give two negatives examples of philanthropic interventions in transitions. What made these problematic?

South Africa and many other countries in the region have accessed private philanthropy through religious organizations and charities. Many of these are very conservative, which has produced many instances of support to initiatives which, for example, discriminate against sexual minorities. This is apparent in initiatives that seek to close down constitutional spaces in respect of reproductive rights and the clause guaranteeing freedoms to members of the LGBTI community.

What core values should guide private foundations wishing to engage in transition contexts where there is a chance to put in place the building blocks for sustainable peace and democracy?

The shift from traditional top-down philanthropy (which has typically prevailed at the start of democratic and post-conflict transitions) to locally driven and community-based models has incorporated new patterns of giving which focus on the lives of the poor.

In addition, in-depth research and understanding of context are needed if philanthropy is to realize its clearly stated goals in pursuit of the public good. Philanthropists need to ensure that accountability and good governance are a two-way process. They must be educated about the power constructs within the societies they fund, ensuring that their actions promote equality.

Core funding – so fundamental in times of transition – remains another issue that needs addressing. Foundations should have a long-term vision, committing themselves to the sustainability of the projects they fund rather than making short-term, one-off donations. Their practices and operations should be fully transparent. It is absolutely critical that philanthropic funding can be tracked. Philanthropy should also promote inclusiveness and reflect diversity in both staff and board. @

INTERVIEW WITH RODRIGO UPRIMNY

Ending armed conflict in Colombia: how has philanthropy done?



Rodrigo Uprimny is executive director of the Center of Studies on Law, Justice and Society, 'Dejusticia', based in Colombia. Email ruprimny@dejusticia.org

What kind of support has been going to Colombian civil society in recent years?

Colombia has received a considerable amount of money for not-for-profit activities from various international and local actors. A very high proportion of that money has come from two main sources: from private foundations (eg Ford Foundation and Open Society Foundations) and from state-run international aid agencies such as USAID or directly from governments and embassies. Foreign individual philanthropists have generally contributed less. Colombian donations have typically been made through corporate foundations like Fundación Social and Fundación Corona. We do not really have private millionaires or 'great philanthropists' who have made significant contributions to NGOs.

What in your opinion has the philanthropic sector – both local and international – contributed to the broader national effort to end armed conflict in Colombia during the last decade?

Public and private funders, especially international ones, have contributed a great deal. For many years, they have funded the work of the country's flagship and mid-sized NGOs as well as grassroots organizations. Important human rights work, peace initiatives and development efforts have been carried out thanks to that support. In many regions where the Colombian state has not historically been present, international aid has been key.

By contrast, local contributors have been more timid. Their contributions have tended to be focused on issues that can make an impact on peace in a broader sense, such as children's rights, basic education and targeted poverty reduction, but that are less political.

Has private philanthropy mainly been on the 'right side of history', taking smart risks at the right critical junctures?

It has been on both sides. International aid has been virtually the sole source of support for risky human rights, peace and development efforts in many

regions. Without such aid, our country wouldn't have such a strong civil society community working on these issues.

At the same time, some international aid has been used to promote and perpetuate conflict. For example, a number of years ago Colombia was the second-largest recipient of US aid globally. This was mainly through 'Plan Colombia', which was used primarily to strengthen the military capacity of the state. A great deal of the money was spent on the salaries and expenses of international contractors, military and civilian, with virtually no positive impact on the livelihoods of the war's most affected communities, whom it was supposed to benefit.

What is a positive example of something that private philanthropy has contributed to the country's efforts in the last decade to end armed conflict?

The state agency in charge of the paramilitary demobilization process that began a decade ago offers a good example. The agency launched different attempts to include the private and philanthropic sector in that agenda. We do not have detailed knowledge of the results, but we know that the agency was able to engage big retailers to promote the hiring and reintegration of demobilized members of paramilitary forces – an issue of enormous importance within the overall objective of reinserting these people back into civilian life.

Are there any negative examples?

In more recent times, we have seen a trend where corporations have initiated corporate social responsibility foundations or philanthropic institutions, NGOs and other institutions of the kind that are publicized as committed to peacebuilding causes. In reality, though, these entities only tend to advance corporate goals such as increasing PR for the company and gaining the confidence of local communities to facilitate their local profit-making operations. This is especially apparent in the case of the extractive industries.

As Colombia moves closer to a final peace accord with the country's last rebel groups, what core values and operating principles should guide the engagement of private foundations in the post-conflict transition?

There are many. But the most important would be neutrality, a commitment to human rights and human dignity, a focus on local reconstruction that is based on promoting local efforts and maximizing local tools and decisions, and a commitment to doing no harm. @

Philanthropy and inclusive transitions

Barbara Ibrahim, Mark Freeman and Hilary Pennington report on highlights of an expert discussion about key ingredients for advancing inclusiveness in transitions

Those who work on transitions are often asked if they can point to one element that appears to be essential across societies for a successful shift away from internal armed conflict or repression. While a simplistic answer cannot do full justice to the diversity of history, place and moment, it is fair to ask about the necessary, if not sufficient, conditions that made a crucial difference over the dozens of national transitions since the early 1970s.

Mark Freeman, Barbara Ibrahim and Hilary Pennington are the guest editors for the *Alliance* special feature on 'Philanthropy in transitions'.

In August 2014, the guest editors of this *Alliance* special feature invited 12 foundation leaders and an equal number of development and transition specialists to the New York office of the Ford Foundation to grapple with that question. (The full list of attendees is on p58.) The invitation was framed around our own emerging answer: that inclusive social, economic and political pacts are needed for there to be a truly stable and legitimate transition. In almost all stalled transitions we have reviewed, one or more dimensions of inclusion was missing. Usually one finds longstanding divisions in society, whether ethnic, religious or class-based, aggravated by continuing systemic practices of exclusion. Those fault lines, if not forcefully addressed, undermine the achievement of a widely accepted social covenant among all groups and prevent the formation of a cohesive national identity.

While there was general agreement at the meeting about the centrality of inclusive processes, a lively discussion ensued about the optimal roles philanthropy can and should play in strengthening such processes when a transition is under way.

Opportunities in tough contexts

The conversation began with comments about key challenges in transitions – from power vacuums to weak institutions, ongoing violence and economic disparities. The theme of 'starting conditions' was considered central. Some states have deeply unfavourable conditions at the onset of a transition. Thus voting freely – even in some cases repeatedly – fails to bridge divides without a new, inclusive dynamic. 'In

times of post-war transition it is critically important to build a platform for inclusive national dialogue from different sectors of society. Yet it is these moments when it is hardest to achieve due to lack of trust,' noted George Khalaf of the Synergos Institute.

It was pointed out, nevertheless, that it is precisely in periods of transition that fragile and conflict-affected states have the opportunity to transform their social and political dynamics and pursue a new national path. Progress may be slower and harder in places with poor starting conditions, but there are inclusive nation-building steps that can be taken even in the most unforgiving of environments. 'Dialogue matters. Key sectors and individuals must find ways to reach out and work together across political and ideological divides and establish a new vision, sometimes away from the public eye,' observed UNDP director Jordan Ryan. 'Civic groups, protest movements, political parties and others also have to shift – from a protest to a governance mode, and often very quickly. Mandela's leadership in South Africa was a classic example of this shift, as was Lech Walesa's in Poland.' The kinds of relationships private philanthropy builds with grantees over time make it easier to have these difficult conversations.

Though transition support for improved governance can be valuable, many commented that private funders can make more impact (and are uniquely suited to) supporting the development and protection of a vibrant civil society that can shape and inform political processes, and 'help change discourses and narratives'. But civil society itself may be deeply fractured. As Seth Kaplan observed: 'Often the international focus is on the state–society relationship. But in fragile states a much stronger focus is needed on the society–society relationships that have so much influence on how countries evolve. Forging a social covenant early in the process, joining together major social groups, is crucial to ensuring that an inclusive and legitimate political process will take root and become widely accepted. In a transition, populations are more likely to forgive delays and ineffectiveness if they feel that there is a genuine effort at equity and fairness.'

Others emphasized the unique opportunity in a transition to understand and constructively engage in the local politics of change – to engage in the reform opportunities that enhance the interplay of the forces that move a society forward. This includes not only civil society, but also special state-sponsored bodies set up for transitional justice, constitutional drafting, and similar nation-building purposes.

Learning and measuring

A recurrent theme of the roundtable was caution over philanthropy's current embrace of metrics and measurement. Stephen Grand, a transition specialist and Fellow at Brookings Institution, noted: *'The message that I hear [in this conversation] is that some of the most important societal goods cannot be measured – which is in part the reason for the market failure that private philanthropy is needed to correct – and foundations need to get back to supporting such traditional knowledge-creating institutions within society as schools, libraries, the media and culture.'*

Transitions are by definition times when the potential for impact is high. But the field currently lacks the right indicators to measure the things that matter most during these moments – security, empowerment, engagement and inclusion. That can lead to

Sometimes it seems like every donor is circling around the same few individuals in a transition – often those with political savvy and connections in the international donor community. The result is missed opportunities to strengthen emerging leadership.

Afghanistan, March 2010. Marja's new district chief Hagi Zahir (far left top) meets with local elders in Marja's district centre.

MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM

counterproductive 'bean counting' based on short time horizons, which in turn can lead to unwarranted conclusions of failure. As one participant commented: *'We need a metric on how to assess and support processes – not just results.'*

Likewise it was noted that effective learning and measuring depend on something prior: a serious effort to understand the make-up of the state and the society, as well as the dynamics of the particular transition. Independent Diplomat director Carne Ross observed that the gap between outsider and insider knowledge is often profound – yet surmountable. Donors, who often support but do not implement programmes on the ground, could make more active use of their international and local grantee networks to obtain regular expert briefings to help them understand emerging risks and opportunities.

How do you fund?

A lot of emphasis was placed on the need for relationship-oriented philanthropy in transition environments – especially having in mind the goal



of inclusiveness, described by one participant as *'the most important building block for strengthening resilience'*. Key actors in fragile and conflict-affected states often need to build up the skill-set to talk and debate in a civilized way; to learn to step out of traditional, often patriarchal power relationships; and to build coalitions. Funders can encourage all of this by respectfully requiring NGOs and social leaders they support to work together.

To be effective, funders may start building dialogue and cross-group relationships even before the conflict ends or a transition begins. Key things to support may include projects focused on power sharing, the building of common identity and narratives, knowledge-producing and relationship-building institutions, and leadership development. Philanthropy can generally do more to go beyond its comfort zones – to pursue what one termed 'radical inclusion', meaning the creation of meeting spaces across divided ethnic, racial, gender, and class groups. A donor commented, *'You have to provide support that helps persuade the civic actors you know to temper themselves so that they can bridge across differences.'* This may include the very youth groups whose protests provided the impetus for change, but who now may need the skills of political coalition-building.

Who do you fund?

One participant commented that sometimes it seems like every donor is circling around the same few individuals in a transition – often those with political savvy and connections in the international donor community. The result is missed opportunities to strengthen emerging leadership in the cultural field, community leaders, young scholars, or historians who can help interpret the current moment in light of a country's past.

Other participants mentioned that philanthropists should build on the new energy in corporate responsibility, business leadership and social entrepreneurship. In particular, opportunities to build local philanthropic capacity are often overlooked in transitions. For example, investment banks have great potential influence on the way newly created wealth is invested socially in transitions. Philanthropy advisory services within financial organizations, CSR

While it is straightforward to tell the leaders of opposing camps that inclusion and dialogue are often the best way forward, convincing a highly polarized or sectarian-based citizenry that they will be better off abandoning old loyalties is a major challenge.

consultants and business schools are places where social change discussions are happening – yet foundations rarely engage them. Ironically, while transitions should be times when non-profit entities can flourish, the opposite is increasingly the case today. Social enterprises and entrepreneurship incubators may have more freedom of action to build capacity for change in difficult environments than NGOs.

Universities were also cited as potential partners. As one participant stated, *'they produce the citizens of tomorrow'* – and are often institutions ripe for the introduction of more experiential and community-focused learning methods that can have an impact on thousands of students and citizen leaders. At the same time, scholars and professors can be uniquely at risk during the periods leading up to a transition or in unstable periods immediately afterwards. Scholar rescue programmes for Latin America in the 1980s made a huge difference when the time came to rebuild post-military governance there. Faculty members who had been invited to teach and continue their scholarship in northern universities returned to become parliamentarians, party leaders, and even presidents of new democratic governments.

Regarding the Arab uprisings in particular, it was noted that one tragedy has been the way in which young voices and aspirations have been sidelined. In many places that are in turmoil, the generational shift has produced smart, globally connected and impatient young cohorts. They are demanding a political stake and economic opportunity, but frequently lack access to the new professional opportunities that transitions can produce, resulting in marginalization or new resentment. It was emphasized that this could be a crucial area for more focused and creative programming.

Understandably, not all donors present were comfortable with the idea of working with governments. But it was noted that state bodies are multi-layered, and *'even within the worst bureaucracy, one can find pockets of excellence. Funders should stay open to working with decentralized as well as centralized actors; formal as well as informal ones.'*

When do you leave?

While it is straightforward to tell the leaders of opposing camps that inclusion and dialogue are often the best way forward, convincing a highly polarized or sectarian-based citizenry that they will be better off abandoning old loyalties is a major challenge. It is a particularly thorny problem in fragile states,

including many in the Arab region, and can stall transitions for years or decades, as in Lebanon. *'The forces that allowed survival during the war (confessional identities) were the very forces that stood in the way of inclusive post-war dialogue,'* George Khalaf commented. *'In other words, what enabled survival during the war, disabled any postwar harmony and reconstruction. We were asking people to let go of allegiances (Sunni, Shiite, Maronite or Druze) that helped them during times of need and to reach for an elusive overarching national identity.'*

These are precisely the problem areas around inclusion where transition specialists and philanthropists could mine their experiences for examples of success, distilling some of the positive actions that in the past have encouraged the growth, over time, of cohesive national polities. Such examples will underscore just how worthwhile it can be to stay engaged and help work through the practices of exclusion that can otherwise hold a society back. As Jonathan Fanton,

Syria, March 2013.
A playground
damaged by
fighting in the
rebel-held Sultan
al-Basha district of
Aleppo.

MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM

former president of the MacArthur Foundation, remarked: *'While our conversation focused on countries in the early stages of transition, I believe philanthropy should stay with countries like Nigeria where the transition is incomplete. Another conversation might include Russia, where I believe it is important for foundations to remain involved even though the current situation is troubling.'*

Concluding thoughts

One thing that almost all roundtable participants agreed upon was the invaluable gift of independence that private philanthropy enjoys, yet may not be using to full effect. As Penelope Lewis of the World Bank remarked: *'Risk aversion among foundations – especially younger, newer philanthropies – is growing. Why is this and how can we encourage foundations to use the unique advantages they possess which sets them apart from other funders? Countries in transition need precisely what foundations can offer. And it is in countries in transition that philanthropy has the potential to make a significant impact.'* ▶



While the range of forward-looking suggestions made by participants is too long to include here, Robert Templer offered a useful encapsulation of some of the key ideas that surfaced about better ways for philanthropy to support transitions:

'Find people who have had no contact with outside funders. Give smaller test grants and see what people do with them. Fund people who are outside the NGO world to come up with great ideas. Fund universities to become repositories of ideas. Scale back on log frames and risk analyses and reference letters and get people to apply on the basis of their vision expressed how they know how to express it. Think politically in the way locals see politics.' @

Egypt, September 2012. Protestors stand by a newly erected wall made of concrete blocks built by the Egyptian Army to separate protestors from the entrance to the US embassy in Cairo.

MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM

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A Norwegian perspective on conflict resolution and peacebuilding

Tore Hattrem

Promotion of the rule of law, peace, dialogue, reconciliation and respect for human rights are all fundamental pillars of Norwegian foreign policy. All these elements are also important components for countries in transition. Norway works on these issues alone or in cooperation with other countries, researchers, NGOs, and organizations within and outside the UN system. Until now, direct collaboration with international philanthropy has been rare. But in a new development, the Peace and Reconciliation Section of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry has joined with Carnegie Corporation of New York to fund innovation in the field of peacebuilding.



Tore Hattrem is director general of Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The need for peacebuilding

After the initial sharp rise of intra- and inter-state armed conflicts that followed the end of the Cold War, the number of such conflicts actually decreased. The multilateral system, particularly the UN, became more effective in preventing and solving conflicts. Governmental and non-governmental action also contributed greatly. But fewer armed confrontations and more peace processes meant more post-conflict situations. The number of countries moving from authoritarian regimes to democracy also placed stress on the international community to devote financial, diplomatic, political and in some cases military resources to support transitions, which in many cases involved not only peacebuilding but also state-building elements.

Norway is very active in supporting these varied types of transition in fragile countries. This is a logical extension of our policy of facilitating peace processes. We believe that transitions in post-conflict environments need to be inclusive and sustainable, creating a new social contract between the government and the people, and between the state and the international system.

As a peaceful country with a sound economy, there is a political and social consensus in Norway that we have a responsibility to contribute to the well-being of other

countries and societies. We have a unique position, combining the absence of a colonial past, recognized experience in managing substantial energy resources, and a history that includes a transition from being an impoverished to a wealthy nation.

A multidimensional engagement

In its engagement with societies in transition, Norway is deeply committed to work that supports integrated approaches that combine multiple objectives: respect for the rule of law, democracy, equal rights (with particular attention to the role of women and their pivotal role in peace and security), education, the establishment of mixed economies with distributive policies, accountable and transparent institutions, poverty eradication and sustainable development. This multidimensional perspective has been developed by the Norwegian government in close cooperation with research institutes in Norway and abroad, and in constant dialogue with civil society organizations.

In the last two decades, Norway has been involved directly or indirectly in peace initiatives of different kinds, for example in the Middle East, in Asia (Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Afghanistan), in Africa (Somalia, South Sudan) and Latin America (Guatemala, and currently as a guarantor of the Colombian peace process together with Cuba). As the configuration of the international system is changing, Norway is also establishing special links with emerging powers like Brazil that were themselves in transition a few decades ago. Together, we believe in an approach that emphasizes dialogue and mediation, a long-term perspective, facilitation of solutions, and inclusiveness.

Experiences

One lesson from past experience is the critical role that state institutions play in ensuring security, the rule of law and protection of the rights of women and minorities, among other critical functions, during the transition. With this in mind, Norway has provided funding to help build the capacities of state institutions so that they are better able to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. It has also provided funds to civil society projects that likewise contribute to the consolidation of state institutions, for example in Haiti.

However, Norway is probably best known for its role in various peace processes as a trusted facilitator working towards a negotiated transition. Norway has had a long engagement in Israel/Palestine, starting with its role in the Oslo Peace Agreements, in supporting dialogue and track I and II peace initiatives; the Palestinian state-building project; and civil society organizations



Jordan, June 2013.
Syrian children
next to their tent
in the Zaatari
refugee camp.

in Israel and the Occupied Territories willing to cooperate in the two-state solution. In the Philippines, we were requested in 2001 to act as facilitator for the peace process between the Philippine government and the communist front (NDFP). During his visit to the Philippines in January 2014, Foreign Minister Børge Brende reconfirmed Norway's willingness to facilitate renewed talks if the parties so wished.

In the case of Colombia, Norway has been engaged for close to two decades in various dialogue initiatives between the government and the left-wing FARC and ELN guerilla groups. Over time, useful contacts and networks have been established with the main actors, thus facilitating Norway's current role in the Colombian peace talks.

The partnership with Carnegie Corporation

Norway continues to learn about support for democratic and post-conflict transitions. But there are new challenges today that require new solutions, and we are therefore investing in innovation.

Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to look for creative innovations to support peacebuilding. Applying lessons we learn along the way, we can all do better in helping countries to achieve successful transitions.

A year ago, Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to join efforts in order to promote new actors as well as identify innovative approaches in peacebuilding. This joint Public-Private Partnership on Peacebuilding (Px4 Initiative) will provide funding to consortia for projects involving a US, a Norwegian and at least one southern/emerging power partner.

Carnegie Corporation of New York's International Peace and Security programme works on a range of security and peacebuilding issues, from nuclear security to developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Of late, the programme has paid special attention to citizen uprisings and political transitions across the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Pakistan. And now, through our partnership, we have begun something new. Conversations are also under way with several other major US private foundations and grantmaking institutions about joining the partnership in some fashion.

Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to look for creative innovations to support peacebuilding. Applying lessons we learn along the way, we can all do better in helping countries to achieve successful transitions. @

Philanthropy in transitions: concluding reflections

Mark Freeman, Barbara Ibrahim and Hilary Pennington

Few professional sectors are better suited to support transitions than private philanthropy. Bilateral and multilateral aid agencies often operate on fixed, multi-year budget cycles and may require legally complex consultations with public officials or parliaments to take decisions. Compared to governments and other publicly accountable bodies, philanthropy has greater independence and flexibility with its funds, and thus a greater inherent capacity to take risks, to be bold and creative – yet it frequently refrains from using these advantages.

Mark Freeman, Barbara Ibrahim and Hilary Pennington are the guest editors for the *Alliance* special feature on 'Philanthropy in transitions'.

The simpler accountability structures give foundations greater capacity to swiftly recalibrate programmes and policies or to find new partners and projects when unexpected changes occur. This gives private philanthropy greater leeway to support remarkable people and processes when transitions arise – provided they have the will and the skill.

Without underestimating current global challenges, or the hard but important lessons from recent transitions in the Arab region and elsewhere, today's reflective mood in the philanthropic community is producing many new ideas worth considering. We have distilled a few of these for future consideration, drawing in part from the contributions to this special feature.

A different kind of affinity group

Few private donors have an explicit department or programme category dealing with 'transitions'. Moreover, concepts and terms long used in the transitions literature – like 'fragile states', 'state-building', 'democratization' and 'peacebuilding' – rarely feature in philanthropic discourse. The same might be said of the community of transition experts beyond philanthropy's walls: they are unlikely to utilize programming concepts familiar in philanthropy around 'scoping comparative advantage', 'ethical exit strategies' or 'leveraging impact'.

It was thus that the idea for a global transitions affinity group emerged from several conversations over

the past year. Integrating professionals from both fields – philanthropy and the broader community of transition experts and advisers – would make for an interesting experiment. It could help to overcome today's ad hoc engagement between these communities, and produce a structured, continuous interaction that could have real impact as transitions evolve.

A transitions network or affinity group could be initiated through existing thematic and regional philanthropic networks. Alternatively, it might become a stand-alone initiative. In either case, it would provide a platform for information exchange and analysis, and for discussion of potential collaborations as transitional opportunities arise. Private donors with substantial field presence and strong track records in transitions could lead the affinity group and promote joint assessments of the field's successes and failures. In addition, the group could provide a forum for 'day-after' advance planning for countries that appear on the verge of emerging from a period of conflict or authoritarian rule.

Political-economic assessment

Country-level analytic tools, including institutional mapping, conflict assessments and power analyses, have come a long way. They are no longer 'back of the envelope' exercises. By using the best available analytic tools, foundations and social investors can base their programmes on more realistic expectations and ensure tailored responses to periods of political, economic and social change. These tools are in wide use by foreign ministries and global consulting firms and could – and should – be adapted to the needs of philanthropists. Additionally, private donors can improve their transition assessments by engaging with a number of active foundation networks in the peacebuilding and human rights fields, which offer expertise and peer learning opportunities that are of direct relevance to transitions, as described by Jo Andrews.

Stand-by policies and funds

To avoid delayed or ad hoc responses to transition opportunities, grantmaking foundations and corporate donors could consider establishing a transition response policy (TRP) that would serve as an overarching 'rules and practice guide' for future engagements in transitions. A thorough TRP could provide advice to staff on how to swiftly assess context, and incorporate due diligence requirements with an eye to allowing for some risk-taking and exploratory grantmaking. ▶



Afghanistan,
August 2008.
Children play on
a hill overlooking
Kabul.

MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM

The TRP's natural counterpart would be a transitions contingency fund (TCF), a tool to increase preparedness that could be built up over time and reserved for unanticipated openings. It could, for example, be geared towards small grants, allowing foundations to test concepts and new partnerships while taking the time to vet grantee organizations being considered for larger grants. The fund might be stand-alone or linked to a donor's reserves, and fed by an annual infusion of sources determined by the trustees. Decision-making over the use of the TCF could be devolved to senior staff and their advisers in the field. Similar transition-specific funds already exist within the UN system, the World Bank and some bilateral aid agencies.

The implementation of even a few of these simple ideas bubbling up from the field could make an enormous difference. It could help donors to limit risks and maximize the chances of achieving significant positive outcomes when countries emerge from repressive regimes or the horrors of armed conflict.

Prioritizing dialogue

Private philanthropy, with its independence and flexibility, is well placed to help bring together divided or dispersed actors in order to foster inclusive social and political outcomes. Well-timed dialogues, as occurred with philanthropic support in places like South Africa and Northern Ireland, can have a profound impact, as the formal and informal agreements they help generate are often the cornerstones of successful transitions.

This type of process-oriented programming is a natural fit for the philanthropy sector, which is often viewed as more impartial than foreign governments. It also fits with a broad understanding of what transitions ultimately offer: learning processes in which

conflict stakeholders come to interpret and act upon their own roles and experiences from new vantage points. More so than at present, transition grantmaking can encourage these structured processes for the reconfiguring of relationships and the opening up of participation and dialogue spaces across society's key political, social and economic fault lines.

Catalytic short-term strategies

Private donors from abroad that plan to stay for a relatively short period may consider focusing their support along the lines of the UN's Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). QIPs are low-cost, small projects that aim to build confidence in early stages of peacebuilding, and are fitting for the fast pace of change in a transition. Shorter-stay international donors may also want to prioritize the establishment of partnerships with local donors who, by nature, are able to stay engaged longer. Supporting the creation of a local philanthropic infrastructure – as was done in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans – can be an equally smart choice for the early years of a transition. It can help mitigate the unsustainable dependence on international aid that too often results from poorly planned transition grantmaking.

Enhancing the ways philanthropists conceive and structure their engagement in transitions is bound to be an ongoing and evolutionary process. Yet the implementation of even a few of these simple ideas bubbling up from the field could make an enormous difference. It could help donors to limit risks and maximize the chances of achieving significant positive outcomes when countries emerge from repressive regimes or the horrors of armed conflict. @