

# **Donor Collaboratives and Devolved Decision Making: It's About the Fundamentals**

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# 1. Executive Summary

- Donor collaboratives with some level of devolved decision making are not simple. The interwoven and complex nature of the multiple elements that need to be considered mean that there is no one ideal structure. Nor can a tick-box approach to establishing such collaborations be adopted. Different sets of decisions will lead the discussion in diverse directions.
- The complexity of discussions that need to be undertaken in establishing such collaborations is taken for granted. Too often, assumptions, rather than defined agreements – have served as a baseline for moving forward.
- Donors must understand what their institutional governance frameworks allow or disallow in relation to devolved decision making. Application of these should be standard, not based on the preferences of individual donor representatives.

## Foundational Aspects

- Donor collaboratives must take care not to reflect a contradictory set of intentions and must differentiate between motivation of each of the individual donors when starting out vs. the collective intention of the combined set of donors when the fund is officially established.
- Discussions on ownership and identity of the fund are paramount. These have wide-ranging implications for how a collaborative unfolds, the nature and division of roles and responsibilities and the lines of accountabilities.
- Where global institutions are involved, local and global offices must speak with one voice. High level commitments by global offices must be informed by the perspectives of the local offices involved, and in-depth discussions engaged on trade-offs and constraints on institutional autonomy in the context of collective decision-making.
- Engaging on the issue of power is fundamental.
  - o Intent on devolution is crucial to conditioning the relationships between the different parties and to determining the powers, roles and responsibilities between them.
  - o If devolution is on the basis of principle – voice, legitimacy, agency - then clear boundaries on donor involvement must be defined and compromises understood. Inappropriate use of donor power, either overt or soft power, serves as a significant threat to such collaboratives.
  - o Donors must be clear *from the outset* what level of power is being devolved by donors and what this means for the nature of donors' influence and oversight on each of the following elements: (i) goal setting; (ii) governance; (iii) strategy, (iv) operations; (v) grantmaking (vi) grant monitoring and (vii) co-ordination.

- Devolution does not imply the absence of constructive collaboration between a fund and its contributing donors. Mechanisms can be enabled that result in donor engagement without inappropriate interference.
- The potential for abuse of power exists wherever power resides. Even in devolved structures, checks and balances are required at different levels – and these must be built into the collaborative at the outset.

### **Critical Building Blocks**

- Representation is often taken for granted; selecting who represents each of the different role players in a collaborative must be given strategic thought. As well, criteria underlying the choice of external actors and the entry point of their involvement needs to be clearly defined.
- Clarity on foundational and operational issues is vital. Working definitions, assumptions, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities need to be clear, unambiguous and documented appropriately.
- Form and structure need to follow substance. Collaboratives that prioritize decisions on what to do (programmatic goal) before deciding how to do it (structure) have fared better.
- Programmatic imperatives must be rooted in local perspective. Where planning has included intensive and ongoing discussions with local civic actors, collaboratives have been much more grounded in approach and in tune with contextual imperatives.
- Leveraging additional funds for a region/program is in itself not a sufficient enough motivation for a collaborative. There must be a clear substantive value add accompanying this, either on program or process – or both.
- Where a collaboratives programming intersects with a contributing donor’s own area of work, it is important for the donor to understand the lines between them and asses if these intersections increase impact or just duplicate resources.
- Different types of accountabilities will emerge within devolved structures, but care needs to be taken that the lines of accountability on each aspect are clear and non-competing. Collaboratives need to be clear on who is responsible for what and who is accountable to whom on different things.
- Appropriate governing documentation, agreed to by all parties upfront, plays an important role in steering the collaborative in the intended direction, resolving conflicts as they arise and maintain the essence of the collaboration during transitions.
- Relationships of trust between individuals and between institutions serve as a core for healthy collaboration. Attention must be given to developing and enabling this where it does not exist.
- All aspects of a collaborative’s functioning must have delineated limitations and parameters. In the absence of these, challenges arise out of conflicting assumptions and/or expectations that have not been defined.

- It is vital to ensure that there is a designated central point that co-ordinates the activities of the different role-players and that accountability for this function is well defined.
- Each collaborative needs to decide upfront whether ringfencing of funds will be allowed and interrogate what the pros and cons of this will be on its goals.
- Processes for ongoing internal and external reflection and learning must be built into the collaborative's functioning as a means of enabling adaptive practice on substance and process, supporting cross donor learning, understanding impact and serving as an oversight mechanism.

### **Maintaining a Collaborative**

- Attention must be given to ensuring space for ongoing connectedness, communication and trust building between different role players.
- Where collaboratives have contributed to cross donor learning and planning, donors have had a more vested interest in making it work.
- Personality plays an important role and donors need to factor this in when selecting representatives/external role players to engage in collaborative efforts.
- Maintaining the collaborative's core intention should not be taken for granted. As new donors join, thought must be given on how to balance orientation to existing strategies and processes with spaces for new donors to influence the collaborative and develop a sense of ownership.
- Collaboratives need to plan how they will deal with transitions of donors/selection committees/secretariats and plan around mitigating the implications that these transitions could have on institutional memory, strategy, budgets and grantees.
- Donor collaboratives, whether fixed-term or indeterminate, must plan for responsible exit.

## 2. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Commissioned by the Ford Foundation Office for Southern Africa to explore three donor collaborations it is involved in; all of which include some level of devolved decision making, this report presents an independent analysis on the nature of the collaborative models in question and a reflection on the lessons that can be learned from them and other models in the region. The report therefore concentrates on the intricacies of the models and the different mechanisms within, and not on their programmatic impact.

The research focused intensely on three different donor collaborations involving the Ford Foundation – The Multi Agency Grantmaking Initiative (MAGI), the Joint Gender Fund (JGF) and the Constitutionalism Fund (CF), but then also sought to explore some of the core questions in relation to five other contemporary donor collaboratives located in the Southern Africa region.

The report covers a broad range of issues that need to be considered over the lifespan of such donor collaboratives, from inception to closure. The findings include reflections on (i) a series of critical foundational aspects dealing with intent, ownership and power that must be addressed conceptually at the outset (ii) lessons emerging on a range of substantive issues that influence practical functioning of the collaborative and delineate its parameters and (iii) experiences on issues to consider in maintaining a collaborative and transitioning/closing one out. The report also includes two guidelines that donors can refer to in establishing such collaboratives.

Perhaps the biggest lesson emerging from this study is the interwoven and complex nature of the multiple elements that need to be considered in navigating such collaborations. As such, the report does not seek to offer a ‘tick box’ approach to the topic but reflects on the critical issues that require consideration, where different sets of decisions emerging will lead the discussion in diverse directions.

## 3. Methodology

- The research involved a combination of:
  - (i) In-depth documentary review of the three collaborative funds. Documentation was requested from both donors and secretariat institutions. This met with varying success, particularly in relation to obtaining documentation from the different secretariats.
  - (ii) Reflections on literature about donor collaborations broadly. It should be mentioned that collaborative funds, while on the increase, are not new and have been the subject of many

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to acknowledge the contributions of all those who gave their time to be interviewed as part of this research; it is their valuable reflections that form the basis of this report. As well, acknowledgement is given for the contributions of the Ford Foundation South Africa Office representatives in reviewing drafts of this report and providing valuable feedback. While the report is commissioned by the Ford Foundation, all findings are independent.

analyses. A recently released *Literature Review on Funder Collaborations*<sup>2</sup> by Bridgespan identifies 125 documents on donor collaborations. In looking at these, a few important points emerge. While different types of funder collaborations can be identified, the reports don't distinguish learnings specific to these different types. Collaborations with some level of devolved decision-making involve a particular set of dynamics and warrant further specific exploration. In addition, the majority of the lessons and learnings are from the Global North. This report therefore adds some diversity to the evidence base. A tangential part of this also deals with dynamics that emerge between global offices and local offices of both donors and secretariat institutions.

(iii) Interviews with 38 people which included a range of participating donors, staff and leadership at intermediary/secretariat institutions, advisory boards or selection panel members, and a small number of grantees – both past and present. The initial interview list was developed to include key players involved in the three different funds but then extended through a snowballing methodology to include other interviewees. Additional respondents that linked to other donor collaborations were then identified and included.

- All interviews were conducted on the basis of strict confidentiality. As such, the report does not identify specific collaborations in relation to the findings.
- Key questions this research considered were:
  - a) How should donors participating in collaborative mechanisms think about the (i) structure, (ii) donor agreements; (iii) host institutions/mechanisms; (iv) decision-making and accountability and (v) staffing, overheads, administrative and operating costs.
  - b) What has worked well and what has been challenging from an operational, structural and implementation perspective?
  - c) What is the appropriate role (if any) of program staff and the leadership of participating foundations in such mechanisms? Should they participate in: Executive Committees (Exco); advisory committees; provide operating support; engage in monitoring and due diligence? If so, to what extent?
  - d) What are the advantages and disadvantages of devolving power and decision making to experts in the country/region and how can such an approach improve/hinder efficiency and effectiveness?
  - e) What lessons from other collaborative funds in the country could assist foundations/donors operating in South Africa to navigate collaborative mechanisms better?

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bridgespan.org/bridgespan/Images/articles/how-funder-collaborations-succeed-and-fail/bridgespan-value-of-philanthropic-collaboration-study-literature-review.pdf>



### 3.1 Parameters and limitations of the research

The various collaboratives are at different stages. Some are fairly new and have emerging areas of concern but can only be fully understood and reflected on with time. Others go back many years and the research has had to accommodate for several aspects that arise from this:

- There are inevitably gaps in information due to (i) incomplete documentation and/or limited or vague recollection of details on certain issues and (ii) transitions of people out of donor or secretariat institutions or selection committees
- As important to note is that in the absence of complete documentation, multiple narratives have sometimes emerged on particular issues, with different people ‘remembering history’ in ways that do not always align. While approaching this issue with caution, the research has tried as much as possible to account for this in the analysis.

## 4. Typologies

### 4.1 Terminology

Each of the funds have used different terms for the various levels of fund governance, administration and decision making. To enable consistency of understanding, the report uses the following terms:

- A **‘fund’** or **“basket fund”** or **“collaborative fund”** refers to a distinct body of money contributed by a set of donors for a shared purpose.
- A **‘donor’** is referred to here in its entirety as an organization – but it should be borne in mind that, for the purposes of this report, each donor has multiple levels – which may bring different roles and accountabilities into play. These include, global offices; local offices and executive committees (Exco).
- **‘Founding donor’** refers to the donor who initiated the idea or brought together the initial set of contributing donors around a collaborative idea.
- **‘Donor collective’** refers to the collective of participating/contributing donors.
- **‘Host institution’** or **‘Secretariat’** refers to the institution/individuals that are administering the day-to-day operations of the fund.
- **‘Selection committee’** refers to a body that makes decisions on grants and/or programming.
- **‘Advisory committee’** refers to a body that can make recommendations and give guidance but not make final decisions.

## 4.2 Institutional Arrangements

Several different structures were present in the various models, some with very straightforward lines of authority and accountability over different aspects (from strategy, staffing, programming and grant allocations and monitoring) and others with quite complicated structural arrangements that reflect multiple and competing lines of authority and accountability. Some of the models have evolved over time in terms of both decision-making and the nature of the pooled funds.

A simplified typology of the funds considered by this research and the different models they employ is reflected below. While these cover a broad range of configurations of donor collaboratives generally, this is not a finite list; other configurations are also possible.

- i. A basket fund is hosted by one of the participating donors. Strategy development is jointly undertaken by the donor collective, while governance and operations are the purview of the hosting donor. Grant making is decided upon by a grants committee comprising donors and civil society.
- ii. A basket fund is hosted by one of the participating donors. Governance, strategy development and grant-related approvals are vested with the donor collective.
- iii. A basket fund is hosted by one of the participating donors. Governance is vested with the donor collective; strategy development is collaboratively undertaken between donors and secretariat based on civil society input; program staff have considerable authority in recommendations, but eventual approval lies with the donor collective.
- iv. A basket fund is administered by a third-party host institution. Strategy development and governance is the purview of the host institution. Donor participation in grant allocations depends on institutional due diligence requirements of the individual donors – some have to participate; some have to opt out.
- v. A basket fund is administered by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party host institution. Strategy development, governance and operations are the purview of the host institution; an advisory board of donor representatives and independent experts makes grant recommendations, but approvals lie with the secretariat's Board.
- vi. A basket fund is administered by a donor-linked entity. An independent selection panel is constituted to develop strategy, budgets and approve grants, supported by a team of consultants to manage the day – to – day activities of the fund. All strategy, budget and grant decisions made by the selection panel need to be ultimately approved by an Exco, comprized of the donor representatives.
- vii. An agreement to pool funds is linked to the establishment of a separate legal institution to govern and manage the programs and grants, with some donors having a seat on the Board of the new

institution. Governance, program strategy, implementation and grant decisions are independent and the responsibility of the new institution.

- viii. An agreement to pool funds is linked to the establishment of a separate legal institution, housed within the physical space of one of the contributing donors and using back office support from that donor. Some donors have a seat on the board of the new institution, others are involved in different ways. An exco including the funding and sectoral role-players is present. The institution is somewhat, but not totally, independent in its decision-making.
- ix. An agreement to pool funds is linked to the establishment of a separate entity to govern and manage the use of those funds programmatically - with some element of funding set aside for the organizing strategies that emerge. Governance, program strategy, implementation and grants support are led by a committee which includes donors, the host institution staff and civil society partners.

In theory, the above descriptions correspond to the basic mechanics of the collectives under study. In practice however, matters are not so cut-and-dried and in some, contestation has arisen between different players, at different stages of the model. Moreover, in some cases these original models have evolved into different configurations.

Aside from this, it is difficult to generalize about the merits or demerits of particular models per se, for a number of reasons. For one thing, none of the elements of these models can be considered in isolation, and no one single aspect of the model functioning well, is in itself an adequate criterion for positive functioning or dysfunction in the model as a whole.

Second, so much of the functioning of the models is influenced by issues such as context, personality, power, legitimacy, etc. In essence, there is no one answer or approach to be followed on script and some models, however successful they may appear, can never be replicated given different contextual/ other dynamics. Having said that, the study surfaced several issues that bear noting.

## 5. Choice of model<sup>3</sup>

*Was it really a model? It was just like, a kind of mechanism and... it's not like there were real strategic choices. You know, a group of donors wanted to put money together into a single fund, then administer it and make grants. So, what are the choices in that? I mean, the choices are where the decisions get made, who approves them, the choices are where the capacity is housed. It didn't feel like there were a whole range of different options and we chose 'Oh, option one on this question, and option two on this question and option three on that one.' It felt very preconfigured and that we kind of gave life to what were the obvious choices.*

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1 on some core operational questions that need to be considered

*[He said] 'we can't be responsible for setting up a new fund. Because will this run parallel alongside [us] and are you outsourcing [our] responsibilities to this fund? Is this a local intermediary? Or is it a new foundation, or is it an intermediary for us? And he was saying, 'if we're setting up a new foundation, we have a responsibility beyond [the short term].'*

Does the choice of model need to be complicated? No. Do donors need to have complex discussions? Absolutely. Essentially once the foundational aspects of intent, ownership, devolution etc. – discussed in detail below - are addressed, the set of choices of what kinds of models to consider automatically emerge.

If donors are looking for a mechanism simply to leverage more funds, have efficiencies in a pooled fund, take existing programs to scale, or support specific grantees, then the set of options to consider revolve around (i) enabling collective donor decision-making with defined accountabilities and (ii) enabling operational efficiency and mechanisms for bringing in skills to provide any value-add beyond grants. If donors are looking for external participation – and this can be at varying levels – then, in addition, more complicated discussions need to be added on (iii) what kinds of decision-making mechanisms can enable external input and at what level of authority; (iv) whether to manage devolution with oversight and if so how and; (v) what kind of mechanisms would ensure straightforward and non-conflicting lines of responsibility and accountability.

## **5.1 Institutional parameters**

Donors also need to be clear about what their institutional governance frameworks allow them to do. For instance, in one case, donor representatives had been brainstorming for several months on a devolved grantmaking mechanism, only to discover that the governance of the donor institution did not allow for it to devolve authority externally on where funds were used and found itself having to withdraw from discussions. On the flip side of this is a donor whose institutional principle dictates that once money is allocated to re-granting; it should have no influence on who that money is sub-granted to.

Another tricky element observed is that while individual donor representatives may have differing views on what level of delegation is appropriate, whatever level is finally agreed upon must be an institutional decision - not one that individual donor representatives reserve the right to change as staff transitions happen. This makes for inconsistency and confusion.

## 6. Foundational aspects

### 6.1 Motivation vs. intent

*So, for us, the basket fund gave us an intermediary where we could put funds and it goes [where we need it to go]. So, risk mitigation, and then being able to meet [the] grassroots levels, which we can't do because of capacity. And also, entry into stuff that we don't have in our portfolio.*

Perhaps the first thing all donors need to be clear and upfront with each other about is the matter of their motivation: What are the factors motivating the establishment of a pooled fund and what is the value-add of pooling funds for each donor. The motivations for donors entering a collaboration naturally differ and these can include one or several of:

- addressing programmatic or constituency voice gaps;
- enabling donor/ field learning;
- involvement in work the donor would not be able to ordinarily do;
- enabling scale;
- legacy and responsible exit;
- leveraging additional resources;
- innovation and experimentation;
- strengthening a cadre of institutions or a field;
- strengthening donor relationships;
- being mandated to collaborate by global offices;
- achieving specific strategy milestones;
- effectiveness or efficiency.

The research shows that each donor begins engaging with these collaboratives based on different and multiple motivations – and this multiplicity is not necessarily counterproductive, provided that (i) there is absolute clarity with each other on the motivations and what their initial expectations are and (ii) there is then a collectively developed intent on what function the fund realistically can and cannot fulfill (iii) clarity on what the compromises and trade-offs of this developed intent are and (iv) what the opportunity costs of that may be. It is here one must differentiate between what is the motivation of each of the individual donors when starting out and what is the collective intention of the combined set of donors before the fund is officially established.

*I don't know if there was ever a properly facilitated conversation...literally to the day that we all came together they were still deciding on [key issues] so what does that tell you? [It] tells you that the fundamentals of who this was formed for aren't clear.*

In one fund, donors came in with multiple motivations but did not seek to define a collective intention. This meant that programming expectations were met for some donors, but not for others. For some of these donors, leveraging additional money was the primary intention, and programmatic alignment became a negotiated agreement of priorities that were too broad and vague to be meaningfully operationalized.

*Eventually there's legal agreement between us that we'll set up this fund; this is how much money we can put. And it was the only idea which was left on the table where we could agree that this is what we will do with the money... So, it was kind of like a negotiated fund because we knew this is what they would be interested in; this is how we could get money. So, we were negotiating for money.*

While collaboratives can meet multiple motivations, these need to be thought out clearly to understand what contradictions might arise from the different motivations. For instance, motivations around donor learning and sharing may be easily compatible with building a field or achieving certain milestones, but motivations around enabling space for new/local voices may be at odds with strengthening existing core institutions in the space.

Sometimes, if there are fundamental differences in what they seek out of the collaborative, it is better for an individual donor to walk away. As well, it can be important for a collaborative to decide that courting a donor with conflicting motivations will do more damage to the collaborative than the funds that it will add. Donors need to define what level of compromise is feasible and appropriate so that the eventual collaborative is not in itself a contradictory set of intentions.

Lastly, it is important that external communication on the fund reflects the collective intent as the primary focus but, where the fund has been shaped in particular ways because of individual donor motivations, these need to be communicated as well. This is reflective of transparency but also helps to position the new fund appropriately in the sector.

## **6.2 Ownership**

*So, I think there is a conversation about [the] architecture of basket funds that needs to be had. Is it possible that if we, as the host organization, were going through whatever troubles we are going through, could they possibly have decided to move the [fund] to a different host and continue funding it? If the answer is yes, then indeed, it belongs to the shareholders [donors]. But as I had conversations with the funders, what they've been saying is 'how can we help [your organization?]' The conversation hasn't been 'how can we salvage, the fund, the basket fund?'*

*And then it was [seen as] the institution's staff. So, we're recruiting staff [for the institution, not the collaborative], and you don't actually have a say in that. And those*

*people [staff] saw their relationship very much with [the institution], not [as], “I service the fund.”*

*It depends on where the idea originates, but I think even where donors are the ones that come with the idea to the table, however you decide to design that donor fund, you need to be able to...allow it to grow beyond you as the contributors to the fund.*

The question of ownership is one of the aspects of collaboration most taken for granted and not mentioned in any documentation of the funds under study, and yet it is critical in such devolved funds. Sometimes the donors and the secretariat have differing understandings of where ownership lies, and in some cases even collaborating donors have differing understandings between themselves. As long as things run smoothly, these do not present a problem, but once challenges arise, the failure to discuss ownership and the competing assumptions about it in advance can compound these.

Equally fundamental is understanding what ownership translates into, in terms of roles and responsibilities between the donor collective and the secretariat.

Questions that need to be asked here include:

- Who has ultimate responsibility for the preservation of the collaborative?
- Can donors move the fund to another secretariat if they are unhappy?
- Who is responsible for getting new donors on board?
- Does the secretariat speak with its own voice on the fund or assume the positions of the fund's donors?
- Who has the final decisions on recruitment of staff/consultants?
- How is the fund branded and who gets credit for success?
- Whose responsibility is it to recruit new donors?
- When one donor seeks to leave the fund, whose responsibility is it to engage that donor and explore if/how the reasons for leaving can be addressed? The secretariat or the donor?

*That's like a huge lesson for me in terms of how we didn't navigate the hard conversations around the table of what made people leave and what made people be wary of [the fund]. And none of us said [that] we actually need to go meet with someone senior and see if we can figure this out.*

Importantly, the ownership issue also needs to be interrogated within the donor collective itself. Each collaborative has a founding donor – the donor with which the idea originated – and as new donors are being brought in, collective ownership is not an automatic given, but needs to be developed. In this emerging space it is often the founding donor that holds sway on key decisions initially. Moreover, some consideration needs to be taken of the role the founding donor plays during the lifespan of the fund and the nature of its influence. Do its views take precedence over other donors or is its influence equal to others? What happens when it fundamentally disagrees with the collective? What happens to the collective when a founding donor decides to leave or that the fund should be terminated?

### 6.2.1 Identity

*So, they spend like probably an hour every single board meeting, proper Exco meeting, discussing and delineating who in which organization and capacity this belongs to, right, even though it is set up to function [independently] its [physical host] is doing everything; which is why there's so much egos in the room about who this belongs to. So, I mean there's difficulties there ...it is an independent [entity] but it's not functioning as independent. And it's still trying to find its identity as an independent... if there was a physical separation you would see much higher efficiency.*

Linked to ownership is the issue of identity, which needs to be considered at two levels:

The first is separating identity of individual donors from the identity of a collective of donors. Collaborations are rarely just an accumulation of donor resources and so some consideration needs to be given to how donors engage in the fund as something that has a collective identity beyond their own institutions.

The second is that donors need to be clear if what they are establishing is a fund with a separate identity or a pooled fund with a shared vision of the contributing donors and what the implications of each are, both for internal relationships and external engagements. Some questions to be addressed here include:

- How does the fund position itself externally and what kind of messaging is communicated on identity?
- Does it participate in sector meetings as a 'donor' or is it represented at these by its contributing donors?
- If the latter, what are the implications for the fund's staff in keeping abreast of issues?
- Does the fund speak with its own voice or take on positions of its contributing donors?
- If the former, what happens when the fund's view is significantly different to that of its contributing donors?
- If the latter, what happens when contributing donors have conflicting positions? Does it take on the position of the founding donor or the donor with more funds vested? How does it navigate this?

### 6.3 Local vs global offices

In the case of several of the collaborations under study, there is the added element of having a global office and a local office at donor or secretariat level – in some cases at both. Here, it is vital that there is clarity and agreement between these different institutional levels. If an institution does not speak with one voice or has conflicting understandings of the elements of the collaborative – where, for instance, collaboratives have been agreed at local level, without adequate understanding of the implications at



the global level or, they have been agreed at global level and then imposed at local level, it is inevitable that challenges arise .

*It is bad practice for international NGOs [or donors] to design something from the top-down. It's money, and so people will take it, and no one will complain in the NGO sector, but if it's not designed from at least a national level, I think it's always going to be problematic.*

*We [local offices] were consulted but not listened to in the development of that [fund].*

In more than one case, differences between global and local offices in one or more issues related to motivation for joining, relevance of the nature and set up of the collaborative or ownership led to significant difficulties down the line.

In one fund, a local office served both as a contributing donor and as secretariat to the collaborative and its local leadership operated on the premise that the collaborative was collectively owned and responsible for decision-making on all aspects. When the local leadership changed and the global institution itself began restructuring, the donor-secretariat no longer contributed funds to the basket and things shifted significantly within the fund; the new secretariat leadership saw the collaborative as being owned by its institution, while the donors saw the collaborative as being owned by the donor collective only. This created a state of constant push and pull, particularly for staff administering the collaborative, as they were being drawn into multiple and competing accountabilities and power battles which placed enormous strain on them.

*I think towards the end it became so so ugly that they [donors] were aware, but I think until then there was a fear, certainly from me and [my colleagues] of protecting the fund. So, we really wanted the fund to work, so we would hide a lot of what was not working from the donors and we [staff of the fund] would rather fight the internal battles than let donors know. We did a lot of that for a long time...It was so stressful... it was this constant push and pull about being told [by our bosses] "you can't do this, you're horrible at it, you don't know what the hell you're doing" to then [later] be sitting in front of these donors and being told "wow the fund is doing so well, thank you for the good work, we really appreciate it."*

In addition, the nature of the fund changed, from one that was collectively strategized and led, to one that became more secretariat-led, with donors very unhappy that programming and budgeting decisions were now being made unilaterally. Lastly, the programming of the fund itself was affected as the secretariat was seen by some to be using its assumed authority to make decisions in its own programmatic interest, rather than in the programmatic interest of the donor collective.

In another collaboration, one donor's participation was decided at the global office level, but direct participation and representation was at the level of the local office, which was not convinced that the structure of the collaborative was the right one or that its framing had been based on sufficient consultation with the sector. Significant challenges emerged as the collaborative progressed which highlighted these concerns, but they were not sufficiently considered. The lesson here is that collaboratives that involve global and local offices must at their very core have local buy-in and be informed by the representatives on the ground.

Global offices often look at the bigger picture of “the principle of donor collaboration” or the incentive of “attracting/leveraging additional funds” and may commit, at executive level, to collaborations that are not necessarily feasible or valuable from the perspective of the local offices. These big-picture motivations must be accompanied by rigorous analyses of the substantive value-add of the collaborative on the ground and must be informed by local representatives. Moreover, donor collaborations that are mandated by global offices without adequate consultation of local offices are both disempowering to local representatives and can have strong reputational impacts for the donor’s local offices when the collaboratives are questioned by the field at large. Where local offices exist, their perspectives should be critical in informing if and how collaborations should proceed. In addition, where local donor offices also have multiple lines of upward accountability, these multiple layers can make it difficult for a local office to manage if and how it engages in a collaboration and the terms upon which it does so. There is a great deal of complexity in these situations and engaging this complexity is often a significant challenge.

When collaboratives involve institutions that have global offices it is imperative that there is:

1. Sufficient discussion between the different offices on the value of the collaborative to the institution and imperatives for involvement.
2. Understanding of the institutional constraints and trade-offs on autonomy that taking on a secretariat function brings.
3. Full and agreed understanding of ownership and decision-making between global and local offices of donor and secretariat institutions.
4. Clarity on where authority is vested – global or local office.
5. Agreed-upon expectations on how the secretariat will budget, operate and report to the donor collective vis-a-vis the global office.

## 6.4 Engaging the power question

### 6.4.1 Intent in devolving power

*Do we want the system to "run itself" seamlessly and be a quicker, less cumbersome mechanism? Or do we want more sophisticated levels of accountability spelt out for each level and role?*

*We have to be comfortable as funders, how much control do we want? And how much do we want to let go? Is this a participatory funding mechanism? Or is it a collaborative funding mechanism?*

*We [now] have people [at the secretariat] with no expertise in this field. And we don't have legitimacy with the grantees that are now actually doing this work. And that's a problem for us... when we [donors] used to sit at the advisory committee you had the staff having a lot of expertise and a lot of connection. And now, we [donors] have more expertise than the [staff] people presenting to us. And that's a problem.*

*You have to give up power if you set up a fund. You really do. Otherwise, it distorts. Obviously there must be clear structures and clear agreement on why and when and who*

*and how and all those kinds of things, but you have to then at some point step back and let it run, and check in every now and again through an assessment or an evaluation or an engagement... otherwise, then you might as well just continue funding within your own sort of systems.*

As this study deals specifically with donor collaborations that include some level of devolved decision-making, these models extend outside of the collaborating donors and include one or more third parties (either institutional or individual). Perhaps one of the biggest lessons emerging from this study is that any such collaborative, must be clear *from the outset* what level of power is being devolved by donors and what this means for the nature of donors' influence on the use of their grant funds. To start with, donors first need to reflect on what level of power they are committed to ceding and all donors be clear both on what that entails in terms of their overt practice and their level of soft influence.

So, the first question to answer is whether the fund will be independent of donor influence or not? If what is being created is a fully independent fund, are there circumstances in which donors retain the right to intervene and, if so, what are they?

Again, if devolution of decision-making is partial, and donors are establishing a mechanism with some limited level of independent action, this also needs to be spelled out upfront. It is vital to know (independently of structure) whether and how much power donors agree to retain or devolve on each of the following: (i) goal setting, (ii) governance (iii) program strategy (iv) program operations, (v) grant-making, (vi) grant monitoring and (vii) co-ordination.

At the same time, a discussion is needed on the reasons for bringing in external players. Is it for (i) administrative ease, (ii) to have a neutral third party involved so that no one donor dominates (iii) programmatic insight and expertise (iv) to add value/reach that donors themselves don't have, or (iv) inclusion of constituency voice? Intent on devolution is crucial to conditioning the relationships between the different parties and to determining the powers, roles and responsibilities between them.

Donors, particularly international donors have long been criticized for imposing programs and strategies based on priorities developed elsewhere - and there is an increasing push-back on the need for more grounded ways of influencing funding streams. There is some sense that donors have responded to this by bringing in external actors. In addition, it may give donors the space and legitimacy to take on things they may not ordinarily do. In either of these cases, donors need to be mindful of the potential backlash when local legitimacy is a goal in theory, but not the practice.

Donor collaboratives can be intensive and time consuming, particularly for external players who are giving their time voluntarily. There also needs to be some consideration on the flip side of devolving power, particularly when bringing in very high-profile people onto decision making structures, but without being clear if they have the availability to commit the time required or the difficulties in aligning scheduling for such high-profile people. This is in part affected by inadequate clarifications on roles and responsibilities – when these are vague, people come in with assumptions on time-requirements that are at odds with the reality.

*But I think, we underestimated how much time they had you know... sometimes it was difficult, I think, to get them all to engage and to commit even the time that was required, so their own processes became difficult.*

*It complicates things, it complicates things, it delays as well because if you going to have to bring people together all the time to make decisions around your grant-making, often times they are not available. There's all sort of things that come into play, so I think if you could find a way of removing that layer by kind of doing a lot more at the beginning around tightening deliverable requirements, processes, due diligence, accountability, whatever you wanna [sic] call it. It probably would make the whole thing much more efficient in a way.*

In situations where devolution is to selection committee members who are not available to take on the role, then decision making gaps open up and these are assumed by a secretariat to enable the collaborative to move forward. In these cases, however, donors need to ask of themselves, 'who is power being devolved to'?

*I think, it needed more time commitment from the [selection committee] and more sort of leadership, intellectual kind of driving ownership of the process from [them]. In the absence of that, that then fell to the [secretariat]*

#### **6.4.2 Power and the implications on roles and responsibilities**

*I think that the process needs, either you need to choose people to do the work [or choose people] who you need to lead.*

*The one thing probably could've been done differently is to give the organizations much more control over how the resources are moved within the fund and I think probably having a clearer agreement between the different organizations and the intermediary around the fund would probably facilitate that better. I don't know how they were organized but my sense is that because you needed to have the foundations as part of the advisory council probably means that they felt they need to have another level of accountability earned and controlled to make sure the money is moved in the way that they need it to be moved - and I think it would've worked better to not have that level.*

When bringing in external players on decision-making committees, the donor collective needs to be clear – are they consulting and asking for advice or are they delegating decision-making? If it is the latter, the types of decisions they will be directly involved in making, the decisions they will provide oversight on and those they will have no involvement in, all need to be clearly and individually defined.

It is important here that different types of oversight are recognized. There is oversight on governance, on process and on strategy/program and each of these need to be engaged. Moreover, care should be taken not to confuse these kinds of oversights with the due diligence grant monitoring and financial compliance oversight that donors are mandated to undertake.

Equally important is, if donor oversight exists, in what form and under what circumstances? So, when donors delegate power on certain decisions, what happens if they don't like what the delegated decision-making body does? Is it appropriate to have an intervention discussion? How does that impinge on the independence of the external players? What are processes for raising these issues in ways that are productive? Or, do the donors recognize that autonomy needs to be respected and back off?

There is a link to be interrogated between ownership, oversight and power. Ownership by donors brings with it the power to maintain oversight at multiple levels and the power to influence key decisions. Ownership by the secretariat brings with it a significantly different relationship on the kinds of oversight the donors have the power to engage on.

Where legitimacy is a key rationale for bringing in external decision makers, then care needs to be taken in defining clear boundaries on donor involvement. Here consideration needs to also be given to ensuring that external messaging to the field is consistent with internal practice on devolution.

*Just the mere fact that they are there, it gives certain level of credibility to the fund in itself and because I know these people, their politics.... So, it's important because we don't have to question, call, phone; we do know that when decisions are being taken, it's been taken from a particular point because we know that they have operated with integrity. And that, to us, is very important. Everybody is influenceable, but for me it's that they [the selectors] are not influenceable by the broader challenges that is [sic] happening within the sector, and I think that, in itself, gives credibility.*

### **6.4.3 Power and independence as a principle**

*The funding agencies would have in their minds some kind of rationalized joint fund that allows them to streamline their own programmes, maybe get away with putting less money in but getting the same kind of reach and just, you know, reducing their overheads and reducing their transaction costs. It hasn't quite worked like that. The local partners have said that's fine, but that's a joint fund, let's do that if that's what you want. But if you serious about having a genuine relationship of solidarity then you've got to throw everything out; nothing is sacred, and you don't predetermine the outcome. So, you make the path by walking it, and so we've moved away from that concept of a joint fund.*

*If we wanted to be the decision-making body, we should have been that. But we sort of, we gave power to a group of people and then we tried to take power back and every step of the way, we tried to say, 'No, don't do it like that, do it like this. No, don't do it like that.' And the structure we set up was like, 'you guys are independent, there is a panel of experts that is going to make all these decisions.' So, it seems like we wanted to have some kind of participatory mechanism.... but the final sign off [should still be with us].*

Central to this discussion is whether independence is a matter of principle or of process. If key strategy and programmatic decisions are devolved to external actors on the basis of voice, alternative perspective, local legitimacy, or recognition of agency - in other words, as a matter of principle - then devolution cannot be piecemeal, with donors constantly questioning decisions. The roles of the donors here should be confined to oversight on whether the fundamental intentions of the collective are being met.

Ideology is an important issue to reflect on, particularly where devolution is a matter of principle. Here it is important that there is a shared ideology between the collaborating funders on what this devolution entails and both the symbolic and practical implications of it. As well, it is important that any secretariat engaged must understand and commit to that ideological framework.

*They [secretariat staff] were very focused on building partnerships and not using the traditional kind of donor type relationship and I thought they were actually really successful in that. You know, in that whole, really successful because you felt that the people you were working with had a kind of common vision, you know, that they were investing in what was happening, themselves as well... think it was in terms of some ideology in one way but I think in the other way there was a lack of experience of the people heading [the secretariat]...in understanding even the fact that there could be [an] ideological basis [for this work].*

#### **6.4.4 Intention and practice**

Intention is one thing, however, but since donors are accustomed to making the decisions on how money is allocated, the reality of enabling participation and truly devolving power is tricky at best – particularly when collaboratives take on a trajectory different from donors’ initial expectations.

*There was the perception that every time there was a problem in the sector that this could be kind of a slush fund where you pull the fund out ... we've had to constantly resist a notion that every time there's a crisis in the sector then we [the fund] should think of something to respond to that.*

*if it's about power, you can't set up this fund and then still wanna [sic] retain like a thin string to pull an arm when you don't like something. Either give up the power or take it all back.*

*I've been co-opted onto the advisory committee, quote unquote...seeing the power dynamics of those who are actually putting money in it [you can't but be aware] of the power that [donors] are bringing into this conversation... it's very difficult.*

Several issues require consideration:

It is important that donors themselves agree on how power is shared between them. Where there is an imbalance of power within the donor cohort, there is the danger of the collaborative becoming an extension of the priorities of the donor with the bigger financial commitment. There is also the possibility of the founding donor retaining undue influence over the collective - even if it is not the biggest contributor – and that other donors are more deferential to the views of the founding donor on key decisions.

When looking at philanthropy-civil society relations, the issue of donor power is increasingly being recognized and, in some cases, steps to manage and mitigate this are being put into place. This is a relatively recent development, however, and donor collaboratives were not always designed to take account of it. So, with older collaboratives, discussions around donors devolving decisions were more about expertise or efficiency rather than about agency and voice.

*It seems like a simpler time, so a lot of the kind of questions around power and agency and control and sort of appropriation of struggle weren't in vogue- it wasn't a part of the conversation in those days. It was, listen, it was like years ago, there was much more of a sense of executive... of the right of a donor to just come in, set up a thing, rock and roll*

*and boom, there you go. You could do whatever the hell it is that you wanted to do. I think these days, one would have to be much more mindful of 'nothing about us, without us' kind of sensibility. But then, there was a lot of power and autonomy that came with resources, and so, the road was a pretty clear thing and there wasn't a hell of a lot of deliberation around ownership and the [role of the] decision-making body. That, which is as we now know, an absolutely essential and really critical kind of heart of the model, was much less engaged around and reflected upon.*

Even where decision-making has been deliberately devolved to include civil society actors, in more than one model, the 'donor voice' has at times been much more overt – either giving instructions or via soft power – in pushing through certain decisions. Power is something donors need to be constantly mindful of when engaging with devolved mechanisms.

Donor power also plays out very differently depending on who the donor representative is. In one case one of the donor representatives was very forceful about their views and imposing them; when another representative from the same donor institution took over, they were very hands-off and deferred to the host decision. Some of this links to ideological principles of individuals or institutions, but also about how embedded the donor is in the issue at hand. If the donor representative is an expert in that field, it is inevitable that they will have strong views about how the program plays out and a more interventionist donor role potentially emerges.

*They are always maneuvering to try and influence things in ways that are not transparent and are not democratic, and that, I struggle with... I want the focus on the realization of the objectives. And I feel that, if I say, 'this is what we need to do in order to realize the objectives,' [then] the administration must listen to me. The donors must listen to me. If the donor says, 'No, we don't want to do it like that,' I'll take exception.*

Implications for how this affects relationships with external partners and for the donor's reputation overall, also need to be considered. In some cases, external representatives have accepted the donor influence tacitly, but have remained very uncomfortable about feeling like a 'rubber stamp'; in other cases, external representatives have pushed back strongly on what is seen as donor interference, either directly calling it out or distancing themselves from donor communications as a means of retaining their control. Often these are very much 'unsaid' lines of influence - soft power. At the root of it, different donors have different perspectives on what should happen without being explicit about it and drawing a line on what is appropriate as a collective. It is vital that donors are clear about what compromises they are making individually and on the same page with each other on what the non-negotiables are.

*It sometimes felt like we were too involved and again, I think that's a leadership thing. I think someone needs to say, 'This is your involvement and no more,' whereas we got into the room and we started, you know like my board does, start getting involved in the nitty-gritty, [and] you're like 'Why again?' If you don't give people direction, or you don't curtail the power, they start using it in all sorts of ways. So, there was a little bit too much of that sometimes, I think.*

Recognition of, and response to, donor power differs by institution and by individual. Some donor representatives are very aware of donor power and of the implications that this has on devolved decisions. At one end of the spectrum, are those who are ideologically inclined to diversify their power and, at the other, are those who feel that they have a fiduciary duty to their institutions to remain

integrally involved. What has been interesting to note is where individual inclinations to devolve power are at odds with an institutional inclination to retain power – and where trust built over time has enabled some shift in institutional orientation on the devolution of power.

*So, you know, why were the donors involved in strategy development? Is there a way where the donors can collaborate around this that doesn't mean that they are overly influential, given the power that we bring to the table? So, how can we maintain all the positive aspects of the model without exploiting our power? It's quite a difficult one, I think. How can [our foundation] fulfil its fiduciary responsibilities without having to, you know, be in these meetings and approve every grant?*

It is important to note, however, that devolution does not have to mean the absence of constructive collaboration between the fund and its contributing donors. There can be significant value to the fund and its work in enabling collaboration with donors even in devolved power structures. Donors are able to bring in a range of insights - from expertise in grantmaking strategies, histories of institutions and approaches undertaken, lessons from past experiences, to access to the thinking of other donors involved in aligned work broader, to name a few – all of which can greatly aid the fund in undertaking about its work. Devolved decision making does not automatically imply complete separation – there is ample scope for donors and devolved mechanisms to be constantly engaging, at a higher level, on emerging program issues, contextual changes, red flags with grantees etc. This does not necessarily mean interference but can be seen as good practice if undertaken appropriately.

*There's the people, there's the process, and there's the clarity about what it is you do...and then there's the context and what you're working on; the ability to have information and; to access information about that context, and in particular about the other players. So, to do this well, you do need to collaborate, you need to know what other people are doing. And that becomes more important; that shouldn't be seen as a blow to your independence. Collaboration isn't a blow to your independence seems to me here, but the [committee] have felt that it is.*

*We said, "it's not that we trying to interfere, but we worried that we're duplicating things. And so, can we agree that we going to work more closely with PO's, with offices that have a presence here so that we're not duplicating things?"*

#### **6.4.5 Responsible power**

*At every point, even in the participatory grant making cycle, there's a point at which power is exercised, and I don't think anybody's figured out how to get around that yet.*

The potential for abuse of power is a reality wherever power sits and thus it is also important that the discussion on power is not limited to donors only. Checks and balances are needed wherever power resides and there is an important conversation to be had about devolved power and trust and what mechanisms can be put into in place to (i) ensure that devolved power is not abused and (ii) flag when there are indications of abuse. In one case, secretariat leadership were seen to be engaging with grantees in ways that were not always appropriate and playing a gatekeeping role in terms of access to



the fund – both externally in terms of grantees and internally between contributing donors and the selection committee, the latter with significant repercussions for the work and operations of the fund.

In another case, significant trust in secretariat leadership resulted in donors not being aware of how a fund was being used to serve the secretariat's own ends, rather than the donor collective's goals.

*...what I felt that [they] did is, there was stuff they wanted to do and continue doing as [their institution], work that they were struggling to raise money for that they would try and push into [the] fund that didn't actually belong there. And that's why I've said they couldn't be really objective cos [sic] you're raising money for your own stuff. Versus you're a contributing donor... If you are an organization that's also raising money for other things, how are you making those decisions then about who to fund and who not to fund. And you're a bit compromised in terms of just having a strategy conversation about what you want to do. Because none of us are trying to fundraise... but you had a dynamic with them [secretariat leadership] actually being in fundraising mode, but they're sitting around a donor collaborative having a strategy conversation.*

The question then arises, how do donors balance devolving power with enabling mechanisms to identify and engage on abuse of power by different role-players within the fund. It is perhaps here that ongoing independent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms may play an important role and thought needs to be given upfront on how to embed this into the fund, with oversight on this residing externally, with the donor collective.

Bringing in civil society actors into decision making also raises the issue of conflict of interest (COIs), and how to manage for this. One fund that included civil society actors into its decision making found itself stalled because the level of COIs that emerged were too numerous and not always transparent – and it had not devised ways of engaging with this upfront. In another, potential COIs related to selection committee members and even the secretariat leadership have been noted and managed by voluntary recusals, but it has not always been clear that undue influence has not been exerted despite these recusals. In another case, COIs related to selection committees and/or the secretariat were not openly engaged with at all and no formal policies or systems for managing these are in place. Here, perceptions of undue influence have been strong and, without transparent decision-making processes and clear program strategies and criteria – there is not much to counter this narrative.

There is an inevitable tension between enabling space for civil society to influence grant selection and the possibility of some role-players having partisan views that unduly influence that selection. Proper and transparent COI documentation and processes are vital in managing this, as is consideration of avenues/mechanisms for the field to flag potential abuse of power in relation to COIs.

One fund that has significant civil society participation has pre-emptively countered this by choosing to focus its resourcing only on initiatives that emerge out of its collective planning – not on standard grant support. This has worked for the most, though some donor over-steps have endangered this approach and need to be engaged.

*The idea is that whenever we go into an area of work in collaboration we use the same approach and methodology that says there's no predetermined outcome of any consultation... the idea is to have these convenings that's driven by the partners and not driven by us and that's the challenge, because everyone is so busy trying to keep their head above water.*

## **7. Beyond the Foundations: Critical Building Blocks of a Collaborative Fund**

### **7.1 Representation**

Once the donors have agreed on the intent behind establishing the fund, and have agreed on the inclusion of external parties and the level of autonomy (or not) that the fund should have, much more intense discussions need to happen on the following:

1. Who will represent the donor institutions in the ongoing discussions and what mandate do they have for making decisions? Collaborative fund negotiations can (and should be) intensive and make significant and protracted demands on a donor's time at the outset. It is crucial to have representation that is both senior enough to make decisions but also available enough to participate in ongoing negotiations. It is important that donor representatives have authority to make decisions – if a representative has to keep going back for approval either the process gets stalled, or a majority consensus gets upset later on because some donor principles are not in agreement.

*I make sure that on key decisions there's always enough time for people to ruminate and to agree because it has long-term implications; that's how you manage a change of process towards something new. But one particular partner doesn't apply their own intellect to this and so after there's kind of a consensus, you get the one email coming because clearly you can see the process is now gone higher up in the organization ... and they come back with comments that are the antithesis of what you've discussed and agreed. And then everybody goes 'ah, the donor is not happy with this!'*

2. To what extent, and how, will civil society be included in the conceptualization of the fund and its goals? How will civil society leaders/activists be selected for participation? Will they be brought in to advise or will they be brought in as co-creators? Who decides that their voice is representative or legitimate and on what basis? The contributing donors need to interrogate and agree on what legitimacy entails – thematic expertise; high profile standing; grantmaking expertise; grassroots activism etc. – and then work from that basis. It should not be assumed that the contributing donors all have the same definition of legitimacy. Moreover, it is also

important that donors not assume that their definition is necessarily agreed to by the field, and some consideration needs to be given to the issue of who the definition of legitimacy is aimed at?

3. On what basis will a secretariat be selected? What criteria will determine this? Will the secretariat provide a functionary/intermediary role, or does it need programmatic expertise? Is grantmaking experience relevant? Is ideological alignment with the program goals important?
4. How can the leadership of the secretariat and/or selection committees be brought into the conversations on the development of the fund, rather than after the fact?
5. What criteria are used to determine inclusion in selection committees? How will conflicts of interest be managed? How does one achieve a balance between including selection committee members that bring weight and legitimacy to a collaborative but are also able to commit the time needed to it?

## 7.2 Clarity, clarity, clarity

*We didn't have the benefit of a detailed role clarification; we didn't have an analysis of power for example, decision-making powers... So, in the absence of that clarity and in using words that were a little bit ambiguous, it reinforced a lot of nonsense. I think we wasted a lot of time than if those things were done upfront. So, I think absolute clarity in terms of powers, and even in the concept of coordinator, we were debating that, you know. It was unnecessary.*

*I think a lot of these difficulties are of our own making, because we didn't think things through and also because possibly, we wanted to have our cake.*

*Because, I always got the impression that it [the fund] was a total moving target- it was made up on the fly and that meant that whatever, whoever, it was being pitched to wanted, and so it was always this, completely this indeterminate thing...and I didn't think there was real clarity on its strategic intention... it became kind of like a catch-all.*

As noted, donors come into collaboratives for different reasons, and with different understandings of the ideal way to approach the collaborative's objectives. Consultation and negotiation then become critical, but on their own, are insufficient. Assumptions emerge which are potentially damaging because in-depth discussions did not happen and/or because founding documentation did not clearly spell out definitions, working assumptions, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. These things need to be clear and unambiguous. In one collaborative, where a new institution was set up and mandated to develop programming and operations, the constitution of the new institution laid the foundation for a clear governance structure. Program parameters and institutional policies were developed by the board, which included some of the founding donors, but a strong leadership at the host institution was enabled and empowered by clear definitions of roles and responsibilities.

In another case, an MOU was signed by the donors and the host institution, articulating a range of agreements on governance, accountability, program objectives and roles, but without any attention to (i) fundamental programmatic definitions that underlie the goal of the collaboration (ii) clear roles and responsibilities of the different players and (iii) clarity on where accountability for different aspects lay.

### 7.3 Programmatic discussions

*You know, that maybe we were maybe too much looking at strategy and mechanism rather than looking at what the actual outcome of this kind of work could potentially be, and whether we have the best formula for putting people in that outcome... That would be the question I would ask if I was setting it up again.*

A key lesson emerging from this research is that form and structure need to follow substance and that collaboratives that prioritize decisions on what to do (programmatic goal) before deciding how to do it (structure) have fared better. In one case, vague programming imperatives were accompanied by significant attention to structure at inception. As the collaborative progressed the vagueness of the program imperatives left much to discretion and interpretation, and conflicting views on the work the collaborative should be engaging in. Moreover, the structure developed was not the most appropriate for the kind of programming decided upon and the collaborative suffered on all fronts. In another, significant consultative processes on content and context over an extended term have led to the design of a structure that is appropriate to the program and one where, overall there is relatively less dispute over decision-making on goals and strategies.

#### 7.3.1 Rooting the programmatic imperatives in context

*The first one, we did a whole day with all the leaders of the sector, and so that's where we decided [what] we need to focus on, because they were saying, 'This is what's missing; these are the people that usually get the money.' So, there was like a panel discussion and then there were interviews with each of the leaders, and it was groups that no one had funded before that came to speak to us... [but] then [my foundation leaders] were saying [to me]: 'you keep just having workshops... and you still haven't done anything.' The pressure within institutions to rush and make grants is the other problem with these philanthropies. For me, I think we made a lot of progress in the last six months. I'm very comfortable and I'd be comfortable if we get to December and we haven't spent the money.*

Donor collaborations are often launched with much fanfare – public announcements, celebrations of collaborative spirit or new opportunities etc. On the other hand, most of them are entered into with some level of anxiety and trepidation, understandable when one has to cede some measure of control yet still be accountable to your institution. Often, external expectations and the internal need to show progress result in a haste during which the necessary in-depth discussion and consultations fall by the wayside.

Developing program goals and strategies that both align with the aims of multiple donors and are rooted in the field is not a quick or easy process. The collaboratives under study had a range of consultation processes in the lead-up to formation:

- (i) in-depth research in the field followed by donor to donor planning;
- (ii) once-off civil society convenings followed by donor to donor planning;
- (iii) a series of donor to donor and donor to civil society convenings followed by iterative planning involving multiple stakeholders and;
- (iv) donor to donor consultations, followed by donor planning.

Perhaps the biggest learning on this is that, where programs have been conceptualized by donors themselves without intensive engagement with civic actors, their relevance has been called into question by the field in general. Where intensive discussions that have included voices from civic actors have taken place over time, the fund has been seen as much more grounded and its strategic imperatives in tune with contextual demands.

One collaborative engaged in a series of consultations, initially with civil society actors in the field and then between participating donors to shape the vision, delineate structure, operations and decision-making and develop the broad programmatic strategy. This fund continued to reflect on the relevance of the programmatic strategy over time and sought to enable its programming to meet the contextual imperatives and gaps in the field at particular moments. Over the years that this way of collaborating continued, the fund remained relevant and valued by both donors and the civil society actors in the field of programming.

Another collaborative engaged in a protracted set of consultations between donors and civil society to chart its way forward on programming and operations, in the process developing a very deep sense of understanding and ownership on its ideology, the kinds of engagements it will and will not deem appropriate, where the locus of decision-making lies and what its program will and will not do. In this case, a real test emerged when a founding donor felt that the collaborative was moving in a direction it was not comfortable with and threatened to leave if fundamental changes were not made. The remaining donors took a decision not to deviate from the direction agreed upon by the majority and the funder subsequently left the collaborative and withdrew its funds, but the collaborative continued, stronger in affirming its principles and directions.

On the flip side of this is a collaborative where donors engaged in consultations with each other for some time around broad goals and the mechanics of how the collaborative would work, in part complicated by different donors entering and exiting the process at different phases. However, that consultation process did not debate strategy, nor seek to intensively engage civil society or those it eventually devolved decision-making to. From this arose a fund that had an overarching goal, but in practice, was not clear on strategy, niche and value-add nor on governance, roles, responsibilities and accountability. The result has been significant contestation both internally and within in civil society broadly.

Yet another collaborative emerged out of a civil society consultation which highlighted particular challenges and gaps. Further discussion continued for a protracted time between the donors and host

institution on systems and process, but not on program strategy. The result is a collaborative that has clear lines of decision-making and accountability, but while its program strategy is relevant, it is not contextualized adequately, nor are all players agreed on the meaning of the key program terminology in that context.

Two clear points emerge. Donor consultations alone are not sufficient or appropriate to produce a viable and relevant fund and set of programs. Second, while consultations can bring in different ideas, it is still necessary to reflect on how these ideas blend in an overall structure.

### 7.3.2 Value-Add to donors

*The trick is that, if you have a collaborative fund, it has to have value over and above just bringing more money to the sector.*

As discussion on program goals happen, it is important to think about what kind of value add the collaborative would provide to help further those program goals – that is, what is the fund doing that individual donors alone are not. Value-add needs to be looked at on two levels – programmatic and process.

In each of the collaboratives under study, different value-adds were reflected, some very clear, others less so. At a programming level, these ranged from reaching community-based organizations (CBOs) that would not fit into larger donor bureaucracies, enabling intersectional programming with a specific ideological approach, addressing specific institutional challenges for legacy grantees, enabling scale, bringing in government participation and putting the relationship between donor and grantee on a more equal footing.

Where the value-add has been very clearly defined in relation to individual donor's programming, there have been fewer disputes. Where programmatic strategies between the collective and its individual donors start to overlap, or where grantees are receiving funds from both individual participating donors and from the donor collective – without specific demarcation and discussion about overlaps – understanding the value-add has been extremely tricky. If a donor's contribution to a collaborative fund intersects with their own programming strategies, it is important to understand where the lines are between them and whether these intersections increase programmatic impact or just duplicate resources.

These duplications need to be considered both internally by the donor in question and in consultation with the fund. One of the collaboratives by definition had no overlap with the work of its individual component donors, because it was set up by them to specifically fund something they could not do individually. Another was less defined. It adopted a way of working across programming areas that donors could not easily do but did not rule out overlap of grantees, though this was rare and usually had different programming imperatives. For one donor in this collaborative however, things changed over time:

*It was easier when we didn't have a vested interest, now that we have a strategy [on the same area of work], we're running into a lot of difficulties with the fund, whereas before, we weren't doing that work. The moment you start doing the work as well, then there's a*

*duplication of roles, of strategy, of stepping on each other's toes. It's almost easier when you're saying, 'that's the piece that the fund is doing, and this is the piece that the office doing.'*

In another collaborative, lack of clarity upfront on the intended value-add of the fund had contributed to considerable overlap between the grantees supported by the collaborative and those on the individual donors' grant books, often with overlapping programmatic goals. In this case, the donors are questioning what role the collaborative is playing vis-a-vis their own normal grant making- even though much of this is of the donors' design. The donors failed to look at their internal grantmaking choices, constantly expecting the collaborative to change its course, while mandating them to proceed otherwise. The secretariat too did not engage in-depth with donors on these duplications and the implications thereof.

At a process level, value-add needs to be looked at in more than simply financial terms. Is the fund just disbursing grants or is it focused on, say, knowledge building or community organising? If it is mainly grants, will these be accompanied by other support offerings and, if so, what will these be? Some have used grantee convenings as part of the support offering, others have used mentoring, grantee workshops and technical support, yet others have used convenings to periodically reflect on the state of the field and the challenges emerging. For one collaborative. the main value- add is organizing, and it then uses resources to support initiatives that emerge from that organizing process, some directly, others via grants. Grants thus need not always be a starting point and can sometimes be one of several tools a collaborative uses, without necessarily being its core.

Again, no one set of value additions is the gold standard and a lesson emerging is that additional value offered by a collaborative must be flexible to the needs of its constituencies. Rigidly set predetermined interventions are more likely to meet the needs of the donor than of the beneficiary. What is useful and supportive for the beneficiary to further strengthen its program or its institution must be the guiding factor.

## **7.4 Developing appropriate models**

*...and even then, even with the fund operating outside of any donor organization and kind of having its own structure, it has still not protected the fund from donor...I don't wanna [sic] say interference, but kind of donors influencing how processes work. And, I think part of it has been because it wasn't sitting within an institution that was independent in a way that [an organization] could've managed it. I think that's part of why there's been a lot more...in a way, a heavy-handed mess around how donors engage with the fund. And it has an expensive model, it's time consuming, it's really time consuming. Because you're having to have people at different points in time engaging in different things...It's one thing to have an idea as a collective of donors but, as far as possible, find a home for your ideas that work efficiently for both you and the people ultimately that you want to be supporting on the ground with the grant.*

*Ultimate decision-making needs to be with that collective. And the strategic management of that structure needs to be with the collective. And if there's a strategic manager,*

*whether it's a consultant or a person, that person needs to be accountable to the collective.*

*It seems to me, the way you run something like this, either, is you have a strong person who runs it. Or you have a process that runs it, or you have a set of checks and balances and events. And so, things either happen because there's a process to manage the absence of strong people, or there are strong people. And we, I think, had neither. And so, you end up getting frustrated and everything taking longer. A disproportionate amount of effort to do something that is, should be, relatively straightforward.*

## **7.4.1 Structure, Roles and Responsibilities**

### **7.4.1.1 Basic tenets**

The research shows that no one structure is ideal for all types of collaborations. The structure chosen must be dependent on the needs and dynamics of the collaborative in question and based on the extent to which donors agree to involve external role players and/or devolve some or all of the decision-making.

None of the structures under study can be classified as simple – each brought its unique strengths and challenges. Some critical lessons can be learned, however:

1. Be clear from the outset on ownership.
2. Keep it as simple as possible. Creating multiple layers in a collaborative is par for the course – but this need not mean creating multiple and competing sets of accountabilities.
3. Decide if a collaborative will be hosted externally or by a contributing donor – and have intensive conversations on the pros and cons of doing so. This has implications for internal budgeting and decision making within the collaborative but also on levels of autonomy that are allowed to external role players.
4. Be clear on where the buck stops. Know who is responsible for what and who is accountable to whom on different things. The biggest learning from this research has perhaps been the limited documentation of specific roles and responsibilities, and the assumptions that retaining/devolving of power on one aspect of the mechanism automatically applies to all aspects. Differentiation on roles and responsibilities must be individually agreed upon for:
  - a. Program strategy – who decides the program strategy and how it is devised
  - b. Program operations (including staffing and budgets) – who decides what are appropriate staffing and budgeting imperatives, who has authority on hiring/firing of staff? Where does contracting authority lie?
  - c. Grantmaking – who has final say on grantmaking (from developing calls to grant approvals; amounts and terms). Who contracts and pays the grantees?
  - d. Grant monitoring – who do grantees see as first line of accountability and how does the collaborative see this?
  - e. Governance - who will be responsible for oversight of the fund and provide the checks and balances?



- f. Co-ordination - what is the mechanism that holds the collaborative in place and in connection with each other? Where does this coordinating point lie? What specific functions does it perform? Who is its direct accountability to?

#### **7.4.1.2 Operational learnings**

*I would make some big headings to this to do with accountabilities at each level: accountability to the field, accountability to the grantees and accountability to the funders and the funders boards. And then look at, in this case, to the selection panel, and then look at what do you need to know and understand in relation to each of those.*

This report is not meant to be prescriptive. As noted, beyond basic models, the structure of donor collaborations may be configured in a variety of different ways to suit different contexts and purposes. That said, there are some emerging operational lessons that bear noting.

- The more substructures within a collaborative, the harder it is to manage them and limit confusion and contestation. Where collaboratives have been set up to function independently, whether as independent institutions or as projects of other institutions and donor involvement has been as part of a broader board/steering committee, operations and management have flowed relatively smoothly. Decision-making roles and accountability have been clear.
- Where multiple sub-structures do exist, attention must be given to ensuring how the different parts fit together as a whole, without overlap and to what strategies will keep them so. Building a cohesive and effective model requires that each element is seen in relation to the other and that the whole is not just the sum of its parts.
- Where clear and non-conflicting lines of accountability are developed within the different elements of a collaborative model, its operations have moved ahead more smoothly. Where secretariat staff have been pulled in different directions by either secretariat leadership and donors or by selection committees and donors, and accountability in practice is to different role-players, effectiveness has been put at risk.
- Differentiate between different types of accountability (i) accountability to donors as a grantee in respect of standard due diligence reporting and (ii) accountability of a fund to a donor collective on different elements (from administrative to programmatic) and delineate what each entails.
- Operational efficiency is best achieved when all operational decisions (staffing, grant-processing and contracting, and program support) reside within one entity, whether donor project, external secretariat or newly created institution. Donor roles on these, if any, are best limited to being advisory.
- The secretariat works best when it is seen as more than just an administrative function. A secretariat adds the most value when it:

- has programmatic expertise on the issue at hand
  - brings in grantmaking skills (either on staff or via consultancy) to inform its programming
- Having paid, full-time staff working under a secretariat adds much more value and cost efficiency than having individual consultants manage a collaborative. At minimum, staff should manage day-to-day functions of a collaborative. Consultant expertise is best brought in for specific expertise that staff do not have or for value addition.
  - Where multiple consultants are brought in at an equivalent level, careful consideration needs to be given to how to (i) manage for differences in orientation and approach between consultants, (ii) processes for delineating respective authority and (iii) processes for managing accountability.
  - A selection committee that is one step removed from individual donors' programming can add significant alternate expertise and broaden strategic conversations.
  - It is counterproductive to establish selection committees that have influence on grant decisions without having influence on high-level strategy/program issues. The most productive use of external committees is gained when they have opportunity to input into both.
  - Where external selection/advisory committees are established, care needs to be taken to ensure they include individuals who are able to give the time required. In the absence of this, it is easy for a vacuum to emerge on key decisions and oversight, and for secretariat staff to assume these by default, without adequate oversight.
  - Consideration should be given upfront to whether selection committee members are remunerated for time and/or expenses. Where intensive involvement is required, remuneration may be appropriate.
  - Using a participating donor's grant systems and processes is not always the best solution. In some cases, intermediaries who are not bound by the bureaucratic requirements of large donors can make these systems more accessible and less complicated for beneficiaries. It is vital, however, that there is agreement on whether separate and simplified systems and processes are able to be accommodated within individual donors' own strict due diligence requirements, particularly on financial aspects.
  - Having a secretariat located within a participating donor requires clear lines of separation of roles as donor and as secretariat. Using the back-office services of a donor may provide cost savings, but these need to be balanced against ensuring mechanisms are in place to mitigate undue donor influence on the collaborative.
  - Where a donor serves as a secretariat, the real value of in-kind contributions must be documented and costed as part of operating budgets to enable true understanding of what the model costs and where the efficiencies are generated. This becomes particularly important

when decisions need to be made about moving the secretariat to another donor or external entity.

- Models that have built in mechanisms for ongoing reflection, learning and constituency consultation on programmatic issues have been both more responsive to context and able to address operational challenges as they emerge.
- Wholesale program support interventions based on donor/secretariat analysis which does not take sufficient account of the context in which grantees are working has led to challenges. Programmatic support must be suited to both context and grantee requirements. The same is true of the frequency of such support. Where this support has been focused on grantee needs rather than donor compliance, institutions have fared much better.
- Bringing in external mentors to support grantees on specific challenges has proved valuable in enabling further support – provided there is a match between grantee needs and mentor skills and flexibility to change mentors as grantee needs change.
- Where support by secretariat or mentors has helped grantees think through challenges or brainstorm strategy and interventions, these have been significantly valued.
- Being cost-efficient should not be at the expense of capacity. Where support beyond grants is being provided as a core component of the program, appropriate staff/consulting capacity needs to be budgeted for. Capacity must meet the needs of the strategy adopted.
- Where secretariats are providing support (grant or program) on specific issues, monitoring can be designed as support interventions, not just as accountability conversations. This cannot always be easily delegated to staff of contributing donors as the approach and discussions are often very different.
- Budget allocations within a fund should be driven by programmatic priorities, not pre-determined according to donor mandates or secretariats own institutional leanings/preferences.
- Where funds have some flexibility or a broad programmatic range, upfront conversations need to be had to mitigate against donors treating it like a slush fund or rapid response fund that they can instruct on an ad hoc basis, if that is not its mandate.
- Contributing donors need to be clear on what differentiates their funding from the collective fund when they do fund the same issues and what flexibility/opportunities the fund provides when they do not fund the same issues.

## 7.5 Governing documentation<sup>4</sup>

*MOU? No, [we did not have one]. It [grant agreements] really just spoke to the funding in particular, so it was just like a typical funding agreements and it would say sort of like, in some instances, it would say a basket, in some instances it was a collaborative fund which I think was important wording for some of the donors organization. But it didn't talk about the management structure; in fact, it would just say it [the secretariat] carries a program...*

One vital issue to emerge is that of ensuring there are appropriate documents that govern the establishment and operations of the fund. The research shows that having an MOU/ agreement between the donors as the only governing document is not necessarily the best course. It is important that, in addition, a written articulation of roles and responsibilities is signed between the donors and the other parties involved – donors, secretariat, selection body – and that these are informed by a series of in-depth discussions between the parties involved.

Different governance documents have been used in the models under study, from donor agreements, to MOUs between donors and secretariat, to individualized grant agreements. What is apparent is that the more connected donors are to the different levels of the collaborative, the more detailed and varied the documentation needs to be. Even where independent institutions have been set up but are being supported by the back-office functions of a donor, it is important that documentation govern this appropriately.

*There are agreements about structure, about who reports to who, but they're not detailed, they're not detailed; so that if issues arise, you have to reconsider it. 'Oh, you actually have to report to me, not to them,' and I think the fund is maybe too new for the lines to have been clearly drawn. We are still learning. And I think what should happen is that every year, whatever we have experienced during the year which needs some line drawing, we have to include in the next year's contract or the next cycle of contracts. I think we need to constantly learn from our experiences so that we include these issues in at a contractual level.*

Having documentation only between donors or only between donors and secretariat, with no formal documentation on the parameters of the devolution to external role-players makes it too easy for conflicting assumptions to emerge on roles and accountabilities. This has proven a fundamental flaw in one collaborative and has led to a significant level of questioning of legitimacy in another. In cases where no collective donor agreements exist, and individualized grant agreements play the governing role, problems have also arisen, about how to deal with donors' overstepping their responsibility and encroaching on independent elements of the fund.

It is thus vital that formal documentation is agreed on by all parties. Donor to donor agreements only are not sufficient. Where these exist, aligned documentation needs to be developed and discussed with secretariats and selection committees - not just presented to them as *fait accompli*. While documentation does not guarantee effective functioning, it should serve as the default guide to the

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 2 on issues to consider in developing a Donor agreement/ MOU

collaborative and plays an important role. Moreover, documentation is particularly useful in the case of conflict or transition.

## **7.6 Strong collaborative working relationships**

The research reveals that where consistent and collaborative interactions between donors and host institutions existed either prior to inception or were deliberately cultivated shortly after, the operational and programmatic decision-making of the funds happened in ways where different views were dealt with constructively and criticism was accommodated and engaged. Contestation here appeared to be healthy rather than destructive. This played out in both institutional and individual relationships.

With one collaborative, prior but separate interactions between the host institution and the different donors had already built a relationship of trust between the leadership of the various institutions and some sense of shared overall visioning. As a result, donors were very comfortable leaving program and operational decisions in the hands of the host institution, based on the governing documents signed between all the parties involved. Barring grant decisions, all programming and operational policies and decisions, and the monitoring of these, lay solely with the different layers of the host institution and donors neither queried nor sought to make input into these decisions. Donor oversight took the form of periodic reporting.

In two of the collaboratives, strong inter-personal relationships played a defining role in the initial stages of the funds' development. Relationships of trust between individuals involved at the inception of the funds emerged as an important factor in enabling the relative ease with which important decisions about the funds' set-up were taken and the ways in which roles and responsibilities were configured and played out. This is not to say that other factors did not contribute, but the set-up of the actual mechanisms worked in the way they did in part because of the individual relationships that existed or were developed.

Longevity of the collaborative, however, depends on institutional relationships, not just individual ones – and these were not always strong or codified appropriately in documentation. Moreover, as long as individual relationships held, the formal documentation is rarely referenced; but when fault lines appear within relationships, formal documentation plays a vital role.

Lastly, it is also the case that role-players can develop productive working relationships without building individual relationships and that people that have very differing views can discuss, debate and push boundaries in a constructive manner, without just being part of an echo chamber. Enabling the space for this, however, is important.

### **7.6.1 Advantages and disadvantages of strong individual relationships**

*I was working with comrades. I was not working with donors.*

This reliance on relationships had both positive and negative implications. In the early years, the positive elements of these relationships stood out. For one, the initial discussions between founding individuals at the donor and host institutions were undertaken in an environment of long-existing camaraderie and solidarity, which meant that negotiations were not contentious, that space was more easily made for different ideas and perspectives that fitted into a broader vision, that relationships between the host institutions and the funders were not seen as complicated, lines of accountability and authority were not seen as linear and a great deal of flexibility was given to the host institutions in undertaking its roles.

In the second of these cases, where there were previous relationships between some of the donors and the host institution, while other newer donors came in without any history, significant levels of ongoing discussions between the different parties prior to establishment of the fund helped in some measure to begin to develop these relationships. In both these funds, the earlier years also saw open, consistent communication and consultation between the host and donor institutions on various issues and operational and programming decisions were made on a very consensual basis. On the negative side of this, however, the individual relationships which held the funds together were not adequately institutionalized and when particular individuals transitioned, the glue which held the arrangements together slowly melted and significant fault lines appeared in the relationships between the different parties.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, where donors and hosts did not have significant existing relationships, did not deliberately cultivate them, and where ongoing spaces for engagement did not exist as the fund progressed, contested assumptions emerged without avenues for engaging them, communication between the different parties remained at arms-length and was particularly strained. As a result, decision-making at both operational and programmatic levels became problematic and unwieldy. Several other factors were also contributory, but the absence of efforts to build strong and productive working relationships was an important factor.

## **7.7 Delineating parameters at all levels**

In the excitement and pressure of setting up collaboratives, managing expectations of the collaborative can often be tricky. One of the crucial issues to emerge in this regard is understanding the limitations and parameters of the collaborative. Whether this be about sunset clauses and roles or programmatic goals and strategies or even about the extent of devolved power, one of the clearest lessons has been that discussing parameters and limitations needs to be focused on upfront. In the absence of these, challenges arise out of expectations that have not been well defined.

In one collaborative, external players on a selection body were brought in without any formal agreement and are not all entirely clear on the limitations of their mandate. They see the practice of simply approving or declining recommendations without any other substantive involvement as superficial and not an optimal use of their skills. In another, the lack of parameters on how a collaborative program strategy intersects with those of its founding donors has been a key source of frustration for many – again, without any prior discussion of parameters, these have evolved to a point where relationships have been very negatively affected. In yet another, donors have agreed to a

collaborative decision-making process but there is nothing in place which prevents the participating donors from overriding what should be consensus decisions.

At a different level, donors have contributed to a collaborative without defining the limitations of its scope, leading to significant contestation on the fund as it has evolved. One independent fund is housed at the premises of a participating donor and is using its back-office support, but the parameters of influence of that donor are not clear. Out of this there are tussles for decision making power and attribution between the donors themselves and between them and the independent fund.

These afford a few examples of why it is vital that there is clear acknowledgement of the limitations of the collaborative and a tempering of expectations in line with these. Clearly defining the parameters of a collaborative helps to both manage expectations but also to help engage with and plan for anticipated challenges, or better manage unexpected ones.

## **7.8 Co-ordination**

In complex structures, it is important to ensure that there is a designated central point that co-ordinates the activities of the multiple role-players. This is important from several perspectives: enabling healthy communication and information sharing; preventing duplication and overlaps; ensuring that time is set aside for regular meetings between the donor collective etc. In addition, collaboration between different parties is extremely challenging if there is no central coordinating point – putting the entire fund at risk. In one collaborative, several different role-players talked about how meetings were supposed to happen and assumed the secretariat would take that function on; but without any agreed-upon coordinating point for this being noted upfront, the secretariat did not do so and meetings between donors and the selection committee were very rare – an issue that was noted as a critical factor in the challenges that collaborative subsequently experienced.

The co-ordination point also serves as the institutional memory and document repository of the fund, something that is vital when there are transitions, new entrants or issues of conflict. In several of the collaboratives, the coordination function is automatically assumed by the secretariat but not specifically mentioned in the governing documentation. In one collaborative, a secretariat successfully played the coordination role, but when the secretariat transitioned, the new secretariat did not have or did not know where to find the documented institutional memory of the fund – and without this, took the fund on a trajectory that was very different from the original collective intention.

Where part of the purpose of the fund is to enable collaborative learning by donors, a coordination mechanism is extremely valuable to help guide this process. In all of these, it is important that coordination is not assumed, but specifically designated upfront, and lines of accountability aligned to it.

## 7.9 Ringfencing funds within a collaborative

A discussion on structure must also consider the issue of ringfencing funds: can ringfencing work in a collaborative fund and is it an optimal strategy? Again, there is no one answer to this and opinion varies. For some, ringfencing, even when fitting into the broader intention, is seen as diluting the spirit of what it means to be a collective fund and, if adopted as a principle, has the potential to spiral out of control, pulling the collective apart rather than pushing it together. For others, ringfencing is seen as a practical solution to their own institutional constraints or strategic imperatives, and acceptable as long as it is within the broader intent of the fund. In one fund, minimal ringfencing on geography did not interfere with the larger aims of the collaborative while still enabling that individual donor to meet its own internal criteria. As things changed in the fund, however, ringfencing became more common, and addressed different thematic priorities – in essence diluting the collective aims of the fund significantly.

There is no optimal solution, but what is clear is that for each collaborative, the issue of ring-fencing needs to be discussed early on, and a proper analysis of the pros and cons as well as opportunity costs of allowing donors to ringfence money undertaken in context.

## 7.10 Reflection and learning

*On a regular basis assess whether this basket is adding value to the work that you're doing or is it subtracting value, and how that can be addressed then, if it even needs to be addressed.*

*But the idea of a portfolio, the idea of funding strategy, the very thought that you might need to know what difference your funding was making, and then a realistic understanding of what kind of difference the difference could make... I think it was very poorly thought through.*

*Reflecting on why you have this fund, what purpose it's serving and whether it's still serving that purpose. And I think maybe, it may be something that sits even within the organizations that are hosting the fund, to constantly be reflecting on, are we still on it or is there mission drift...whatever it is.*

In any institution, processes for ongoing reflection and learning play an important role in enabling the institution to engage on challenges as they emerge, adapt to changing dynamics and course correct where needed. This is part of building a nimble institution. In collaboratives, where multiple role players are involved, it is important that processes for reflection and learning must be built into the collaborative at inception, and not engaged as an afterthought.

Reflection and learning can take place at several levels:

The first is in ensuring that programmatic strategies of the fund are able to be responsive to context. Here, one fund, in its design, created mechanisms for ongoing consultation with its constituents and iteratively developed specific strategies that responded to emerging conversations, while still retaining



overall program objectives of the fund. Another used regular civil society convenings to help define and shape priorities and funding. These built in processes enabled funds that are appropriately focused and responsive, and which thus bring greater value to its constituencies. Where funds have not embedded this programmatic reflection, there have been criticisms on relevance, on strategy and on potential impact.

The second is that with so many moving parts, it is vital that there is a mechanism to keep a pulse on how these moving parts are working together, where the gaps and challenges are and where the links are the strongest. None of the collaboratives had such a reflection mechanism in place formally, though in some, the nature of the relationships and frequent conversations enabled a space for issues to be raised as they emerged. Ongoing independent external monitoring and reflection mechanisms, strategies and evaluations, built into the collaborative from inception, would play an important role in keeping an objective pulse on the fund and flagging potential challenges to be addressed before they reach crisis point.

Third, as with any program or fund, measures need to be put into place to reflect on programmatic impact. Is the fund advancing the priorities intended and to what extent? What are the challenges and limitations? What are the markers that reflect the fund is moving in the right direction? These and many other programmatic questions need to be engaged on objectively, through independent assessments.

Fourth, grantees feedback on both process and substantive engagements are important in enabling the fund to learn from its mistakes and refine its approach and/or programming. In one collaborative, ongoing conversations with grantees have developed a relationship of trust and the fund specifically asks grantees questions about how it is doing and what it could improve. This is not once off, but periodically as they see challenges emerge, as well as via documented feedback; and the fund secretariat has done well to adapt its processes to be better aligned to grantees needs. This is rare; it is not often that donors both ask what needs to change and then take practical action – in real time – to engage with those changes as far as possible.

Lastly, the nature of collaboratives can allow for much more intense cross-donor learning and sharing; and even collaboration beyond the fund; as well for individual program staff to help inform their own practice. If this is part of the core aim, then the structure needs to enable spaces for this to happen in ways that involve donors substantively but set parameters to mitigate against possible micro-management.

Overall, a collaborative fund that prioritizes ongoing reflection and learning as an integral part of its work is able to adapt accordingly, and

Overall, establishing consistent and constructive learning and reflection processes is important to maintain healthy collaboratives and ensure they remain on course. These processes should involve both internal and external reflections – there is some level of review that can be easily undertaken by the collaborative itself, but there is also a need for an independent objective reflection on the collaborative to ensure that all voices are equally heard. Lastly, once-off evaluations at the end of a program are not useful. It is important that a collaborative think about reflection and learning at inception, as a long-term process and then develop ways to blend the internal and external reflections into a holistic method.

## 8. Beyond establishment: Maintaining a collaborative

### 8.1 Ongoing connectedness and building trust

It cannot be underscored how important it is that relationship building is not taken for granted. What the research shows is that attention needs to be placed not just on building trust and relationships at inception, but in maintaining these relationships and constantly communicating on emerging challenges.

*Look, this case, it took a long time, I'd say it took a year just for the people to settle to their respective places. It was a lot of jostling.*

Where the different role-players have had consistent communication, deliberately set aside time and space for discussion on both program and process, the program's relevance was both deep and responsive to context. In addition, the connectedness enabled relationships to be built that brought about trust between role-players and was conducive to donors learning from each other, at times even influencing each other on programmatic work. Important to reflect on here is how to maintain institutional connectivity when individuals are taking the lead and ensuring that positions adopted on a collaborative are institutionalized, and not just at the level of the individual.

Lastly, the ongoing connectedness meant that challenges that emerged in the work of the collaboratives could be dealt with in a timely fashion and often constructively. Transparency was a critical element here and the relationships developed appeared to have enabled frank and honest conversations, with mechanisms for reflection and course correction built in. Importantly, connectedness that continually happens at a distance (via email/ electronic means) is not the same as enabling spaces for in-person engagement. Also, important, however is to ensure that connectedness is undertaken with parameters to prevent micro-managing.

In one case where communication was sporadic, bureaucratic and riddled with extensive delays, and primarily through written forms, challenges multiplied, tensions festered and an environment of uncertainty persisted, leading to a situation in which each of the different parties wanted to exit at different times and yet they all spent very little time in understanding the roots of these challenges. These differ depending on who you ask and were given variously as unaligned expectations, contradictory devolution of powers, and lack of clear roles and responsibilities. As one player noted:

*Most of the time, I got the feeling that we didn't make room for that [discussion] because we didn't have- I think that there was a kind of lack of courage to confront this difference in understanding. I always felt that they probably tried to avoid offending us and we didn't really have this open, honest, frank discussion- it would require all of us. I would like to have them sitting here, you know, and talking about all of these areas of tension and solve them, draw the lines and even have a memorandum of understanding. So that when we operate, we know exactly the lines and where the lines are drawn. And drawing the lines in such a way that we get a common understand that we are pursuing the same objective and it is important for us to give each other the space to use our area of responsibility to advance the objective of the organization.*

In another case, where all collective conversations had ceased and the secretariat engaged with donors on an individual ad hoc basis only, the nature and structure of the collaborative was fundamentally altered, with donors wondering whether it was still appropriate to call it a collaborative or to engage instead in relationships based on a fundamentally new understanding. In this case an interesting dynamic has emerged, where neither donors nor secretariat are completely clear about what the nature of this new relationship is and both sides are hesitating to ask some hard questions about the collective agenda. As it stands, the collaborative exists in name, but not in practice.

In yet another case, breakdown of communication and trust between the different parties played a strong role in bringing a collaborative to a near standstill and unable to move forward on strategic issues. Key underlying factors here revolved around inconsistent communication by the secretariat due in part to its own internal challenges and lack of transparency about them, delays in donor feedback, inadequate space for in-person conversations, and insufficient attention to how to include a new donor in an existing structure while still building collective ownership. As tensions mounted, suspicion replaced trust, initial differences resurfaced, and the sense of a collective agenda dissipated.

It is important to note that part of the trust-building process is how a collaborative approaches the issue of conflict management and what mechanisms are available to manage conflicts when these occur. Often, conflict management is addressed only in relation to donor disagreements, and documentation does not make provision for conflict management between donors and secretariat or donors and the selection committee or between the selection committee and secretariat. While donors retain the right to change selection committee members or secretariats, good governance practice infers that measures to address/mediate conflict between different parties are first explored before drastic changes are made.

## 8.2 Value add to donors themselves

*If all we do is put money into the pot, there's no collaboration there really, you know, I mean I guess we still get the 'bang for the buck' thing which is important, but I think one of the strengths of [the fund] was that it pulled us all together, it forced us to work together, it engendered a much better understanding of each other and those were, kind of, the undocumented parts of it, you know.*

Where the nature of the collaboratives have been seen by donors as adding value not just to the programmatic work being funded but to the ability of donors to learn from each other, share experiences, brainstorm strategies and consult on challenges, this dynamic has served as an incentive to motivate donor engagement and to maintaining the collaborative. While not all donors go into collaboratives seeking to learn or even seeing it as a priority, where this has emerged, donors have been much more vested in the collaborative and committed to making it work.

## 8.3 Personality

*There's [sic] the interpersonal challenges, just people not getting on with each other, people not liking each other, people feeling that other people are building empires.*

Whatever the orientation of the institution, at the end of the day they are represented by individuals and these individuals bring in differing worldviews, ideas and priorities as well as differing ways of relating to others. While this is not something that can be easily controlled for, it cannot be ignored that in some of the cases discussed here, personality has played an important role in the collaboratives either moving forward or struggling to cope with challenges.

The force with which some individual donor personalities put forward their views can be difficult to push back against unless other donor representatives hold contrary and equally strong views or, the secretariat or selection committee itself is in a comfortable enough position to manage it. In more than one case, donor representatives have been seen as attempting to 'interfere' outside of the formal discussion channels, having side conversations that create mixed messages and push specific agendas in ways that are not transparent to the collective. In some cases, this has been managed well by the secretariat, in other cases, it has contributed significantly to a breakdown in relationships. Lastly, even within institutional agreements, there is always leeway, and the degree of leeway given to devolved structures has also been affected by personalities of the donor representatives.

On the secretariat side, managing a donor collaborative is no easy task: many role-players, divergent views, varying ways of working, changing contexts and the force of personalities – a mix which can go wrong so easily - requires particular kinds of skill and personality to hold the centre. In one collaborative, the relationships of trust between the parties and the personality and skill of the person leading the secretariat played a vital role in holding it together and in managing the challenges that arose. When different leadership came on board, the relationships changed and the pieces slowly unravelled.

*He is the consummate responsive, adaptive guy, like he makes things work in a way that leaves everybody feeling fine... So he's very very skilled at the workaround, you know: like, 'okay, if you don't like that, we'll do this and if you don't like this, we'll do that,' and it's a real attribute, like he managed to keep everybody happy, and a lot of the downstream conflicts and tensions rose, I think, that were inherent in the model and were inevitable, without the conducting and puppet-mastery that he was so incredibly good at: like he was the consummate player.*

In another case, mistrust by some donors of the secretariat has been significantly influenced by the fact that the secretariat leadership was seen as not being a team player, playing a gatekeeper role in the fund and actively distancing itself from constructive engagement and collaboration, with significant repercussions for the fund as a whole.

There is some call made that donors need to think much more intentionally about either ensuring that the staff, secretariats and selection panel members they appoint are 'team-players' or finding ways to enable those skills, to the extent possible. While personality can only be controlled for so far, there is a sense that donor institutions must generally be more deliberate in thinking about this issue, particularly in relation to collaborative funds.

## 8.4 When new donors join the fund

*So, there was no [orientation system] ... I felt like we needed to have a review of the strategy or for, as new donors come in, you have a session where we say “this is the strategy, this is where we’re going, this is what we decided we are going to be doing.” Because it’s the assumption that everybody knows.*

Maintaining the collective intention is not something to be taken for granted. This requires specific attention as new donors join in. In one collaborative, while the collective still held as the governing body, as new donors sought to join, they had differing programmatic motivations based on what their own institutions were prioritising – but this was not incompatible with what the agreed upon intention of the collaborative was and these individual motivations were able to be covered under the existing program. In some ways this allowed for a wider ticket for donors to come into the fund, without being so broad that it lost relevance as a collective. As this collaborative changed leadership, the secretariat assumed a greater role in decision making and the sense of collective decision-making was relegated; new donors then entered into the collaborative on an individual basis, with individual intentions which did not necessarily align with the collective intention of the fund. This resulted in a fund that no longer held a common core but served as more of a regranting conduit to channel funds from different donors.

From the other side, coming into a collaborative where key programmatic decisions and operational systems have already been decided is not always easy, and specific attention needs to be paid to both ensuring that new donors not only understand what is already in place but also the implications of these on the parameters of their engagement. Each collaborative over time develops its own ‘ways of working’ which have certain unwritten expectations and limitations – and these need to be made clear. Important as well is that attention be paid to enabling new donors to add their expertise and perspective to the fund and feel a sense of ownership beyond just resources.

Some challenges have emerged when buy-in from new donors has been at the senior leadership levels, but participating staff have not been in tune enough with the ways of working and acted in ways that have been contrary to the practice of the fund. In another case, having a new donor located in a different country meant communication challenges and limitations in developing solid relationships; without specific attention being paid to this, the new donor’s influence on the system was limited and frustration slowly increased. Once again, forethought is key, and it is important that there is adequate communication and consultation with the collective before new donors are brought in.

## 8.5 Transition

*So, it worked because they sat around a table, designed it and it worked for everyone. But the minute those people left, it didn’t seem to make sense to new people and so it kept being chopped and changed.*

*You can’t take things for granted especially when people change because I guess that’s part of the problem. When people change, then the ratio of resources from who and what also shifts, especially as it relates to the implementing agent. I felt at some stage even*

*though they have started off as a full partner, [but] because they were [now] not putting in as much money, we were talking at them. We were the ones with the money; we were treating them as a service provider.*

*Be very clear about your values and be very clear about what would determine what you are going to accept...and don't compromise too much within that basket in relation to your purpose and be prepared that there will be people who will be jumping off the bus.*

*I think with the changes internally people didn't quite understand the fund, I think there was a level of feeling threatened by some of the stuff we were doing, wanting to control it more, you know, I mean that's my sense. And then I think increasingly also not understanding the feminist nature of what we were trying to do.*

All collaboratives inevitably go through transitions. Given the number of different players and changes in context, these are inevitable, but are rarely planned for. A range of potential transitions need to be engaged with upfront. These include change related to:

- donor representatives,
- withdrawal of one or more donors
- key program staff or leadership of secretariats
- external selection committee members
- donor hosted secretariat
- replacing a secretariat
- a fund transitioning into a separate institution
- closure of the fund.

None of the collaboratives have engaged the issues broadly or in adequate depth. While in two cases governing documentation made some mention of some of the potential transitions and how they may be engaged procedurally, upfront discussions on how transitions may influence the collaborative substantively have not happened. In other cases, it is not apparent that the issue of transitions were factored in.

Several issues require attention in discussions on transitions. These include:

- How does the institutional memory and founding ethos of the collaborative be retained? What mechanisms and strategies need to be out into place to enable this, both for individual and institutional transitions?
- Is a collaborative seen as a funding mechanism that can have changing program strategies or a program whose funding focus is set?
- How can a collaborative ensure that senior staff changes at secretariat or donor level do not disrupt the collective or stratify it but that incoming representatives are also able to contribute to the collective vision?

- When a donor secretariat transitions to just being a secretariat, and no longer contributes funds, what are the implications on:
  - o Secretariat roles and influence in decision making
  - o Budgetary changes to compensate for in-kind cost by the donor host
- When a secretariat is shifted to a different entity, where is the balance between donors enforcing the existing mechanism and structure with enabling the new entity to have influence over what might be appropriate within their own systems and structures. In such transitions it is important for donors to meet to discuss what this transition means for the basket – not just what the new institution can/can't do?
- When a secretariat is transitioning to an independent institution, what is the balance between seeking to preserve the value of the collaborative vs. enabling the secretariat to determine its own trajectories independent of the needs of the donor collective?
- When transition of secretariat results in transition on strategy and grantees, how can the collaborative think about responsible exit? How are these changes communicated externally, particularly to existing grantees?
- Under any transition, what are the key benchmarks that need to be assessed to determine if a collaborative should continue or fold?
- How do fixed term collaboratives think about responsible exit from inception? How does this influence the scale and scope of the collaborative?
- When a collaborative prepares to exit a funding niche, how does it engage with other donors and the field to explore possibilities for mitigating the funding gap?

## 9. Conclusion

This report reflects on the range of philosophical and operational issues that such donor collaborations need to engage on, putting forward that there is no easy or ideal collaboration recipe. These types of collaborations call for difficult conversations between donors themselves as well as between donors and external role-players brought into such collaborations. It is from these difficult conversations that the foundations and parameters of any donor collaboration will emerge, and it is here that most attention must be paid.

# Appendix 1: Critical operational questions to be considered

There is no 'ideal model' or tick-box approach to making such collaboratives work. This study has surfaced, however, a range of operational questions that require reflection in any collaborative:

- How to balance decision making by external experts/constituencies with ensuring that relevant grantmaking experience informs these decisions?
- What value will be added by creating new grant systems and processes vis-a-vis utilising those of an existing donor?
- How to ensure that programming is iterative and context responsive whilst retaining the core mandate of the collaborative?
- In what circumstances does the mandate need to be revisited and what are mechanisms for doing so?
- What mechanisms will be put into place to enable learning and sharing between donors?
- What mechanisms will enable ongoing reflection and learning on both the model and its programmatic work?
  
- If a secretariat is located within a contributing donor:
  - How will donor vs. secretariat roles be separated within the institution?
  - Will the hosting donor be contributing in kind? If so, how will that be reflected in budgets and in that donor's contributions?
  - How will budgets be determined?
  
- If external actors are brought into decision making committees
  - How to ensure balance between profile and legitimacy of external actors with availability to engage consistently?
  - Are these committees playing an advisory role or a selection role?
  - What are the parameters of their decision-making roles?
  - Will donors share decision making on these committees?
  - If advisory role, who makes final decisions?
  - If selection, will they be accountable to the donors or independent?
  - Will there be donor oversight, on what elements and in what circumstances? What does consensus and veto power look like in this structure?
  - Who does the secretariat report to? Donor collective or the external committee?
  - What mechanisms will be put into place to ensure ongoing communication between donors, secretariat and external decision makers?
  - Who will coordinate this?
  - What will the nature of collaboration between the fund and individual donors be on shared priorities and grantees?
  - To what extent will program staff of donors be involved in these conversations?



- Will secretariat mediate engagements with beneficiaries or will beneficiaries engage directly?
- What COI policies are required?

#### Capacity

- What kind of capacity and skills are needed for the fund to operate efficiently?
- If the staffing is adding value beyond managing resources, what does this look like?
- What kind of capacity and skills are needed to add value over and above resources?
- Will this be brought in as consultants or full-time staff or both?
- Who will consultants be accountable to? Donor collective, secretariat or external committee?
- Is there a hierarchy in the staffing/consultants?

#### Financial issues and reporting

- Who develops and approves the budgets?
- Where does financial accountability lie?
- Who will be responsible for contracting related to staffing and grants?
- How are operating costs covered?
- What level of financial due diligence is acceptable to all the donors?
- Where will the actual funds contributed be housed?
- Will these be invested, if so, who makes the investment decisions?
- What will the investment proceeds be used for?
- What investment reporting will be necessary?
- What grant reporting will be necessary?

#### Reflection and Learning

- What internal systems should be put into place to enable ongoing learning that feeds into adaptive practice?
- What independent external mechanisms can appropriately accompany a collaborative on a monitoring and learning process but also serve as a space for checks and balances on the collaborative?

#### Conflict Management

- What internal measures will be put into place to address conflict between any of the different role-players?
- Will independent/external mediation be brought in and what are the limits of that?
- When a contributing donor leaves the fund, what processes are put into place to mediate this and manage any repercussions (internal or external)?

#### Transition/ Closure

- What operational measures will help to build ownership for new donors joining the fund?

- What systems are in place to deal with transitions of donors, secretariat or selection committees?
- What measures are put into place to ensure institutional memory and records are retained and accessible to all during times of transition?
- What circumstances warrant closure?
- What does responsible exit planning look like in the event of closure of a donor fund and how far in advance does this need to be initiated?

# Appendix 2: Donor Agreement and/or MOU - issues to consider

## Objectives of Collaborative

- Program Rationale(s)
- Donor Rationale(s)
- Goal and overall strategy. These need to be clear on overarching strategy while still retaining room to manoeuvre.
- Value add beyond grant funds.
- Definition of key terms.
- Key assumptions on program.

Some of these can be spelled out briefly in the MOU with fuller detail included in an Appendix.

## Role-players

Who the key parties are and how they will be represented?

- Where the donor is an international organization, clarity must be given on whether representation and decision making are undertaken by global staff or delegated to a local office level – and if at a local office, which level?
- Will the secretariat be a participating donor, an intermediary institution or independent consultants?
- If the secretariat is also a contributing donor what does this mean for decision making powers? Will there be in-kind benefits that arise? What does it mean for budgets when the secretariat is no longer a contributing donor?
- Where an advisory/selection panel is established to make decisions on grants, clarity must be given on the terms of operation, the limitations (if any) on decision making, terms of service and rotation, criteria used for inclusion as well as criteria warranting removal and, whether they are elected or appointed.
- Where independent civil society actors are brought in as part of decision-making structures, it is vital to reflect how they were selected, what authorities they have and what is the nature of the relationship between these members, the donors and the secretariat.
- What are the parameters of donor's oversight role? What circumstances will give rise to donor veto/rejection?
- Any selection/advisory committee established requires a detailed TOR with parameters.
- Where donors or donor representatives sit on selection committees, criteria for appointment should be mentioned.
- Mention must be made of what, if any, financial remuneration of time or related expenses are allowed to the selection committee
- Who holds the central coordination - donor committee, secretariat or other? How can liaison between the different parts be mandated?

## Ownership

- Is the fund owned by the donors or the secretariat or the external committee?
- Who has ultimate decision-making on changes/removal of any of the role-players and of extension/closure of the collaborative?
- Whose responsibility is it to deal with attracting new donors or managing donors who want to leave?

## The Fund

- Who holds the actual funds? What mechanisms enable that? What reporting obligations arise from this?
- Amount and duration of the fund.
- Use of proceeds of invested funds.
- Is the fund open-ended or fixed term?
- If fixed, what happens with any remaining funds on closure or if funds are utilized earlier than anticipated?
- How will finances be monitored and reported. What processes/reporting are deemed critical in this regard?

## Governance

- Is the collaborative mandating the establishment of an independent entity or a mechanism bound by parameters set by the donors?
- Extent and limitations of donor power and authority.
- Where does ultimate responsibility lie for:
  - o Strategy
  - o Programming decisions
  - o Finances
  - o Grantmaking decisions [and how decisions are reached (consensus, voting?)]
  - o Grant monitoring
  - o Operational decisions (including staffing) and what are the parameters of that
  - o Co-ordination
- What do the lines of accountability look like on:
  - o strategy
  - o programming
  - o finances
  - o grantmaking
  - o grant monitoring
  - o operations
  - o co-ordination

(while the nature of collaborations can mean that multiple lines of accountability emerge for different aspects, it is important that each aspect itself has a clear line of accountability and that these lines do not conflict with or constrain each other.

## **Operations**

- What institutional arrangements govern where funds reside, how these are disbursed and who retains accountability for oversight on sub-grantees.
- To what extent will systems and process of specific individual donors be used in operations of the collaborative?
- To what extent will a collaborative be directly responsible for monitoring or do this via proxy of donors.
- What fora exist to ensure adequate and effective communication? How often will different sets of role players meet? What constitutes quorum? What happens in the absence of a quorum?
- What does the staffing of the secretariat entail and what are the parameters of its decision-making power vis-a-vis the donors and/or selection committee?
- What are the processes for external communication? Who has primary responsibility on this?
- Measures for dealing with disagreement between the different parties – donors, secretariat, selection committee and between donors themselves.
- Termination –
  - o In event of donor exit.
  - o In event of secretariat exit or change in secretariat.
- Decide upfront whether secretariat operational costs are set upfront as percentage or amount or defined in each budget cycle and what parameters for this are .
- It is important to clearly define upfront whether the functioning of the collaborative aligns with and resides as part of the secretariats ordinary processes and procedures or whether the collaborative is situated within the secretariat with a clearly defined mandate for an independent governance and accountability.

## **Roles and responsibilities (including parameters)**

Of secretariat, donors and selection committee in relation to:

- Strategy
- Programming
- Budgeting
- Grantee liaison
- Grantee due diligence
- Grantee approval
- Grantee monitoring
- Operations
- Grant contracting and disbursements
- Staff/consultant contracting
- Co-ordination

### **Program Beneficiaries**

- Who the collaborative is targeted at?
- Nature of beneficiary – formal/ movement/ start-up / established – mixed.
- Specific criteria within that?
- Process on how beneficiaries will be selected and processes for exclusion/removal.
- Types of grants and grant terms.
- Timing and scope (if applicable).
- Nature of additional program or other support.
- Decisions on whether the fund can support institutions that are already receiving grants from the core donors, and circumstances in which these are possible or to be voided.

### **Reflection, learning and action**

- Of the collaborative
- Of the program beneficiaries
- Of donors
- For the field

### **Conflict Management**

- Internal processes and external mediation for conflict:
  - o Between contributing donors.
  - o Between one or more of donors/secretariat/selection committee.