# GRANTMAKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE: APPROACHES DRAWN FROM SHARED PRACTICE

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PHILANTHROPY
*for*
SOCIAL JUSTICE
*and*
PEACE

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# Preface

'Grantmaking for Social Justice and Peace: Approaches drawn from Shared Practice' has been long in the making, drawing as it does, on the experience of a wide range of philanthropic trusts and foundations and developed through multiple consultations and discussion.  Our thinking has benefited from the generosity of many funders' time and interest.  You know who you are, so thank you all.

Martin Luther King pointed out that *'philanthropy is commendable but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstance of economic injustice that makes philanthropy necessary'*.  This essentially sums up where the Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace is coming from.  We believe that philanthropy can, and does, make a difference, but it must be self-reflective and self-critical in adopting this role.  Philanthropy can never be neutral; whatever it does, there will be consequences.

This study aims to share the experiences and practices of many different funders and, in doing so, to encourage self-reflection.  Whether it is framing priority issues, designing grant programmes or listing selection criteria, each of these steps either includes or excludes options for change.  What are often seen as technical considerations can, in fact, be incredibly important in identifying potential grantee and collaborative partners.  Power does not only lie in foundation boards and chief executives, it is also found in the niches of programme decision-making, outreach and administration.

One of the interesting threads running through the information received over the course of this study was the emphasis on broad participation in framing both social justice issues and in drawing learning from grant programmes.  The diversity of respondents allowed us to see how participative honesty is often easier at the local level, channeled through smaller community-based funders, than it is in large private foundations, where the scale of resources sets them apart from the world of their grantees.  This opens up another important discussion on the need for partnership between foundations and donors of different scales and in different locations, as well as the challenge of breaking out of the 'gilded circle' of wealthy donors.  Who takes the time to talk – and listen - matters if the aim is systemic change.

Through the 'dark arts' of factor analysis, the study categorizes foundations into three broad types – managerialists, organic developers and pioneers.  This is not a hierarchy, simply a recognition that approaches and priorities differ.  Whether a defined theory of change is regarded as necessary or not is in many ways less important than appreciating the importance of reflection and learning.  The allocation of the relatively scarce philanthropic resources dedicated to social justice and peace is too important to be left to chance.  Progressive change can be effected at different levels of society and in different ways, but experience shows that it is most effective when different interventions are mutually reinforcing.  Consequently, funders need to take the time to communicate and learn collaboratively.   As the African members of the Working Group remind us, a local proverb instructs: *'If you move forward fast you move alone, if you move forward far you move together'.*

Finally, there is the double 'p' question – politics and power.  Both peace and social justice are inextricably linked to, and influenced by, both politics and power.  Deciding which issues have priority in terms of social justice and peace is an exercise of power.  How they might be addressed in practice is political.  We need the collective imagination to consider how that third 'p' – philanthropy – can be brought into play in an effective and simple manner.  In doing this we need to meld funder experience, grantee learning and thematic/contextual expertise to scope out future work.  The study tells us that this will take long-term commitment, patience and the willingness to take risks and engage with smart failures.  We hope that this short study will help create the climate for funders to ask the questions that might initiate this process. As an adjunct to this process, we have also compiled a short document *Grantmaking for Social Justice and Peace: Some Practical Lessons*, designed as a 'nuts and bolts' guide to funders trying to find their way in the landscape of social justice philanthropy.

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# Introduction

Over the period 2009-12, the Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace undertook an exploration of the experiences of grantmakers working in these areas. Information was gathered through conferences, workshops, interviews and survey data. The funder representatives involved are associated with organizations that are varied in both the scope of their work and their resources, from those operating on an international basis to community foundations.  What is common across the field is a sense of commitment and motivation captured in the statement of one practitioner: *'Social justice is a concept, how do we make it real? We're not fighting for a concept we're fighting for very real things that affect people's lives.'*  It is readily accepted, however, that the immensity of the challenge requires funders to be smart, cooperative and to work with, rather than for, prioritized groups, communities and classes.

The theory of a philanthropy for social justice and peace has been argued by the Working Group over a number of years. While there is no one-size-fits-all definition, we believe that there are several necessary components of social justice grantmaking[1]:

🌼 It is focused on root causes of unjust structural arrangements and practices;

🌼 It includes a sound analysis of the forces that contribute to injustice, of the effects of membership in disadvantaged/ marginalized groups of people, of institutional structures and of the distribution of power;

🌼 Effective social justice grantmaking is able to translate that analysis into (a) an effective formulation of goals and objectives, and (b) strategies and tactics able to challenge the structural power imbalances that cause and maintain injustice.  In doing so the grantmaker works in meaningful partnership with the communities he/she aims to serve and respects their dignity;

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[1] It's worth drawing attention here to two other documents produced by the Working Group that further explore the ideas behind social justice philanthropy: *Values and Practices that are Important for Good Social Justice Grantmaking,* and *Social Justice Philanthropy: An Initial Framework for Positioning this Work by Albert Ruesga and Deborah Puntenney, available at www.psjp.org.*

☀ It evaluates its impact and readjusts its course as needed, again working together with the communities affected by the injustice, knowing that structural change does not come quickly and might take decades.

There is a real danger that funders may consider the challenges too formidable and limit their grantmaking to service philanthropy, failing to look beyond this and tackle structural or systemic issues. By contrast, this Discussion Paper draws ideas from funders who do support more transformative action, recognizing, in the words of one such funder, that: *'The field of social justice philanthropy needs more cohesive strategies. . . The opportunities for organizations coming together and developing joint strategies and ideologies and taking that back to local communities is really important. Working alone in one community at a time is a less effective strategy for fundamental change.'*

## Structure of the report

The following report is divided into six key sections. The first section 'The variety of the sample' explains the range of grantmakers who have contributed to this research based on their fundamental features such as the nature and size of the foundation. The second section 'What grantmakers need' describes the key qualities necessary for good social justice grantmaking; 'Framing Social Justice' issues explores how a foundation conceptually develops their grant programmes within a social justice and peace framework - who do they listen to and how do they make a case for this work within their organization. This section also explores the common barriers grantmakers face towards achieving social justice and peace grantmaking programmes. The fourth section, 'What does social justice grantmaking look like in practice?' is about the nuts and bolts of this work; it explores five different approaches to social justice and peace grantmaking; it discusses different criterion for finding and selecting grantees; the kinds of support (including financial and non financial) that a social justice grantmaker can provide, the level of risks involved and importance of alliance building in this work. The fifth section 'Evaluation and learning' talks about different evaluation approaches adopted by various social justice grantmakers; the sixth and final section 'What funders have learned: patience and courage' shares reflections from the research about what funders have learned though their experience of social justice and peace grantmaking.

# The Variety of the Sample

Information was gathered from 54 independent funders working in very different contexts. They came from every continent (with the exception of Australia/New Zealand), and were drawn from private foundations, community foundations, public foundations, women's funds and corporate foundations. The grantmaking budgets ranged from $500 to a maximum of $450,000,000 per annum and numbers of staff varied correspondingly, from purely voluntary organizations employing no paid staff to a foundation which employs 400. The median (the mid-point in the range of respondents) was an annual grant budget of just under $1,000,000 and some 10 members of staff. Not surprisingly there was a very close correlation between the size of budget available and the number of staff.

### Size is not crucial

Clearly grantmaking budgets and organizational size are important, but they are not determining factors in philanthropy for social justice and peace. As noted in the comments cited above, transformative philanthropy requires a scale of funding that can support change and is committed over a long timeframe. Similarly, the building of partnerships and exchange of practice can demand the investment of scarce staff time that can be difficult for a small staff team. On the other hand, smaller, grounded funders working closely with their grantees are sometimes more able to be responsive, flexible and open to collaboration. Despite their apparent diversity – including the different ways they understood the term 'social justice philanthropy' - it is interesting to note that all felt able to subscribe to the value base that underpins the concept and many used that value base to inform their work.

# What Grantmakers Need

What do grantmakers for social justice and peacebuilding need to be able to do and to show? The main themes that emerged from the survey can be summarized as follows:

🔅 Clarity on the issues to be addressed and on the rationale for the design and implementation of grantmaking programmes, and the production of an evidence base for the work.

🔅 Evidence of engagement with the groups in question as well as with other informants and potential partners.

🔅 An awareness of the political dynamics of addressing power relations and the possible reaction it can provoke.

🔅 An understanding of context and the potential to maximize solidarity across social justice and peacebuilding issues.

🔅 The ability to display and exercise facilitative leadership using their reputation as well as their financial capital.

*Resilience: setbacks will happen*

The need to invest patient capital over a longer period than they are used to is a major challenge for social justice funders. We've already noted such a commitment by one funder. He notes another important lesson:

*'Our main successes have come through long-term support for the core costs of agencies working on key themes. Take the Campaign for Freedom on Information. We supported the organization through the research phase, the policy development phase, the drafting of legislation phase, the advocacy phase, the getting the idea on to party manifestos, getting the legislation passed, getting it implemented, monitoring its impact, preserving the Act from amendment. This sounds like a linear process. It's not! The campaign suffered setback after setback. For years it looked like it would never happen. Then a window of opportunity came and success was achieved in terms of getting the Act on to the statute book. We have repeated this*

*process with the Human Rights Act and the new Equality Act. This is all in relation to policy change, which is one aspect of our work.'*

In other words, the resilience to endure failure must be added to patience.

A related consideration is the level of grant support made available for this long-term work. All too often funders pare their grant awards back in an effort to spread the available resources more widely. Unfortunately this can have the effect of limiting the impact of the funded work, particularly in the area of policy influence and change.

# Framing Social Justice Issues

Challenging the accepted view of why a situation is as it is, or the acceptability of current power relations and/or structural relationships, is always difficult, so framing and prioritizing issues related to social justice and peacebuilding is critical. In the first instance social injustice has to be perceived as such; then the reasons for such injustice have to be exposed and possible strategies for philanthropic action and investment devised. Funders need to be able to identify issues of injustice that emerge from the experience of their grantees, and to cluster such experience in a way that highlights both structural and systemic issues. All too often what is identified as injustice can be determined by small groups of people removed from the world of those individuals, groups and communities that suffer the actual impact of structural injustice. Injustice can be perpetuated as much by administrative procedures and the interpretation of rules and regulations as much as by oppressive laws. Injustice can also be normalised by what is generally perceived as the 'common sense' of expectations and attitudes. Funders are well placed to expose social injustices that might otherwise be hidden, silenced or ignored due to respect for institutional status and accustomed positions of power. However it is essential that funders listen to their grantee partners in marginalised communities if they are to be aware of how they see, experience and identify injustice. A combination of data drawn from funded work can be reinforced by the lived experience of those at the cutting edge of the issues.

Funders need to be self-critical about how they themselves either consciously or unconsciously, perpetrate injustices (either through inaction, counteraction or denying relevant sections of society a 'voice'). Such self-reflection is most effective when applied in a 360° approach to philanthropic assets, investments and practices.

### Appealing to different audiences

Framing issues of importance in the area of social justice and peacebuilding has to be carried out in such a way that the subsequent analysis makes sense to a number of discrete constituencies:
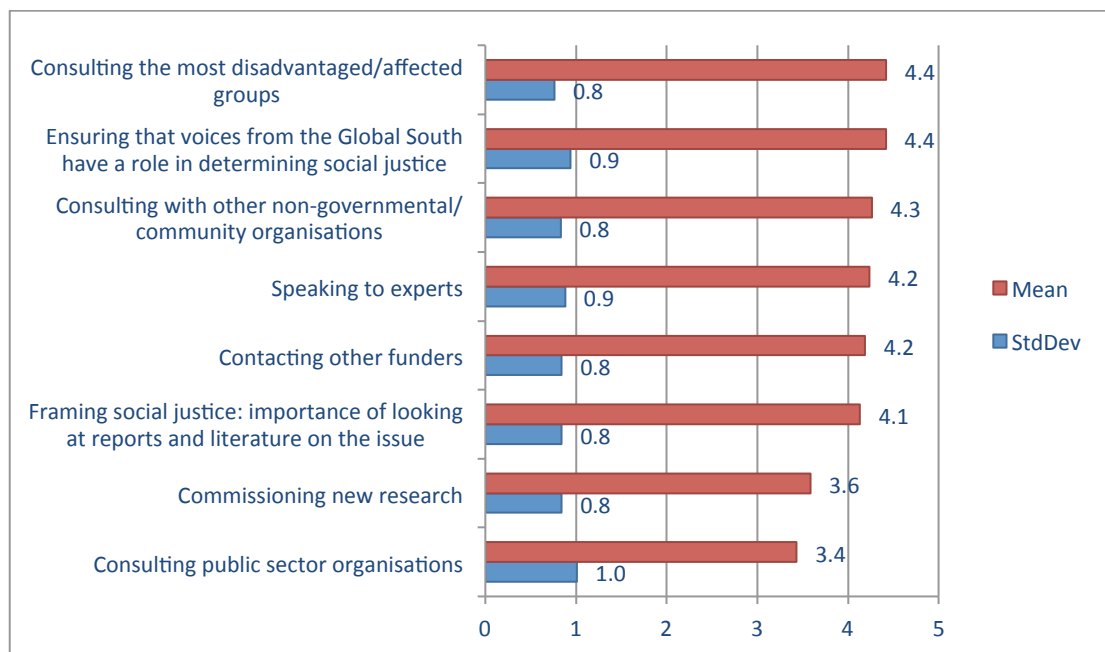
- Foundation Board members

- Donors (where appropriate)
- Foundation staff and/or volunteers
- A broader public or support base (where appropriate).

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of a number of factors in framing their understanding of social justice and peacebuilding issues using a five-point scale (where 5 = very important, 4 = important, 3 = average, 2 = unimportant and 1 = very unimportant). The results are reflected in Table 1, below.

*Table 1: Factors Used to Frame a Social Justice Approach*

| Factor | Mean | StdDev |
|---|---|---|
| Consulting the most disadvantaged/affected groups | 4.4 | 0.8 |
| Ensuring that voices from the Global South have a role in determining social justice | 4.4 | 0.9 |
| Consulting with other non-governmental/ community organisations | 4.3 | 0.8 |
| Speaking to experts | 4.2 | 0.9 |
| Contacting other funders | 4.2 | 0.8 |
| Framing social justice: importance of looking at reports and literature on the issue | 4.1 | 0.8 |
| Commissioning new research | 3.6 | 0.8 |
| Consulting public sector organisations | 3.4 | 1.0 |

*Participative in practice*

The fact that consulting with those disadvantaged as result of social injustice was seen by a large group of funder respondents as 'very important' demonstrates a widely-held idea that philanthropy for social justice and peace needs to be participative in practice. Examples were provided of funders taking direct initiatives to bring marginalized people together so that their voices could be heard, or by gathering information at one remove, through encouraging feedback from grant partners who were working directly on social justice issues. One funder noted: *'We were challenged by black activists in our local region about the lack of relevancy of our national racial justice programme.'* This led to the organization of 'listening tours' and convenings to help surface and prioritize issues.

Another foundation spoke about developing a proactive social justice approach by selecting seven very different (although all disadvantaged) local communities and running a series of supported 'conversations' with various interest groups (such as young people) within each. A place-based community funder said it developed its grantmaking strategy following a series of community level workshops it had organized throughout Palestine in order to understand grassroots groups' experiences of international aid, together with their priorities. In Europe, a place-based community foundation developed a 'Voices' initiative, which offered a small grant (maximum $5,000) and mentoring support to groups of people working on 'unheard' issues, such as the historic abuse of young women in church-run 'Magdalen' laundries or the experience of people confined in secure mental facilities. The mentor support proved essential to give those involved the confidence to speak out, a development encouraged when the sense of suppressed individualized injustice was found to be shared, thus transforming a hurt into an issue.
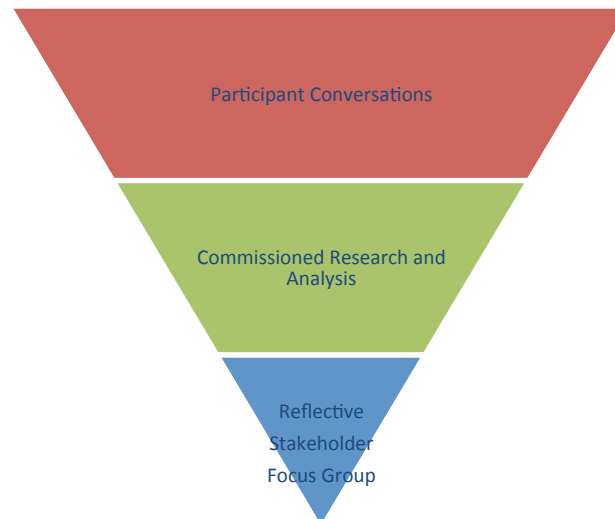
Some challenges to canvassing the views of grassroots groups and grantees were noted, too. They tend often to be mediated through analysis (often externally commissioned). It is difficult, but crucial, to keep knowledge relevant and up-to-date. From the funders' side, it is important to maintain a two-way flow of information between a foundation and those that it is working with. Too often foundations fail to explain their value base and/or process of prioritization of issues and strategies, and these strategies often appear to emerge from commissioned research and/or elite consultations rather than from the views of those people most affected by the issue.

*A broader view is critical, too*
Participation of individuals and groups in highlighting social justice issues (including listening to voices from the Global South) also needs to be augmented from other sources. These may include other NGO organizations, policy experts, other funders or indeed specialist researchers. Respondents had less inclination to consult with public sector organizations.

This broader scan of sources highlights that, while those most affected are central to understanding the experience of injustice, their understanding of the causal factors may be limited by lack of information or coloured by antagonisms. In contested societies, for example, people may blame 'the other' - neighbours may blame neighbours, or make scapegoats of communities that are 'different' from themselves - rather than looking for other explanations, while reinforced messaging (from political leaders and the media) can limit the search for critical understanding. Thus, framing social justice issues through research into control of resources, power and influence remains an important complementary approach to gleaning local experience. While the survey returns show that a smaller proportion of respondent funders invest in commissioning such new research, the fact that some do offers the possibility of collaboration between funders of differing size and scale on issues of shared interest.

*Participant Conversations*

*Commissioned Research and Analysis*

*Reflective Stakeholder Focus Group*

*Sharing research*

A number of foundations do publish reports of commissioned research either through their own website or in the form of a disseminated report to share learning or possibly invite greater philanthropic collaboration. Two specific issues referred to were a black men and boys initiative in the USA and female genital mutilation in Africa. A number of community foundations and women's funds also noted how their ongoing monitoring of women's needs and issues could be a useful source of information for funders at one remove. It was suggested that in one instance 'labour rights and domestic workers' rights' emerged as the 'forgotten' agenda of women's issues; while human rights and civil liberties issues are often an early casualty of violent conflict. At least one respondent argued the importance of adopting clear points of value-driven reference in such circumstances, noting: *'international human*

*rights principles and law frame our work'.* Another funder believes that it is essential to hire programme staff who are experts in their field in order to bring substantive knowledge, practical experience, networks and contacts to enrich the foundation's strategy.


## Making the organizational case

- *'State and market forces can't alone bring about social and economic justice, hence the need for social justice philanthropy'.*
- *'If we want permanent sustainable solutions they must include justice.'*
- *'We define it as trying to improve the position of those most disadvantaged in society through high level policy change.'*

These comments were among those made in response to the question: 'How do you make the case for social justice grantmaking?'

For a small number of funders, there was no difficulty, since their organizational mission statements already clearly identified them as social justice grantmakers. However, for many others the situation is not so clear-cut and the case constantly has to be made with board members, organizational staff and in some instances with donors. Where this is required a number of approaches were identified:

- Undertaking or collating the necessary research to identify the causes of social injustice. One respondent noted: *'Inequities and injustice are responsible for virtually all of humanity's ills,'* but this needs to be demonstrated in a clear and effective way.
- Having established the cause and effect connection, the next step is to identify how philanthropy could be deployed in such a way as to make a recognizable difference.
- Relating issues of social justice and peace to already accepted notions of fairness and equity. This can be facilitated by drawing on the experience of the victims of injustice, alongside an analysis of the structural reasons for disempowerment and disadvantage.
- Using the additional credibility of partners (particularly those experienced and effective in challenging accepted norms) to provide a greater sense of organizational confidence in addressing structural and systemic change. The experience of other funders can be particularly powerful in this regard.

Respondents emphasized the need for *'long-term systemic change rather than tinkering at the edges'.* This was articulated by two respondents in the following terms:

* *'In black communities throughout the country (USA) there is an ongoing crisis, now exaggerated by the economic downturn, the cascade of budget cuts that impact education and other social programmes. The very high unemployment rate nationally is trebled in black communities, especially for young black men. Solutions that focus on individuals will never be enough to stem the flow through the school to prison pipeline. We need to look for comprehensive strategies. . .'*

* *'A life free of poverty, discrimination, injustice, etc. is not just a fad or a dream; it is a matter of international law. Governments have signed international human rights treaties that require them to respect, protect and fulfill obligations in areas such as the rights to health, education, housing, etc. Without social justice grantmaking, organizations seeking to hold their governments accountable to their obligations will be unable to carry out their important work.'*

However, the rational argument is often supplemented by moral and humanitarian considerations: *'We believe that our well-being is intrinsically linked to the well-being of others. . .'* A place-based funder explained its approach: *'We start with the actual problems of our region, and with us it is youth, children and a family. Usually our programmes are directed on this.'*

### *Local needs, assets and community engagement*

For funders like community foundations, making the case for social justice grantmaking may be more complex because of their diverse donor base and the multiplicity of area needs, but proactive initiatives such as social mapping of needs and assets, alongside effective community engagement to identify local priorities, can provide a body of evidence to underpin a social justice approach.

One approach that has proved successful with local donors is to present funding as 'making a difference' to issues, rather than simply being a sort of 'sticking plaster' for a problem. Difficulties often arise in deeply divided and/or violently contested societies where donors may be worried about their philanthropy being seen as

'political'. In such cases partnership working between local public philanthropies and independent private philanthropy can work well.

## The barriers to adopting a social justice approach

What prevents trusts and foundations adopting philanthropy for social justice and peace? As the tables below show lack of funding and of supporting information rank as the most serious obstacles. The first is not surprising given the varying scales of resources available to the funder respondents. In regard to the second, the main consideration was the lack of information that would allow the design of grantmaking programmes that are both effective and can confidently be presented to board members.

### *Setting the objectives*

Interestingly, however, the obstacle cited as giving 'some difficulty' to over half of the survey respondents was 'framing the grantmaking objectives'. Challenging current power relations, control of resources and systemic or structural arrangements is an ambitious undertaking and framing a relatively modest programme to tackle them can appear daunting. Given the level of aspiration and the long time horizon it inevitably involves, it is important that time is taken to set clear strategic objectives, even if the programme is only a small, contributory element in the overall change journey.

### *Grappling with the meaning of 'social justice'*

One foundation respondent noted that: *'The major problem is that "social justice" is contested – and some people find it too complicated or too based on a "rights-based" approach.'* The need to ensure that social justice is comprehensible and achievable was felt to be critical, including offering boards a menu of strategies. Without losing focus there was a plea from one respondent to simplify – *'. . .the message so that sceptics or people who don't understand the term can see consonance between their programmes and values and those of social justice funders. . .'*
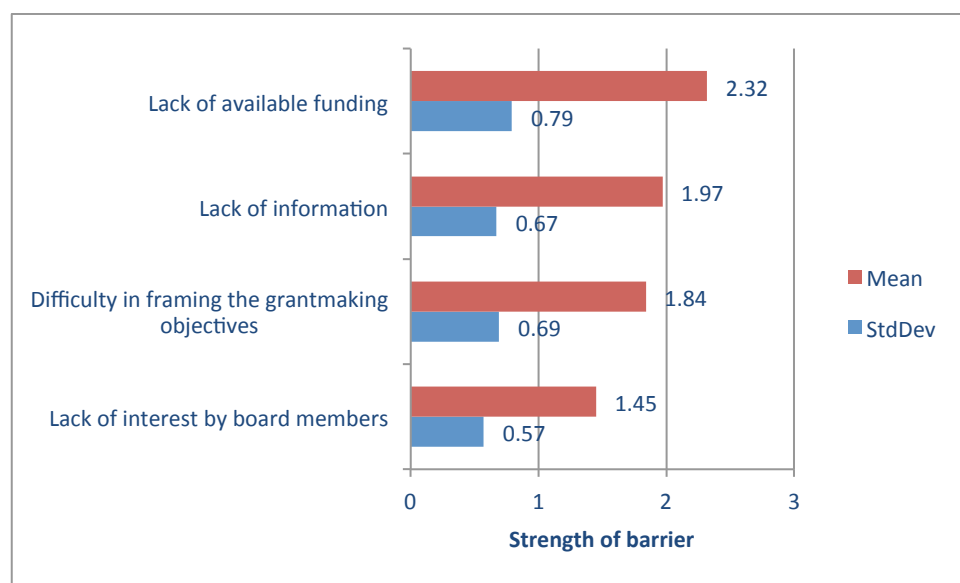
The availability of skilled and informed staff, who had a well-developed level of political consciousness, was identified as a major advantage when seeking to make a case for social justice and peace programmes. This was seen as particularly

important when there was not an agreed organizational understanding of social justice. It also highlights the need for funders to invest in such a staff and to allow time for staff engagement with relevant coalitions of interest in order to stay up to date with thinking and developments.

Table 2 highlights the barriers that were identified towards achieving social justice grantmaking programmes.

*Table 2: Barriers Towards Achieving Social Justice Grantmaking Programmes*

# What Does Social Justice Grantmaking Look Like in Practice?

## The five characteristics

As part of the survey, five characteristics of social justice were proposed for respondents to rate in order to find out how much agreement there was on the issue. While, as we've seen, there were concerns that social justice is both complex and contested, the responses in this area showed a high level of agreement. A high score on any one of the characteristics offered predicted high scores on most of the others. The one exception was the sixth statement that 'the market operates in ways that benefit all'. This is perhaps not surprising among funders with an interest in social justice and peace.

It was felt that case studies of funders' supporting work on one or more of these characteristics would be useful. Some of these were offered in outline:

i.  *Individuals and groups having a say on issues that affect them:*
    *'Working with a diverse array of grantees and other funders throughout the world to build the field of community management of, and rights and access to, nature resources and creating a new norm in which community voice is no longer and after thought or actively/aggressively discouraged. What started several decades ago as an initiative to enable farmers to have a say in how irrigation systems were developed and managed to enable communities living in/near forests to have access to use forest products, now is directly linked to and affecting national and global efforts to address poverty and climate change. This involved decades of support that incorporated and interwove work on economic, social and cultural rights; technical assistance and research on sustainable forest/water/grasslands etc. management; development of viable livelihood options; policy reform with major national agencies and multi-lateral and bilateral donors backed by research, community organizing and the use of tools such as resource mapping, dispute resolution, self-governance structures, etc. It's a long complicated story."*

ii. *Marginal groups are protected through the rule of law:*

'We conducted the one year operational project in a conflict zone, delivered services for conflict affected community members and prepared over 100 women/young women for social activism. The community-based women's organization was formed and officially registered. We gave the first grant to the organization (Karaleti Women's Solidarity Center – KWSC - for combating domestic violence. Now in Karaleti community everyone knows that there is the actor which will never allow violations against women and children. KWSC collaborates with local police patrols, judges and the Anti-Violence Network of Georgia . . . (to) combat violence against women in Georgia. . .'

iii. *All people have security within a framework of right:*

'As part of the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in Northern Ireland, a Bill of Rights was promised. This has since been contested politically and to date has not been implemented despite continuous lobbying. Part of the weakness of the lobby was that it was predominantly the larger Human Rights and Equality organizations that were lobbying and they were not successful in engaging local communities. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland undertook a grants and awareness raising programme which resulted in a huge number of submissions in support of the Bill of Rights from locally-based groups. While the newly devolved government continues to procrastinate on the Bill of Rights, we have managed to get huge interest in it from both main communities in Northern Ireland and this is widely seen as a major contribution to embedding a 'culture' of rights.'

iv. *Structures that ensure the equal distribution of public and private goods:*

'An example of work we are supporting that I consider to be social justice philanthropy would be the support we have given Acorn for work in India, where they are working with rag pickers in Delhi. Together they are forming workers' organizations seeking rights. The right to sort trash, the right to preventative health (care). . . It is the idea of helping people who are marginalized, or powerless, to effectively organize so that they can advocate to gain rights, gain opportunities, gain justice that they have been deprived of.'

v. *All cultures should recognize that their norms should not dominate others:*

'Programmes to tackle prejudice among children, tested, validated as effective and beginning to be mainstreamed in schools.'
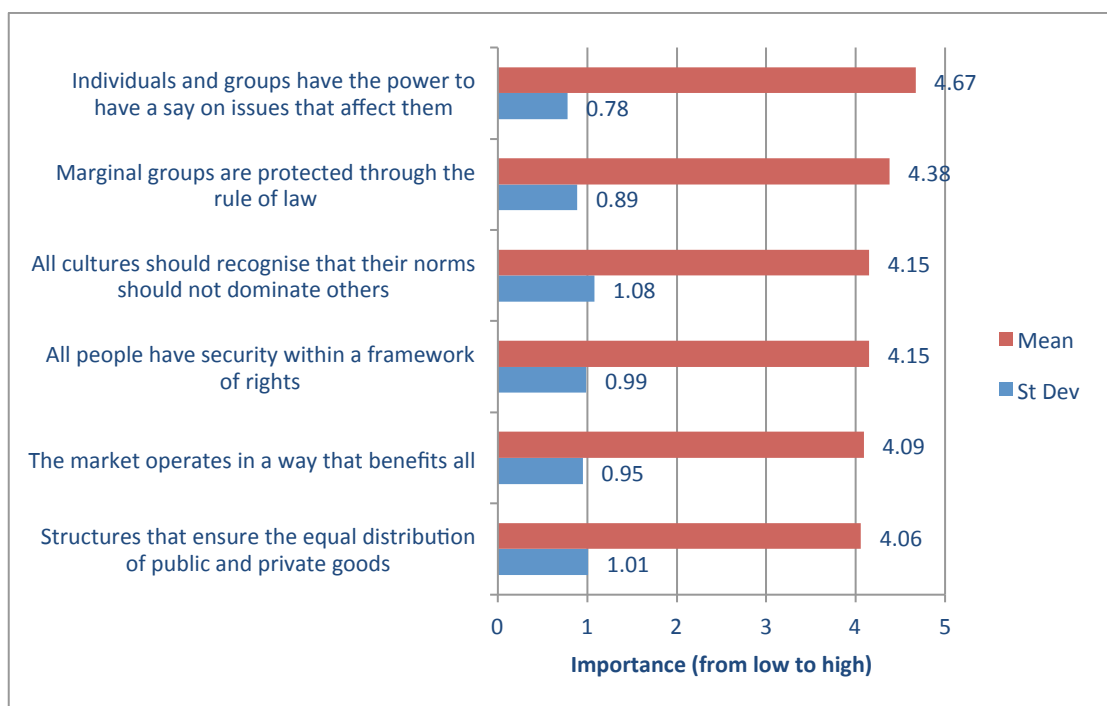
It was clear that there was more identification with the philanthropy for social justice than there was for peacebuilding and conflict transformation, which raises an additional set of questions and concerns. These will be addressed in greater detail in a forthcoming WGPSJP publication on Guidance for Funding in Conflict-Affected Environments: Notes for Grant-Making (2016).

Funders stressed learning, perceived outcomes, the assessment of impact, and related to all three, the building of alliances. It may be instructive that the response rate to these questions was smaller than it was in others.

How important are these characteristics in the selection of grantees? Table 3, below, summarizes the responses of funders to this question.

*Table 3: Importance of Characteristics for Philanthropy for Social justice and Peace*



This Table demonstrates again the extent to which giving 'voice' to the excluded and/or target population is fundamental to social justice philanthropy. Whether this

characteristic is adequately reflected in current grantmaking strategies that operate at one remove from the shifting local circumstances is questionable.

The social justice characteristic focusing on attitudinal change (a recognition of some cultures that their norms should not dominate others) featured less often in respondent priorities. Those that did highlight it explained the importance of:

* *'Indicators of change that contribute to a longer-term goal of systemic change either in the form of policy, changing attitudes, etc.'*
* *'Shifts in people's minds towards less prejudices against gender equality and against racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, etc. (these are more long term goals). Among those that work with government agencies, we start with an approach that consists of training key agencies on how to better understand and implement policies, budgets, laws that are gender and human rights grounded and how can these officials exercise power in favour of these issues and in favour of women in situations of marginalization; and how women in these situations could one day themselves be in a position of power.'*

The fact that this last respondent was engaged in direct operational work raises the interesting question of the differences between direct funder-led development work on the one hand, and identifying and resourcing appropriate grantees to address social justice issues, on the other.

## What funders look for in grantees

A number of funders elaborated on the priority they gave to these characteristics by discussing what they looked for in grantees:

* *'I definitely look for grantees who know their constituency very well, maybe consider themselves part of the constituency.'*
* *'Agency of common people to be agents of change and cooperate with each other.'*
* *'Social transformation over a period of time, people willing to raise voices on their own to demand justice, demand services and an end to discrimination.'*

☀ *'Significant participation of women, increased knowledge of environmental threats and opportunities, increased ability to advocate for just sustainable development policy.'*

☀ *'The ability to anticipate unexpected opportunity and the self-confident ability to act decisively.'*

The last point sheds light on an aspect of social change work not often talked about in a field which stresses longevity and the ability to endure among both grantmakers and grantees: opportunism – the ability to see through events and the flexibility to turn them to account.

It's also worth noting the reference to agency and voice in the comments. These do not just happen, nor should reliance to produce them be placed on leaders. Funders need to support and promote them.

### Effective policy change

Of the 35 funder respondents who addressed the question as to what it was that they looked for in their grantees in terms of social justice characteristics and outcomes, one-third focused on effective policy change – in the words of one: *'something that is identifiable and achievable'.* While another funder expected a: *'significant shift of power (economic and political) to marginalized communities'.* Another group of foundations was more tentative in terms of their expectations, acknowledging the long-term and multi-dimensional nature of the change process:

☀ *'Trustees understand that the outcomes can take many years to achieve. For example, we would look at a relevant work plan; engagement with current policy developments; likely achievements in the short and medium term; people committed to working on an issue or programme for the long term.'*

☀ *'It depends on the application. . . After ten years of funding the Campaign for Freedom of Information in the UK could show little by way of outcome. After fifteen years an Act was in place. After twenty years the whole political system was in turmoil because of the Act's use to find out about the abuse of MPs (Members of Parliament) expenses. We funded the organization through all this because we too believed in the issue.'*

This last statement shows that a foundation's continuity of ethos and commitment can make a major difference to the relationship to both an issue and a grantee.

*Building a constituency*

One other aspect that a small number of funders mentioned was the importance of grantees being able to network and to build partnerships around social change issues. One articulated this in describing their grantee selection:

*'Ideally, organizations that can use a social justice agenda as a strategy for building/expanding a local constituency (grantees, donors, volunteers) as well as delivering on specific programme outcomes (i.e. that can show that positive change can happen – even around a difficult issue) – in an expanded notion of 'community' in a positive light. . .'*

Networking around social change issues is also critical to both translating a grievance into an issue and building cross-sectoral alliances for change.

## Finding grantee partners: the open or restricted approach

An essential aspect of grantmaking strategy is how funders select their grantee partners. Questions were asked about how open grantmaking progammes are to potential applicants, or whether funders prefer to research, set their own criteria and then invite applications from pre-prioritized preferred partners. The majority of respondents indicated that they maintained open grantmaking calls notwithstanding the additional work that is involved in sifting, assessing and selecting the required applications. In at least one case a funder admitted: *'We are open but our programme areas are rather narrow so this automatically sifts out a lot of inquiries.'* Clearly the staffing structure of a funder organization will also influence the approaches adopted.

A number of respondents felt strongly that an open grants call can elicit new ideas and strategies, whereas a closed (invited) call can shift the balance of power too much toward the funder. Concern was expressed that this approach could imply

that philanthropic organizations felt themselves to be more privileged in terms of knowledge and expertise as well as in terms of financial resources. Indeed one respondent went so far as to argue that: 'Board members and others (like other grantmakers) who talk the social justice talk may, in fact, use their grantmaking to perpetuate inequities (giver v receiver) not to distribute wealth and power. . .' At the very least funders should be conscious of their own power and how they use it.

The second largest group of respondents to this question said they fell somewhere between the open and restricted categories. Explanations ranged from the limited scale of resources available to their foundation having very clearly defined interests, for example: *'We accept proposals from indigenous communities in Napa Province in the Ecuadorian Amazon.'* Similarly, women's funds, community foundations and specific thematic funders are often limited by either – or both – their foundation's mission and donor preference, although, more often than not, these have been open to interpretation unless the donor in question is living and actively involved.

It is often assumed that those funders that only consider invited applications  have a clear grantmaking focus which is most effectively implemented by well-positioned grantee partners. In this case the expertise of the foundation staff, board members and/or contracted expert advisers was highlighted. However, there was also mention of the specific considerations imposed by the nature of grantmaking engaged in. A human rights funder pointed out that: *'Most of our grants are confidential because they involve protection.'*

### Balancing the two approaches

There was much discussion about the balance of maintaining a degree of openness, but equally being clear about grantmaking priorities so that neither staff nor applicants' time was wasted, or expectations raised needlessly. This is one of the reasons that a number of foundations adopt a two-stage application process, consisting of a short expression of interest, followed by a more detailed second-stage application if there is a fit between the funder and the applicant interests. Another strategy adopted was to run both an 'open call' programme alongside a more targeted 'closed call' programme.

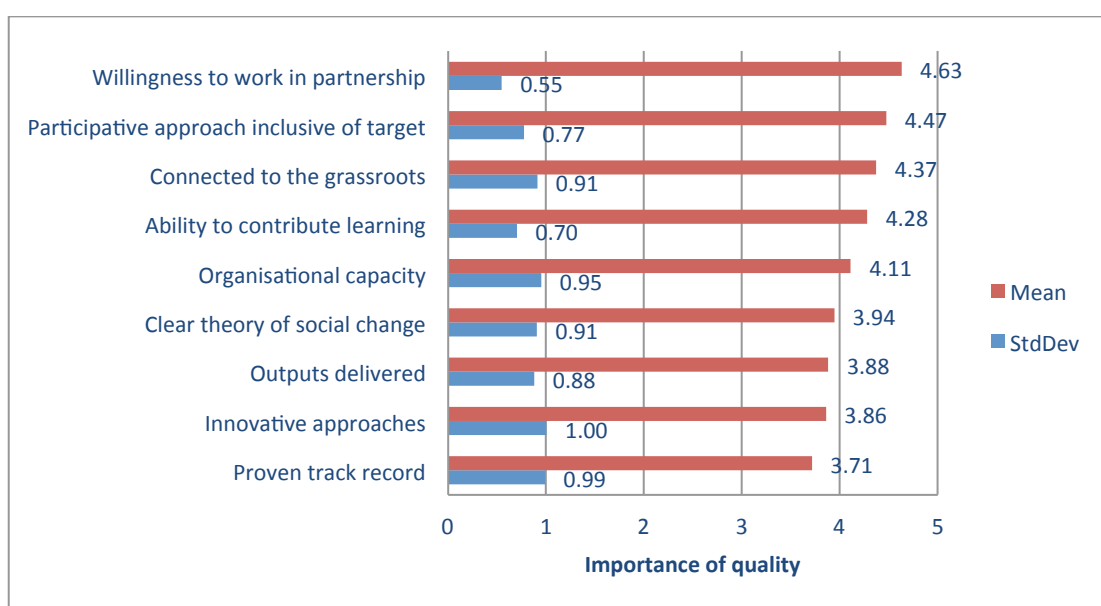One larger Foundation offered an honest insight into its experience:

*'Applications are open to all but almost none of the unsolicited requests are funded since they are not appropriate to our priorities, mission, etc. Most applications are created out of an interactive process of discussion and discovery between the programme staff and the prospective grantee. Sometimes we discover them through participation in meetings/conferences/symposia together; sometimes they are recommended through other grantees; sometimes we find them because we are trying to fill a programming need; and sometimes we create new institutions since none exist to address a particular strategic aspect of our work.'*

This networking of the strategic and informed approach stands at odds with the more locally based trusts and foundations that may have more pressing requirements for transparency. This is particularly sensitive in contested or politically divided societies, or in societies where there is a distrust of civil society organizations, or where they are only emerging. It is also at the opposite end of the spectrum from the funder who noted: *'We define our interests in a broad way, and then invite people to persuade us that they can create change. We are primarily a responsive grantmaker.'*

**Three types of funder: each type looks for different qualities**

*Table 4: Desirable Qualities of Applicants*

There is another consideration here. Not all funders adopt the same approach. Factor analysis of the data in the Table highlights three main types of foundation[2], each of whom tends to stress different qualities:

* The 'managerialists' seek partners with high organizational capacity, an ability to deliver outputs, a proven track record and a clear theory of change.
* The 'organic developers' take a participative approach that is inclusive of the target group, is close to the grassroots and is innovative but avoids a clear theory of change as being deceptively linear.
* The 'pioneers' seek learning and innovation among their grantees with a clear theory of change.

### The managerialists

The following comments offer examples of the views of the managerialist cohort:

* *'Personalities – individuals are always key.'*
* *'Other sources of funding and a bank account (are necessary).'*
* *'Commitment by leadership and/or management team (must be shown). Thoughtful monitoring and evaluation".*

### Organic developers

The organic developers can be characterized by the following remarks:

* *'Sometimes we work with marginalized or excluded groups with no track record or proven organizational capacity in order to hear their "voice" and this helps to frame up new programmes.'*
* *'We often need to help build capacity, coax out innovation, strengthen ways to work with grassroots, etc. In other words, the grantees may not have all the characteristics we seek but we support them to become more effective. Often outputs are about number of conferences held, how many publications were produced, numbers of people reached, etc – mostly tangible metrics. Outputs need to be put in the context of their contribution to the goals and impact of the work.'*

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[2] Factor analysis is a statistical technique that seeks out the underlying structure in data, grouping it into 'factors' or 'components' that have shared characteristics.

The funders in this category are often the thematic and community-based funders where participation of the prioritized group and openness to an often uncertain and changing process is stressed as is the focus on outcome over outputs. This approach is particularly applicable to the complexities and uncertainties of peacebuilding.

### Pioneers

The pioneers' perspective is represented by the following views:

- *'(Importance of) "Partner with the policy maker".*
- *'Potential for sustainability – reputable.'*
- *'We need to know what some of their recent campaigns have been. . .We need to know that a group is actively engaged in organizing currently. Also we like to know what networks they are part of and look to linkages to specific "tipping point" networks. .'*

Many respondents require that applicants clearly show that they believe in and practice social justice and equality in their work. It was principally developers who acknowledged the *'ability to anticipate unexpected political opportunity'* mentioned by one funder earlier, although, arguably, this is relevant to achieving systemic change in any social justice and peacebuilding context.

## Establishing criteria for grant allocation

Funders were asked about criteria that they use to prioritize and select grantees for social justice work. The most frequently cited attributes were:

(i)     Clarity of purpose, objectives and strategy;

(ii)    Evidence of work delivery and effectiveness from past experience;

(iii)   The ability to be inclusive of marginalized groups and participative in approach;

(iv)    Clarity of values and goals;

(v)     Leadership; and

(vi)    Capacity to learn and disseminate learning.

Not surprisingly, these criteria reflected the three types of funder noted above. There was, in addition, a cross-cutting appreciation of the importance of project promoter motivation, commitment and socio-political acumen. The following comments are representative:

- ☀ *'A deeply embedded subcultural sense of "what to do next" – strategic social intuition.'*
- ☀ *'Organizations that have a sound analysis of where power lies and how to engage with allies and enemies are often the best. Also those that have long term horizons are key.'*
- ☀ *'A good feminist analysis.'*
- ☀ *'Having shared values, or at least understanding the values and goals that drive our work and being able to see themselves in the broader context of what we are trying to accomplish. Having the courage and willingness to do work that may be unconventional, risky, outside their comfort zone. Having deep commitment to the work and not necessarily to institutional preservation or growth.'*

### The defects of written applications

Grantees may well feel that funders should ask the same of themselves and a couple of the respondents did acknowledge that the criteria applied to applicants can be overly demanding. To address this it was suggested that there should be an interactive process of dialogue and support between funder and potential grantees. As one suggested:

'*Given our target audience, hard and fast criteria are not as useful as getting to know the applicants. We conduct a series of workshops on proposal writing, not only to increase grantees' capacity to submit quality proposals, but also to get a sense of how committed the community is to the project. Community commitment is probably the single biggest determining success factor.'*

Another respondent warned that it was necessary to be: *"open-minded and realizing that the applicant's written word is not necessarily a reflection of their commitment or capabilities'.* This warning stands in marked contrast to the more managerial approach which finds that: *'Accurately formulated demand, the real purposes and methods of their achievement, the project and achievable results is important.'*

The emphasis on grantee leadership, which was often linked to clarity of goals and the potential to contribute to a 'larger change agenda', was a recurring theme that was somewhat countered by an alternative emphasis on a collective approach.

*The role of board members in grant decisions*

Turning to the decision-making role of board members, funders were asked whether there were some criteria that were more important to the foundation staff than to board members. Most felt there weren't, though a small number said there were. This could often be the case where the board was made up of donor family members and/or friends. Another respondent felt that some of his/her board members had too much of a business approach and struggled with the concept of social justice philanthropy. Another believed that at times, the board was preoccupied with the scale and impact of the grants awarded, at the expense of exercising a strategic overview. The challenge for community foundations that work to an ethos of donor service was specifically referred to:

*'The board gives credibility to donors, so they tend to be (not exclusively) elite, which means they've bought into the system that we're trying to change. Most are genuine, but that doesn't mean there aren't sometimes conflicted, especially when we critique the aid and development industries of which they are (often) part.'*

This suggests the need for such funds to have a specifically designated social justice funding stream to enable them to concentrate on these issues. Partnership with an independent private foundation might be a possible way of doing this.

Another possible pressure point identified was board frustration with the type and pace of change in social justice and peacebuilding work:

*'. . .There is a tension between their (the board) having a meta-narrative about the overall work that is easily circulated and grasped and their recognizing that social justice work does not lend itself to linear solutions and simple story lines.'*

Such tensions may emerge even more sharply when funders are addressing the complexity and uncertainty involved in peacebuilding. Tensions can also become
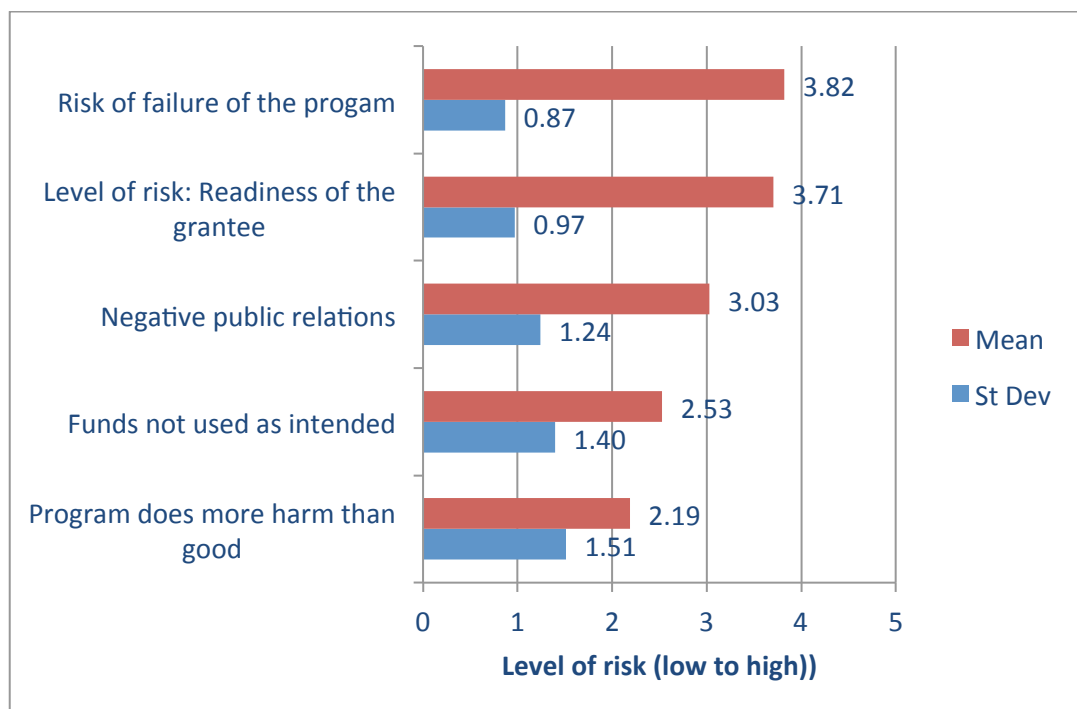
rapidly apparent where the board members are of one specific type (managerial, organic developers or pioneers) and senior foundation staff fall into a different category.

## Levels of risk

*'You have to be open enough to continue to experiment. As Foundations we can be open to risk-taking. We need to make long term commitments to programmes which appear to make sense and stick with them long enough for it to be scaled up to a significant size and have some transformative impact.'*

Table 5, below, considers the level of risk that foundations are prepared to take in the selection of grantees on the basis of a number of criteria. Acceptance of very high risk levels is indicated by a 5; high risks – 4; medium risks – 3; low risks – 2; and very low risks – 1:

*Table 5: Level of Risks Foundations are willing to Take*



While there is a recognition of the need to accept risk with regard to the overall success of the funding programme and on the possible effectiveness of grantees, more caution is expressed on the question of whether the programme might actually do more harm than good or whether the funds awarded are used as

intended. These can be particularly important considerations when the programmes concern violently divided societies where there is likely to be close public scrutiny of the allocation of philanthropic funds and the impact of these programmes.

Consequently, some funders speak of 'calculated risks', and many recognize robust risk management procedures as important, with a strong communication/support strategy being an integral aspect of such planning. There is also a certain sensitivity about negative public reaction which can have an impact on the tax and other financial status of philanthropic organizations, but might also threaten the work being supported.

*Standing in solidarity*

Nevertheless, as one funder noted, solidarity with the grantee, with the risk to funders that this implies, is important: *'Our grantees inherently face challenges from the public and government because they are tackling sensitive, even taboo, human rights issues.'* For a number who commented on this question, the level of risk should be proportionate to the learning to be drawn from the project and its transformative potential. Two examples of such programmes funded in the USA included: *'Significant support for successful healthcare reform',* and *'abolition of the death penalty in a number of US states and abolition of the juvenile death penalty.'* Both issues had attracted public and political controversy.

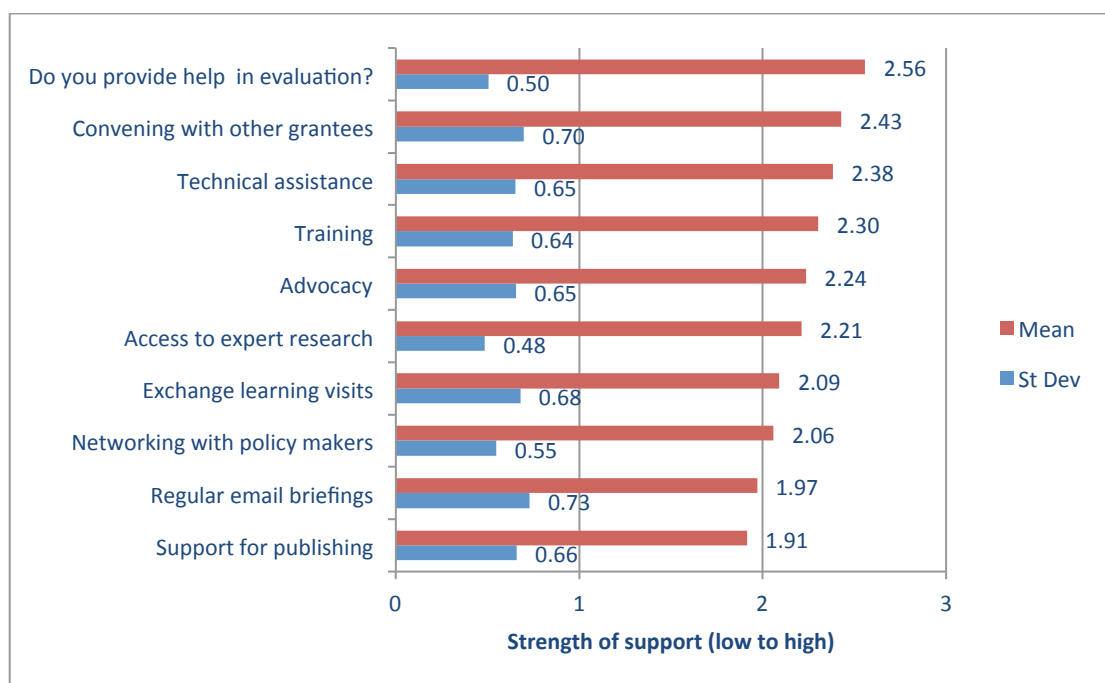## Non-financial forms of support: Effectiveness is about more than money

The survey also explored the extent to which funders were willing and able to provide support to their funded programmes and grantees, over and above the funding. Among the approaches mentioned in the survey, one principal one was working closely with applicants to help them identify objectives within the context of a clear theory of change, and then allowing them to decide on their preferred methodologies. Another was by providing informed feedback on 'expression of interest' applications. In at least two cases, training for potential applicants is provided, and it was noted that where a foundation initiates a strategic programme itself, there is more likely to be preparatory support for potential applicants. This

raises the further question of which potential applicant organizations are invited to participate in the preparatory support sessions and how they are selected. A further point here is that the language used by funders can be off-putting to potential grantees, particularly where terms are culture-specific or infer a familiarity with ideas that may not always be justified.

Once selected for funding, there is a range of other services that funders can offer grantees that can be particularly important in progressing a social justice and peacebuilding agenda. Table 6, below, lists some of these:

*Table 6: Provision of Different Kinds of Support to Grantees*



Willingness to organize convenings of grantees and related peer exchange and networking opportunities has long been recognized as both an effective means for the sharing of information, and for the building of solidarity. One respondent referred to an effective programme of work that grew out of building cross-sectoral alliances:

'The Equal Voice Campaign mobilized thousands of two-income people around a programme of issues and facilitated a range of networks and alliances between groups around the country. Many of these groups had not worked together

*effectively and now they have formed strong and effective alliances and coalitions. In the process, they have built capacities and extended their constituent and issue base and have been able to more effectively press for policies and changes that impact low income people.'*

Such work can either be contracted out to NGOs or can be delivered directly by foundations themselves. Large foundations with a number of programme streams are also well placed to encourage cross-fertilization of learning and approaches between grantees in different .

### Brokering relationships

More than just making links between grantees, funders are often in a position to open doors to policy makers and researchers, bringing the experience of the grantees together with the expertise and influence of the 'experts'. Such collaboration can make for more informed and policy decisions. Unfortunately, it is not unknown for funders to determine and publicize the learning from their funded programmes unilaterally, without either involving grantees in that process, or indeed empowering the grantees themselves to peer organize. The experience gained from a programme also needs attention if it is to be inclusive rather than exclusive in nature.
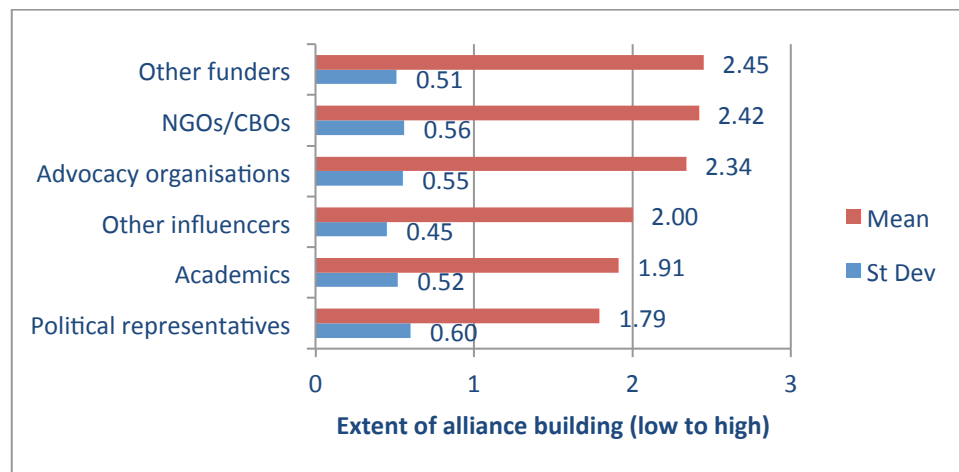
### Help with evaluation and publicization

One of the ways mentioned of supporting grantees' ability to both learn from their project activities and to disseminate the learning, is to provide help with evaluation and advocacy/messaging. Some respondents suggested that this was often provided, while others replied that they sometimes took this into account. The relatively high returns reflect the emphasis on shared learning that so many funders expressed, although approaches to evaluation also have their own implications for social justice funders.  The study 'Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of Development Aid' (Anderson, Brown & Jean, 2012) offers useful insights on this issue that are as applicable to philanthropy as they are to the field of international aid.

## Building Alliances on social justice and peace issues

The question of alliance building is considered in Table 7, below:

*Table 7: Building Social Justice and Peace Alliances*



Clearly there is a recognition that alliances with other funders can bring in more resources for social justice philanthropy, but there is also an acknowledgement of the important contribution that broader organizations within the community and the non-governmental sector can make. At least one respondent linked the latter with advocacy:

*'Advocacy organizations and partnerships between governmental agencies and NGOs, these have been surprisingly strategic. For example in Cameroon with the domestic workers group (a union) who were connected to the Labour Ministry through the UN representative there, given that they became a grantee. The governmental agency began to learn and understand more about them, and because of the UN "mediation" took the group seriously.'*

This reflection underlines the importance of developing cross-sectoral links so it is surprising that there seems to be less experience of connecting with political representatives when so often the focus of philanthropy for social justice entails political and legislative change. One example was provided of where an influential connection proved to be a major advantage to philanthropic mission: *'In the cluster munitions campaign we made a big contribution as we used our association with the Princess (Diana) to convene meetings and draw attention to the humanitarian effects of the weapons.'*

Collaboration with other funders can take the form of networking, such as that described by a German respondent: *'"Regenbogen Philanthropie" of 2009 found a broad echo in German bilateral aid and foundation circles. Corresponding events have led to networking among interested parties.'* Such approaches can allow for effective sharing of complementary experience and expertise among funders.

Another collaborative approach mentioned is more explicitly monetary - the creation of joint donor 'basket funds' for specific programmes.

# Evaluation and Learning

A number of funders (17) raised issues of monitoring and evaluation and the difficulties of assessing impact.

### Emergent learning

A wide spectrum of evaluation approaches was mentioned, including internal self-evaluation, external evaluation of projects or clusters of projects, and commissioned thematic evaluations. One of those concerned about this issue commented:

*'We have little idea what is meaningful to measure because no one actually knows how social change happens consistently. Therefore we use an "emergent learning" approach to understanding the near-universal dynamic for understanding how complex adaptive systems emerge, adapt and build resilience.'*

### Outcome mapping

Another foundation was a firm advocate of an outcome mapping methodology, which involved keeping in constant touch with projects and making regular site visits.

### Qualitative evaluation can tell you as much as quantitative measures

Recognizing that measurement of change in social justice and peace work is difficult, a cluster of foundations used evaluation techniques that included qualitative elements:

- *'Deilinden evaluation: purely qualitative. A set of questions answered annually or, if needed, core questions also put to the grantee. The central question is: has learning taken place?'*
- *'We always evaluate – through different evaluation models – starting with a theory of change, and often formative evaluators as a piece of work progresses. We recognize that we can't measure everything – so we focus on what is most useful and what learning can be shared externally.'*

Some of the respondents accepted that detailed impact measurement may take up scarce resources and place an unjustifiable burden on hard-pressed grantees,

however, the majority expressed the view that the importance of learning justified collecting project-generated information notwithstanding the difficulties of ensuring consistency of quality. Such information can be particularly useful in encouraging continued interest by foundation boards in social justice programmes. One foundation was able to celebrate the success of its programmes by gathering information on where the funded programmes and projects had made an evident difference:

*'There's so many! From the beginning we were instrumental in breaking through on recognition about domestic violence and all forms of violence against women. We had major impact on the fields of economic development for women, microenterprise in the USA, girls' healthy development. We created Take Our Daughters to Work Day in 1993, which had a major impact on the recognition of girls in US society.'*

This respondent's organization had clearly had a long-term involvement in social justice funding and it is that that has allowed them to chart such changes.

A smaller number of respondents argued that it was equally important to put in place mechanisms to encourage grantees to evaluate the funding organizations themselves, rather always adopting a top-down perspective.

# What Funders have Learned: Patience and Courage

This discussion led to reflections about what funders had learned from their involvement in philanthropy for social justice and peace. While phrased in different ways the main conclusions were that the work was self-evidently long term in nature and the circumstances in which it was done were often complex. It was also suggested that funders still had much to learn and that this could be partly addressed by effective partnership working and information sharing. Finally, patience, and sometimes, courage were needed by social justice funders. The importance of this patient, long-term perspective caused concern to at least one community foundation: *'In many instances the results are perceived to be harder to measure or longer-term and therefore many corporates and other donors are slow to fund these small, rural and peri-urban groups of women (for social change) that are less structured.'* To overcome this, funders need convincing messages about the importance of long-term structural change.

### Community and relationships

There were respondents – often in the 'organic developer' category – that placed great emphasis on learning derived from relationship building, as the following illustrate:

- *'Grassroots people make great decisions, and when they don't it's still their right.'*
- *'It's a long-term task. Foundations are most effective through funding NGOs with fire in their belly. Change comes at different levels – both bottom-up and at an elite policy level. Foundations need to be committed to the issues they support. They need to be bold and adventurous and take risks.'*
- *'The basis of social justice is community and relationships. We cannot do it alone and it is not enough to just build common frameworks and indicators. It is absolutely necessary to build strong relationships between funders and grassroots partners. These relationships will sustain the collective power of the social movement in the longer term.'*

*'The communities have to decide which projects are most important to them and we cannot impose our agenda. We can make suggestions but we have to respect grantees' wishes within the broad framework of our funding approach.'*

These views express the idea of process and participation that is integral to social justice and peacebuilding. It is equally true, however, that communities are not homogeneous and that power balances operate both within and between, as well as vertically between communities and the state/broader society. It may be in recognition of this that one of the respondents warned about the: *'importance of language (and with that historical, cultural context, etc.) – as something that can be an alienating factor as well as helping to better define.'* Over-dependence on community interpretation of priorities can result in certain aspects of social justice and peacebuilding taking precedence over others. An honest relationship between funders and target communities/constituencies can help to address this difficulty.

Examples provided of where independent philanthropy made a difference in areas of social justice ranged from achievements in the area of penal reform to bringing the issues of LGBT human rights into the grantmaker discourse in Germany. They also touched on work for the reintegration of politically motivated ex-prisoners and victims of violence in Northern Ireland to protection of human rights and respect for diversity in Sri Lanka. Support for NGOs working in difficult situations was seen by many of the funders as strategic: *'If we had not assisted these organizations they would probably have closed down by now with disastrous consequences.'* Indeed, the very long term nature of social justice and peacebuilding encouraged funders to look seriously for measures to ensure the sustainability of key community-based and NGO organizations, particularly in circumstances where the state is hostile to such work.

The importance of investment in building solidarity was touched on by another foundation which explained:

*'We have helped to create diversity of needed expertise, of institutions, of conventions and policies, etc. We've also brought work on various interactions of rights work, civil rights along with economic, social and cultural rights – under one*

*umbrella of universal rights, so that there should be no American (or other national/cultural) exceptionalism. It has taken years and multiple strategies to build the legitimacy of the field, to have its norms and conventions accepted, to create the needed areas of expertise and to link them in effective ways, etc. This work continues as new generations of problems and contexts demand.'*

While it is often difficult for trusts and foundations to claim attribution for social change it is clear that they have made an important contribution – in partnership with others – in the areas of social justice and peacebuilding. However, as this final statement highlights, there is still work to be done.