The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly:
The Role of Funders in Pre- and Post-Conflict Situations
Tuesday, January 28, 2014
1:30– 3:00 pm

***Session Organizer*:**
- Alex Toma, Executive Director, Peace and Security Funders Group

Facilitators:
- Alex Toma, Executive Director, Peace and Security Funders Group
- Ellen Friedman, Executive Director, Compton Foundation

***Panelists*:**
- Mark Freeman, Executive Director, Institute for Integrated Transitions
- Ariadne Papagapitos, Program Director for PeacebuildingRockefeller Brothers Fund
- Andrew Hudson, Deputy Executive Director, Crisis Action

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Panelists set up the context for the discussion by first stating that they would be looking at a "broad" view of conflict, in which there is a situation of armed conflict, or impending armed conflict and people are getting hurt, and there is the need for a transformation from conflict to a peaceful settlement required.

Each panelist responded to the question, "What are the best ways to use philanthropic resources to prevent, bring conflict to an end, and rebuild a society after conflict?" Panelists briefly mentioned the challenges in providing funding to unfamiliar contexts that are experiencing chaos and conflict: uncoordinated resources are deployed to the conflict area; many actors (including funders) jump in, adding to the confusion on the ground. Often, emergency aid is prioritized over general and core support funding, which can also be problematic.

The discussion then transitioned to the solutions that funders can bring to the situation. Ariadne stressed the need for funders to ensure that harm to local populations is avoided. Funders can do this by doing their research and working with experts on the ground before providing funding.

Many funders want to direct resources to conflict. How should they approach this area? Mark said that transitions out of conflict have changed over the past decade and new challenges have arisen. An example is the Arab Spring: funders feared sending resources to the region because they were afraid to "jump" on an opportunity to engage in a quickly changing and unpredictable situation. It is easy for funders to misunderstand the context and underlying causes of the conflict. Mark referenced the book, *Supporting Countries in Transition: A Framework Guide for Foundation Engagement,* as a resource to help funders navigate complex conflict environments.

What are the constraints to pooling resources when conflict arises? Ariadne stressed the importance of funders taking a step back and not rushing into an area. It is crucial that funders understand the root causes of the conflict, or the drivers of conflict, before they attempt to provide support. Funders can also play a vital role in educating and mobilizing their constituents at home about the root causes of the conflict. She also mentioned three other areas in which funders can assist:

1. Increasing advocacy efforts to spread public awareness about the underlying issues of conflict, such as the small arms trade.
2. Funders' should dedicate resources to increasing prevention efforts and stopping conflict before it occurs.
3. Funders should be innovative in their approaches and use resources aside from money, such as expertise, knowledge, mobilizing networks for more idea generation, incubating innovative solutions, and unifying voices on an international level.

What works and what doesn't work for funders when they enter a conflict situation? Andrew mentioned that funders have been good at mobilizing civil society, creating networks that protect citizens from violence, and preventing and stopping conflict. He cited the example of his organization's work in the Central African Republic (CAR). Crisis Action enabled CAR religious leaders to meet with European leaders in the UK about conflict resolution techniques they want to implement to stop the conflict. As a result of this visit, the religious leaders gained media visibility on CNN, which helped create a platform for respected and positive voices from CAR to be amplified to an international audience. In Syria, Crisis Action was successful in helping to mobilize doctors from around the world to assist victims of violence. Andrew also stressed the need for donors to provide grantees with core funding, which provides critical flexibility in difficult and rapidly changing contexts. He cited several examples:

1. South Sudan: Crisis Action gave a grant in conjunction with core funding support to catalyze joint NGO advocacy in the lead up to South Sudan's referendum. The campaign was called, "Sudan 365 campaign." The grant contributed in part to a well-coordinated civil society, which enabled a peaceful referendum to occur.
2. CAR: Crisis Action helped mobilize emergency funds, which enabled resources to be deployed immediately, but not at the expense of core funding.

In response to bad examples of funding in conflict situations, Ariadne named a ways that donors can avoid mistakes:

1. Funders must research and analyze the "drivers" instead of the symptoms of conflict. For example what are the implications that policies are having on the conflict?

2. Funders are sometimes attracted to what is "shiny" and "on the map" at any given moment. For example, inter-religious and ethnic conflicts tend to receive more visibility in the media, but these are symptom of conflicts.

What are 3-4 tips on how funders should conduct their research? Mark said that his organization interviewed over 130 donors in 1 year to find out what their top concerns were. These themes emerged:

1) Coordination (Tunisia): In Tunisia there was a "rush" to action for funders. There were at least 18 different privately commissioned mappings of civil society. Duplication and "flag planting" was a huge problem. For example, there were multiple media conferences on same topic. There is a great need for all actors, especially funders, to coordinate early and often. Funders must be able to share their knowledge quickly, and when they are ready to take action they should check and share strategies of action with each other.
2) Donors that felt like they made a difference had similarities. Foundations that had characteristics of nimbleness, flexibility, the ability to take risks, and creativity were able to play a key role in bringing diverse parties together and creating spaces for dialogue. Foundations are usually well-situated to create this change because they can be flexible. Bi-lateral donors often have a difficult time doing this. Bringing diverse parties together and being able to change plans when certain situations arise, creates the enabling conditions for transition from conflict to peace to take place. Foundations can play a bigger role than just mobilizing civil society; they should be helping to catalyze polices and processes.

Ariadne added this point:
3) Accountability: Foundations must be accountable to local civil society instead of imposing their own agendas.

Question & Answer
Q: *How do we know ensure as funders that we are supporting the right things during insurgency?*
A: Research, consulting with experts, picking brains of grantees in the local context, work through intermediary funders.

Q: *How do you balance systemic foundation problems with funding spaces?*
A: Ariadne responded that there should be internal lobbying occurring within foundations for board members to support initiatives.

The last comment before breaking into small groups was that large amounts of funding do not necessarily solve the problem. A collective voice against "sufficient" solutions must be present (Homs, Syria is an example increased violence in an area, despite increases in funding). Funding is not everything. What has been important is ensuring that marginalized voices and women's movements have been part of the peacebuilding processes.

Small group breakout discussion: What are "best practices" for funding in conflict situations?
- NGO accountability and transparency
- Finding a balance between multi-year funding that addresses prevention and root causes of conflict vs. short-term emergency aid that deals with the symptoms of conflict
- Collaboration among diverse actors, and collective coordination
- More research on funding gaps and patters in transitions when they occur.
- Taking into account the absorption capacity of grantees and giving them flexibility in how and when they spend their grant. For example, small grantees should not feel obliged to have to

spend their grant all at once, if they see benefit to allocating the grant out over an extra year or more.

- Prioritize core funding over project-based funding
- Building support for the work that is already happening, rather than reactive "CNN" response funding.
- Having credible interlocutors.
- Moving to a different paradigm of prevention tactics. For example, funding should prioritize "demilitarization" of society, not just when society experiences physical violence.
- Let's realize that war is profitable and take into consideration the "other" actors. Who are the actors funding the continuation of war? How do we initiate dialogue with them?
- Having less "doers" and more advisors.
- Incorporating more diverse stakeholders. Who else needs to be in the room?

Highlights from the report backs from groups:
- Funding should focus on the systemic root causes of conflict rather than the "crisis of the day". More research must be done about the labor and economic issues that cause conflict
- More funding needs to be directed towards stopping the militarization of society, not just physical violence
- Funders must be proactive in avoiding a donor-driven agenda
- Measuring impact needs to be more comprehensive. There are so many difficulties inherent to quantifying conflict
- Donors should be able to take risks on funding
- More resources should be directed toward locally-based funding sources and joining collective efforts in the context, such as women's funds role in resolving conflicts in their areas.
- Funders need to listen to the community before taking action.
- Donors should provide more funding to marginalized groups that are the most affected by conflict (indigenous, women, children)
- There is a need for more accountability. What are the implications for "dropping in" on a situation and how does one remain accountable?
- Donors must build on prior connections/relationships