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**Forging Partnerships Across Divides: The Case Study of Child Labor  
Friday, January 25, 2013  
10:00-11:30am**

***Session Organizer:***

- Vineeta Gupta, Program Officer, Asia, The Global Fund for Children

***Facilitator:***

- Jerry Hildebrand, Founder and Executive Director, The Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship, University of the Pacific

***Panelists:***

- Vineeta Gupta, Program Officer, Asia, The Global Fund for Children
- Nina Smith, Executive Director, GoodWeave

***Sponsor:***

- The Global Fund for Children
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Jerry Hildebrand opened the session by sharing that there are 213 million children working worldwide and the handmade carpet industry is one where child labor is especially prevalent. He highlighted the partnership example of the Global Fund for Children and GoodWeave, which, despite differing views, partnered to address child labor in India's textile belt.

Nina Smith admitted that when she started this work, she thought it would be easy – offer consumers the choice of purchasing certified child labor free rugs and they wouldn't purchase rugs elsewhere. Through GoodWeave's work -- which involves monitoring supply chains, rescuing and rehabilitating children, and investing a percentage of the sale of rugs where the products were made -- she has seen that it is difficult to get companies to participate and difficult to get consumers to make these choices. However, when GoodWeave started there were 1 million children in South Asia working in this industry and now there are 250,000.

Q: Why did you start this partnership?

A: Goodweave's core competency is monitoring supply chains. Goodweave approached the Global Fund for Children to partner on finding grassroots groups and leveraging resources in order to maximize impact. GFC supports grassroots groups with grants and strengthens organizations by leveraging funds and visibility, so this partnership made sense.

Q: What project did you partner on?

A: Goodweave and Global Fund for Children work together to co-support organizations that work for the elimination of child labor in a particular area in India. In the first year they commonly supported 3-4 partners and gave \$200,000. There is a key focus on ensuring children have access to education.

Q: What are the primary challenges you faced?

A: One is that Goodweave's program staff on the ground was new and its initial capacity for vetting groups to support was low. It was a challenge for staff on the ground to buy into the project's vision and locate the community level groups that matched all of the requirements for funding. Another challenge is that GFC only funds small organizations and at times Goodweave wanted to support larger ones.

Another challenge relates to using different approaches to addressing child labor. GFC adopts a flexible approach where it supports children who are working by meeting them where they are, such as by setting up schools near or in their workplace. Goodweave's approach is zero tolerance; it will not support any activities where children are still working.

The project is now moving on to its next chapter. Communities are beginning to want their children in school, but the quality isn't good enough. One goal is to make all villagers accountable to each other regarding children and advocate with the state level government in India, as public education is supposed to be free and within 1km of the children's homes. If the communities without access can be documented, the data can be used within advocacy campaigns.

Q: How much extra time did it take to make this work and was it worthwhile?

A: Yes it was worthwhile, but involved more time than anticipated. This experience has resulted in many personal learnings and will enable both partners to establish stronger, more effective partnerships moving forward.

Q: How do you view the issue of overcoming income loss for families if their children stop working?

A: In this industry there is a lot of bonded child labor and trafficking; most often children aren't earning income for their work. Studies prove that when children and adults are competing for jobs, the income of adults goes down. Goodweave invests in communities to break this cycle and sees itself as investing in communities and increasing the capacity for adults to earn more income. It's a dual approach of strengthening families and empowering children.

Q: Any concerns entering into this partnership? Especially with the ideological divide? Have you had to compromise your core approaches?

A: There were certainly instances in which both partners felt nervous. They talked through it and arrived at compatible ways to fund. It is important to be open with all stakeholders when tensions arise.

Q: If you were to start this partnership over, what would you do differently?

- More clarity regarding roles, responsibilities, and cost sharing
- Draft fall back plans
- Travel to the region together

#### Top 4 lessons learned for partnerships

1. Understand where the contentious issues are and where tensions might arise.
2. Understand where approaches are different, what are one another's non-negotiables.
3. Understand which staff might push back. Establish who are the decision makers.
4. Understand the costs involved; build in more for staff time and expenses.

#### Good practices shared by session participants:

- One participant funding in East Africa and India found it important to find local partners to help the smaller groups that were funded. Only face to face meetings provided the necessary level of understanding.
- Another participant partnered with women's funds across Latin America on LGBT rights and the roles and communications were not clear. The next time they established a partnership they wrote a proposal together following a three day discussion. Although the participants never get it completely right on the first try, it is still important to begin with a partnership.
- Sometimes a partnership organization changes its management and may need to start much of its work over again.

To conclude the session, Nina said that having a shared vision and mission is critical. GFC and Goodweave could have been competitive, and they likely have similar donors in common, but they realized that their work wouldn't be as effective. They also reminded participants that not all partnerships need to be formal in nature. Both speakers invited other funders to join the partnership if interested.