

**The challenges of community foundations in
supporting third sector activity in post-conflict
societies: Lessons from Northern Ireland**

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Growth of the Community Foundation Model
3. Building Peace in Violently Divided Societies
4. The Case of Northern Ireland: Key Issues
5. Key role of community foundations: a discussion in the context of divided societies or societies emerging from conflict
6. Benefits of Community Foundations in divided societies
7. Conclusions
8. Bibliography

1. Introduction

Societies emerging from conflict have particular issues which must be addressed in relation to dealing with the legacy of a violent past and ensuring that peace is embedded in the future. Issues of social justice and human rights, social inclusion, reconciliation and the reconstruction of institutions and economic systems offer unique challenges. The role of community foundations in addressing these issues, whilst negotiating the fraught political and personal relationships, dysfunctional structures and damaged communities, is particularly demanding. The focus of this paper is an exploration of the challenges which face community foundations in the administering of grants to third sector organisations in divided societies or societies emerging from conflict and a discussion of the particular benefits such structures might, potentially, bring.¹

To be precise, the objective of this paper is to explore the role of community foundations in encouraging and supporting third sector activity in regions emerging from violent conflict using the example of Northern Ireland, a society struggling to come to terms with a thirty-year conflict which has left a region which is economically underdeveloped, politically unstable and socially divided. Focusing on the experience of a community foundation in Northern Ireland, whilst drawing out lessons and recommendations from other post-conflict regions, the paper aims to explore key questions which working within divided societies or societies emerging from conflict raises. In doing so, it is hoped that lessons can be drawn on how the positive aspects of community foundation models can be further enhanced and lessons learned for other divided or post-conflict societies considering the establishment of community foundation models.

A direct objective will be to improve understanding of the role of community foundations in regions emerging from conflict, provide recommendations on how community

¹ This paper was prepared in May 2005 in completion of a three-month 'Emerging Leaders International Fellows Programme' at the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, The City University of New York. For more information on the programme, see www.philanthropy.org

foundations can support peacebuilding initiatives, and identify areas for future research and practice.

The key research questions to be addressed in this paper have been identified as:

- What particular challenges do working within divided societies - or societies emerging from conflict - raise for community foundations?
- What particular risks do community foundations face in working in such settings, and how can the potential negative impact of these risks be minimised?
- How do community foundations ensure adequate accountability and transparency, particularly in sensitive contexts, such as post-conflict (and potentially unstable) societies?
- How do community foundations ensure adequate representation from all recipient communities, many of whom have previously antagonistic relationships, while maintaining a workable structure where decisions can be made on behalf of all communities?
- Given the generational nature of peacebuilding and reconciliation work, how do community foundations balance the need to tackle the long-term requirements of societies emerging from conflict, whilst addressing the immediate, often urgent crisis situations which are likely to erupt as they move from conflict to peace?
- What role does diaspora giving play in fostering these objectives?
- What are the benefits of community foundations and what recommendations can be made to potential and existing community foundations in grant-making activities in post-conflict regions?

Report Structure

The report begins with the overview of the community foundation concept and how it had developed and evolved over time and across continents. It introduces the concept of community foundations in divided societies or those emerging from conflict and identifies a number of initiatives aimed at supporting philanthropic foundations which work in such challenging contexts. The paper identified the range of challenges which a conflict region might typically face and the issues which need to be addressed if sustainable peace and reconciliation are to become a reality. It identifies the vital role of the third-sector in delivering peacebuilding work and the role of philanthropy in supporting and sustaining this work. Given the opportunity provided by the New York-based fellowship, the opportunity to explore examples of US community foundations support for race relations work in the country was explored, with a number of significant initiatives outlined.

Background knowledge on the conflict in Northern Ireland, the third sector and the role of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland are provided, before an exploration of the many challenges which face community foundations, using an exploration of their common characteristics. The report concludes with some reflections on the benefits of community foundations in violently divided societies and identifies some areas which warrant further research and exploration.

2. Growth of the Community Foundation Model

The community foundation concept has had an interesting history of development, and it is important to trace its origins in order to understand how the field has adapted over time and where the original characteristics and *modus operandi* were created. In doing so, we may learn more about where the concentration of expertise and knowledge is based, which regions have fully embraced the concept and where further developmental work is needed in the future to promote the concept elsewhere.²

- **United States**

The notion of community foundations was conceived in the United States in the early twentieth century in Cleveland, Ohio by an attorney who wished to create an organisation which would be of permanent benefit to the local community and would be governed by local citizens with direct knowledge of local needs and could provide a vehicle for people to contribute to the betterment of their community. The concept has grown and developed over time, and currently around 650 community foundations exist within the United States, making it the fastest growing sector in philanthropy in recent times. The concept caught on in Canada with the first community foundation established in 1921 and later spread to the UK, where the majority of European community foundations have, at least until recently, been located.

- **United Kingdom**

Community foundations first appeared in the UK in the late 1970s but developed as a key sector following the support of the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) and the British Government in the mid-1980s. In 1988, the CAF worked with the Mott Foundation (a champion of the community foundations model in the United States since 1979) to offer technical assistance grants and assess the capacity for the sector to grow in the future with training grants. Following a successful exploratory assessment, the Mott Foundation offered

² It is important to use the term 'concept' rather than 'model' in reference to community foundations, as it is evolving and should be flexible and adaptable to specific contexts, rather than being a one-size-fits-all structure which is imposed.

one million pounds in endowment challenge funds to support the development of UK community trusts and foundations provided the CAF could raise the equivalent locally. Having successfully matched the funding, a competition was held to provide three existing community foundations with substantial permanent endowments to kick-start their grant-giving capabilities.³ All three foundations are currently thriving and have witnessed the establishment and growth of many more throughout the country. In 1991 the Association of Community Trusts and Foundations (now called the Community Foundation Network⁴) was established as a national network organisation, also supported by the Mott Foundation. The mission of the Community Foundation Network is to promote the concept of community foundations in the UK, stimulate and support their growth and best practice, and give support to individual community foundations and their networking with others.

▪ Northern Ireland

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) pre-dates the later growth of community foundations in the UK, having been formed in 1979 as the first of its kind in the region.⁵ Although by the 1980s community foundations had gained significant momentum in the UK, the experience of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is unique, given the history of conflict in the region and the specific issues which such a legacy creates.⁶

Known as the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust until 2002, CFNI works to support people, strengthen communities and build peace in the divided communities of Northern Ireland.⁷ Their stated mission is “*to improve the quality of life through enabling communities to tackle social need and divisions*” by:

³ The three community foundations that received grants of £667,000 and matched them at a ratio of 2:1 were the Tyne & Wear Foundation, Greater Bristol Foundation and the Cleveland Community Foundation.

⁴ For more information on the CFN see www.communityfoundations.org.uk

⁵ One community foundation also exists in the Republic of Ireland. Entitled the Community Foundation for Ireland, it was established in 2001 as a result of a challenge issued by the government to the private sector to establish a community foundation, given the significant economic growth in the country during the 1990s. The government offered a one million euro challenge grant to establish the foundation and to challenge the private sector to match. In 2003 Atlantic Philanthropies provided a challenge grant to assist the foundation to raise its profile and assist in its endowment building. For more information, see www.cfi.foundation.ie

⁶ A second, much smaller community foundation exists in Northern Ireland called the ‘Fermanagh Trust’ which serves the county of Fermanagh, in the south-west of the region, with an extensive border to the Republic of Ireland to its south. For more information on the trust see www.fermanaghtrust.org

⁷ The terms ‘trust’ and ‘foundation’ tend to be used interchangeably in the UK and Ireland and trust is historically the term most commonly used, although this is now changing.

- Fundraising and supporting community-based action;
- Raising funds from a wide range of donors who wish to support and be associated with this work;
- Drawing on collective experience, research, and evaluation, to influence policy development.

The CFNI is a non-partisan, non-sectarian foundation and has no political affiliations.

According to its Director:

Thirty years of continuous conflict have left the people of Northern Ireland with special and urgent needs. Problems of community deprivation have been aggravated by high levels of stress, poor health and the fear of violence. People living in areas that are most disadvantaged have also borne the brunt of the impact of the Troubles, in terms of death, bereavement, injury and trauma.⁸

The Community Foundation is committed to the development of independent endowment funding to ensure their own sustainability and that of the nonprofit sector in Northern Ireland through their grantmaking. The experience of this community foundation forms the basis of a discussion of the role and function of community foundations in divided or post-conflict societies which follow.

- **Evolution of the Community Foundation Concept**

According to the 2004 Community Foundation Global Status Report:⁹

The modern community foundation, which was born out of a particular tradition of philanthropy in North America in the early twentieth century, has been adapted successfully to the local cultures, socio-economic circumstances and giving traditions in countries around the world.

In recent times, the community foundation concept has developed in various corners of the globe, evolving into structures and practices which are the most appropriate and culturally-

⁸ See www.communityfoundationni.org/

⁹ WINGS. (2004:3) 2004 Community Foundation Global Status Report, WINGS-CF, Brussels. In 1999 the International Programmes department of the Council on Foundations and the Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmakers Support – Community Foundations (WINGS-CF) sponsored a project to track the global development of community foundations for the first time. In 2000, they published *The Growth of Community Foundations Around the World*. In 2003 the first Global Status Report was published and updated in a second edition in 2004.

specific model for their context, learning from the experience of those who have gone before them. WINGS-CF has identified community foundations in at least 42 countries, with an additional eight seriously exploring the concept for their own context. In Latin America, countries such as Mexico are well served with community foundation-like organisations, although the rest of Central and South America have few, with the exception of Brazil. Western Europe is now well served and Central and Eastern Europe are gaining ground on their neighbours with an explosion of activity in former communist states. Asia and the Pacific have also seen a growth in numbers, particularly in Australia and New Zealand, but also in countries such as Japan and India. In Africa, South Africa, a country slowly emerging from violent conflict related to the system of apartheid and dealing with the profound legacies of that experience, has seen the most activity in the establishment of a number of community foundations in the past decade.¹⁰

As a demonstration of the growth of the community foundation concept outside of the US, the first symposium which brought together community foundation practitioners from around the world was held in Berlin, Germany in December 2004.

- **Community Foundations in Communally Divided or Violent Societies**

Aside from the Northern Ireland experience, other regions of conflict have begun to recognise the potential benefits of the community foundation concept. The emergence of the community foundation model in Southern Africa was introduced at a time when people were ready to embrace broad changes in their social, political and economic structures. Also, the decentralisation movement prompted individuals and international institutions to seek local organizations as the vehicles for developing civil society. The community foundation is, therefore, viewed as more than just a grant-making institution, but a structure through which communities could actively participate and shape their localities and affect real change.

¹⁰ However, other African states, such as Kenya and Zimbabwe are also exploring the concept and there are currently efforts to establish local community foundations in specific regions.

The Southern African Grantmakers Association (SAGA)¹¹ is creating specific opportunities for the establishment of community foundations in South Africa. SAGA was funded by the Mott, Ford and W.K Kellogg Foundations in 1998 to fund a five-year pilot programme for developing community foundations. Funding would not only provide technical support and assistance to embryonic foundations but also create a forum where they could learn from each other and from the international sector. Community Foundations Manager for SAGA, Max Legodi explained:

Initially, community foundations were seen as something brought in from the outside, so they were not embraced here. But when South Africans saw that anyone can take the idea and run with it and adapt it, then it started to catch on. There were places where people fell in love with the idea, and that's where it really took off.¹²

To date, the two most successful community foundations in the country are the Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation in the North West province, and the Uthungulu Community Foundation in the KwaZulu-Natal province. In all, there are eleven community foundations in various stages of development in South Africa, and the concept has spread to the neighbouring countries of Botswana, Lesotho and Mozambique.

In Israel, two community foundations have been identified, according to the WINGS criteria. The Jerusalem Foundation was established in 1966 by a former mayor of the city, along with a number of international supporters and displays many community foundation-like characteristics, given its community philanthropy ethos. It is a non-political, non-sectarian, independent foundation, whose mission is to rebuild the city and improve the quality of life for all of Jerusalem's residents, regardless of ethnic or religious background. Today, the foundation's stated aim is "to strengthen, promote and enhance a free, open, pluralistic and modern society in Jerusalem, by responding to the pressing needs of the city and working to improve the lives of its residents."

Now describing itself as "a worldwide organisation" the foundation supports projects in seven key areas, namely Social Services; Youth and Education; Diversity and Tolerance; Arts and Culture; Parks and Recreation; History and Heritage and Jerusalem as a World Capital.

¹¹ Established in 1995, the Southern African Grantmakers' Association is an independent, voluntary and nonprofit association of organisations and individuals involved in funding development in Southern Africa.

¹² Jaruzel, M. *Community Foundations expanding globally*, Mosaic, Vol 3, No 4, January 2004

In 2003 a total of \$22.3 million was received by the Jerusalem Foundation. The majority of funding support for the foundation comes from outside the country (most notably from the US but also significant percentages from Switzerland, Germany, the UK and France). In 2003, 65 percent of the funding came from private donations, 18 percent from foundations, 12 percent from estates and bequests and only 5 percent from government and public support.¹³

Unlike other community foundations, the foundation initiates many of its own projects, but also does fundraising and provides grants for other nonprofits working in Jerusalem. They has been involved in a very broad range of activities since their inception, from supporting the Zoological Gardens or Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra to the Sheikh Jarrach Health Center.

It terms of addressing issues related to the ongoing conflict in the region, the foundation's Diversity and Tolerance programmes support a range of cross-community activities. These projects may be viewed as a limited attempt to address issues of peacebuilding in the region, as they are mainly focused on cross-community encounters and dialogues, rather than social justice programmes which aim to address the underlying causes of the conflict or aim to influence current government policies – whether political, social or economic.

A relative newcomer to the field of philanthropy in Israel is the Beit Shean Community Foundation was established in 2000 in the rural Beit Shean region of Israel, near the Jordanian border. It was formed with consultation and advice from The Cleveland Foundation in the US, and support from the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, Ohio and an Israeli nonprofit organisation devoted to social change.¹⁴ Established to promote economic and social development in the area the foundation is still in the very early stages of development.

Another region which experienced brutal conflict during the 1990s is the Balkan region of Europe. Slower to develop, the first community foundation in the former Yugoslavia states, the Foundation Runovici was established in 2000 in Runovici, a village in Dalmacia, Croatia.

¹³ Jerusalem Foundation Annual Report 2003

¹⁴ WINGS. (2004) 2004 Community Foundation Global Status Report, WINGS-CF, Brussels

Its mission is to support activities that enhance the development of the region, on the one hand, and the quality of life of the citizens, on the other. Like the Community Foundation Simin Han, established in February 2003 in Bosnia and Herzegovina is it too early to see the results of their work. Primarily supported in the initial stages by the Freudenberg Stiftung of Germany, Simin Han was initiated by the Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme (YEPP) and was established by Simin Han's citizens.¹⁵ Simin Han is a semi-urban district of around 8,000 residents and was badly damaged, both physically and economically as a result of the civil war which torn through former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The town is now suffering from high degrees of poverty, dramatically high unemployment rates, significant community divisions between different communities, high levels of drug abuse and crime, with many people still suffering from psychological damage as a result of the war. A small scale initiative, only in the early stages of development, the Foundation aims at empowering young people, strengthening and improving the community and works in the field of education, culture, and advocacy. Their long-term goal is for the foundation to take over the responsibility for the implementation and further development of the whole local YEPP programme and to develop further initiatives in the area. They also aim to provide grants for local groups and organisations in order to implement small scale projects in the areas of education and training; infrastructure, community development and ecology.

Identifying common experiences

As we have seen, the concept of a community foundation is not well developed in conflict-affected countries, perhaps not surprisingly, given these societies' preoccupation with addressing immediate needs and lack of time and resources to establish more elaborate structures. However, this tradition is slowly changing, as demonstrated in Northern Ireland and South Africa and we can anticipate that future development of community foundations in divided or post-conflict societies will emerge as awareness of their potential benefits and knowledge of the community foundation sector more generally grows with time.

¹⁵ On the Board of the Foundation there are three young people under 26 years old, a teacher, a doctor, a women activist, and a construction engineer.

Interest in the area has been demonstrated by the establishment of the ‘Foundations for Peace Network’ initiated by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in October 2003.¹⁶ The idea came from the experience of CFNI, which felt that, having worked on peacebuilding and social justice issues for around 25 years in Northern Ireland, it had much to share with others in similar contexts and also much to learn.¹⁷ The network is open to both community foundations and independent funders, although the latter currently predominates.¹⁸

The mission of the network is stated in their Charter drawn up in Colombo, Sri Lanka in December 2004 as

“Foundations for Peace is a global network of independent, indigenous funders working to advance equality, diversity and inter-dependence in areas of entrenched and persistent communal conflict with a history of, or potential for, violence.”

Membership of the network is open to grantmaking organisations that are both independent and indigenous, that engage as proactive and strategic peace builders, promoting equality, diversity, and interdependence in societies where communal conflict is entrenched and persistent and where societies are in transition from violence or at risk of violence. The network makes a distinction between the type of peace the foundation should be aiming towards - the pursuit of peaceful co-existence in the absence of interdependence is not enough unless it is seen as one step towards the goal of real interdependence between communities. Membership criteria are strictly enforced and any expression of interest by a foundation to join the network is subject to peer review by the steering committee in order to maintain a tight focus of interest. Despite their wish to maintain a focus on these criteria, the network is exploring ways in which they might usefully interact with community foundations and other independent foundations dealing with social justice for indigenous peoples or working in societies that experienced political violence in the past.

¹⁶ CENTRIS, a British nonprofit that promotes social justice in civil society, is responsible for helping to facilitate the network. For more information see www.centris.org

¹⁷ Interview, CFNI Organisational Support Officer, February 2005

¹⁸ In May 2005, the members of the network consisted of – the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Abraham Fund Initiatives (Israel); Balkan Trust for Children and Youth, Dalit Foundation (India); Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation (South Africa); Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust (Sri Lanka); Nirnaya (India); Tewa (Nepal).

Initial research and exploration identified seven foundations which met the criteria, who were approached and invited to attend a meeting in Northern Ireland in October 2003. Later, two more joined. According to Garrill and Knight:

The foundations included ... so far display considerable variation: in age, origins, history, geographical area in the world, resources, scope, and methods of working. In that context, not all foundations conformed to the model of community foundations first developed in the United States.¹⁹

In fact, there are more independent foundations than community foundations in the current membership. That being said, they added:

Despite variety, there was much commonality. All foundations were small foundations with modest endowments (the largest being \$15m). Some relied on regranting from other funders. Small endowments were at least partly explained by the fact that foundations were new, typically formed in the past five years, though one began in 1989 and one stretched back to 1979. In the latter cases, the foundations were dealing with a longstanding conflict.

The network has identified three strategies. These are:

1. To influence and advance public policy to support equality, diversity and interdependence nationally and internationally;
2. To inform, influence and increase the flow of philanthropic funds to support peace building across the globe;
3. To draw lessons from and share models of good practice in peacebuilding that have been implemented within and between local communities.

‘Other conferences like the EFC [European Foundation Centre] address issues like how we raise money, but not why we are doing this and how we should be doing it,’ explained CFNI Director Avila Kilmurray.²⁰ ‘So we realised something else was needed.’ Members can now discuss with people working in similar circumstances questions like: How can funders work with people not at the table and what risks do they take in doing so? How do we ensure the safety of our staff in risky situations? How does what we’re doing relate to political activity? With members beginning to explore these questions in more detail, a series of discussion papers on various topics are being planned.

¹⁹ Knight, Barry and Garrill, Jan ‘*Foundations for Peace*’ Paper presented at Community Foundations: Symposium on a Global Movement, Berlin, December 2-5, 2004.

²⁰ “*Is more really better?*” Caroline Hartnell, Alliance Bulletin Vol 9, No 4, December 2004

3. Building Peace in Violently Divided Societies

While war on the scale seen during World War II has not been repeated, the second half of the twentieth century saw a proliferation of conflicts in nearly every continent of the world, the majority of which are categorised as intra-state, civil or ethnic conflicts. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in the 14-year post-cold war period to 2003 there were 59 different major armed conflicts in 48 different locations.²¹ In 2003, 19 major armed conflicts were on-going in 18 locations, four of which were in Africa and eight in Asia. While the scale of the conflicts may have changed, the loss of life and social and economic devastation remains overwhelming. Given their complex origins and root causes, these types of conflicts tend to be difficult to resolve and can persist over years and generations. Their research concludes what many have long known - that outside actors cannot enforce a quick peace, as demonstrated in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq and Sri Lanka and require sustained and comprehensive engagement of both external and internal actors. The role, therefore, of local actors in support of peacebuilding work is a vital component which no amount of external influence can replicate.

All societies have prevailing issues which occupy them, dependent on their circumstances, and economic, political and social contexts. However, additional to common problems, societies emerging from conflict face further difficulties associated with the violence and its related causes and consequences. Before addressing the challenges of a community foundation working within this complex environment, it is worth identifying what issues such societies might potentially face. Clearly, not all issues will be pertinent to all contexts, however, the following are a range of problems which such societies will have to attend to if the root cause of the conflict are to be addressed and a sustainable peace created. Issues to be attended to include:

²¹ SIPRI Yearbook 2004: Armaments, Disarmaments and International Security (Oxford University Press, 2004)

- Loss of life, injury (both physical and psychological), diminished health and capabilities, sexual crimes and intimidation, trauma and grief;
- Weak or non-existent political institutions; Limited government legitimacy and authority;
- Infrastructural damage and decline;
- Competing territorial claims;
- Damage and distortions to the fragile inter-personal associations and the disintegration of relationships and identities; Weakened social fabric as a result of the pervading culture of violence; Hardening of attitudes towards the ‘other’;
- The creation of ‘parallel societies’ where conflictual communities share the same space but interaction is very limited;
- Economic instability and decline, both at national and at local levels; Lack of investment and exchange; Human resource shortage;
- Criminality and black-marketerring;
- Losses in human potential due to lowered self-esteem and lowered expectations;
- Disruption to the education, health and social welfare system;
- Loss of identity and belonging among communities;
- Competition for influence and power amongst differing groups
- Changing ethnic make-up as a result of the conflict, causing new post-conflict ethnic divisions and balances;
- Departure of economic, political and/or intellectual elites, triggering a brain drain and further inertia;
- Growth of refugees and internally displaced persons and associated problems.

Clearly the needs are great and in order to address them effectively, a society not only requires the will and commitment of government authorities but the society as a whole.²²

²² For more detailed analysis of the challenges to peacebuilding, see Darby, John and Mac Ginty, Roger: Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). This edited book contains a number of relevant chapters documenting the processes and challenges facing violent and divided societies preparing for peace and building a new future. The collection is organised around five main themes: planning for peace during periods of violence; the process of negotiations; the effects of violence on peace processes; peace accords – constitutional and political options; and securing the settlement and building the peace.

Addressing the root causes of the conflict is vital to ensure no return to violence. Identified goals to be achieved may, conceivably include:

- Creation of a legitimate political order which represents the needs of all in the community;
- Creation, reform or renewal of affected public institutions;
- Confidence building in new institutions and establishment of legitimacy;
- Establishment of a fair and equitable judicial system which addresses human rights and minority protection;
- Military and police reform;
- Creation of a culture of peace and respect for others and a human rights and equality agenda and culture;
- Establishment of a strong and sustainable economic base;
- Decommissioning of weapons, demilitarisation of area, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants;
- Development of cross-community bonds to act as a counterfoil to a return to violence and hostilities;
- Reconciliation between divided communities;
- Support for a strong civil society, which can produce potential leaders of the future and socialise and mobilise citizens around civic duties and responsibilities;
- Attraction of actors to support peacebuilding process, while building local capacity within community;
- Addressing the physical and psychological impact of the conflict and support the needs of victims / survivors and their families
- Development of an independent and free press and media.

The Role of the Third Sector in Addressing Post-Conflict Issues

The third sector has a vital role to play in the resolution of conflict and the development of a culture of peace in deeply divided and violent societies. While much research and commentary has focused on the 'Track One' official peace negotiations between warring factions, increasingly, literature is available in both the academic sphere and the field of conflict resolution practitioners, both at a theoretical and context-specific levels which

explores the role of the non-governmental or civil society groups and organisations in supporting peacebuilding work.

Nonprofit organisations have played a vital role in societies experiencing violent conflict and division, and their span has been wide and their activity deep. Organisations have acted as awareness raising and advocacy voices, highlighting human rights abuses and attempting to influence public (and official) opinion on issues such as education, health, gender and equality. Others have been occupied with attempts to span the deep chasms of hatred and mistrust which have been created between communities as a result of the conflict, and have been commonly called ‘community relations’, ‘reconciliation’ or ‘encounter’ groups, who support dialogue, exchange, mutual understanding, joint ventures and attempts to influence attitudinal change. Yet others provide services which may have been curtailed or denied as a result of the conflict or associated discrimination. While some organisations have an explicit focus on conflict prevention and resolution,²³ research has indicated that the existence of an active and engaged third sector has the potential to mitigate against the excesses of war, act as a vital conduit between the state and the individual and are viewed as a fundamental component of a stable democracy.²⁴

The Role of Foundations in supporting Peacebuilding in Divided or Post-conflict Societies

Surprisingly little analytical research exists on the combined contribution of foundations in supporting societies affected by violent political conflict. Foundations involved in such work have certainly commissioned and undertaken studies of the contribution their own

²³ The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict categorises these roles as ‘monitor conflicts and provide early warning and insight into a particular conflict; convene the adversarial parties (providing a neutral forum); pave the way for mediation and undertake mediation; carry out education and training for conflict resolution, building an indigenous capacity for coping with on-going conflicts; help to strengthen institutions for conflict resolution; foster development of the rule of law; help to establish a free press with responsible reporting on conflict; assist in planning and implementing elections; and provide technical assistance on democratic arrangements that reduce the likelihood of violence in divided societies.’ (Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997)

²⁴ see *Mobilising for Peace*, ed. Benjamin Gidron, Stanley N. Katz and Yeheskel Hasenfeld, Oxford University Press, 2002

organisations' have made to support such activity and many private evaluations exist.²⁵ However, larger scale research into the function of philanthropy in supporting peacebuilding activities is not available, and virtually no literature exists on the role which community foundations plays in areas affected by violent political or ethnic conflict.

That being said, attempts at greater networking and sharing of ideas and resources have been developed. One such example is the Peace and Security Funders Network,²⁶ which is an unincorporated association of private foundations, public foundations, operating foundations, charitable trusts, other grantmaking programs, and individual philanthropists who make significant contributions in the peace and security field. The central purpose of the Peace and Security Funders Group is to enhance the effectiveness of the network of grantmakers supporting work in the area of peace and security by:

- Improving communication among foundations active in this area;
- Facilitating the exchange of information and ideas among peace and security funders regarding emerging issues in international security, and innovative approaches to problems of peace and security;
- Providing a forum for funders to receive in-depth analysis of particular developments in the field of peace and security, and
- Encouraging funders not currently making grants in the peace and security field to work in this area and to participate in the Group.

While a very useful contribution, given its US base and dominance of large foundations, the opportunity for independent and community foundations based in conflict-regions to participate is very limited indeed.

It is clear, therefore, that the role of the Foundations for Peace network is in exploring how foundations can support social justice and support each other within the challenging philanthropic sector.

²⁵ Notable exceptions are Leshchenko, N (2003) 'Philanthropic Foundations: Assistance in post-conflict situations', International Network on Strategic Philanthropy Outputs of Working Group 1, Bertelsmann Foundation, Gutteshl e. Also, Aksartova, Sada: "In Search of Legitimacy: Peace Grant Making of U.S. Philanthropic Foundations, 1988-1996, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 1, 25-46 (2003). However, neither focus on community foundations.

²⁶ For more information on the Peace and Security Funders Network see <http://www.peaceandsecurity.org/index.htm>

'Peacebuilding' Practice in US: Community Foundation Activity

Whilst not a direct focus of this paper, it is valuable to acknowledge the significant divisions which exist within US society and to pose the question: what are community foundations in the United States doing to support improved race relations or conflict resolution initiatives within violent or socially-tense communities?

Surprisingly, desk research on many of the community foundations located in areas with an ethnically-diverse population, identified few community foundations undertaking or supporting significant programmes or projects on race relations or conflict resolution. This included a number of large metropolitan areas, such as Chicago, Atlanta and Boston. However, literature on the subject does exist and a number of interesting programmes have been initiated and supported by community foundations in ethnically diverse regions.²⁷ In the context of comparative learning, three initiatives have been identified which provide examples of how community foundations are dealing with divisions which exist within the geographical areas they serve.

One of the most significant examples of community foundations addressing the issue of race and diversity is the project of the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth and California Tomorrow entitled 'Leading by Example' and funded by the CS Mott Foundation. The report documents the Leading by Example initiative which began in January 2002 to help solidify, sustain and expand community foundation efforts on equity and diversity through a process of internal development and strategic change. Following an established change framework and methodology, four participating community foundations²⁸ began by exploring their own organizational culture, composition, policies and practices as they relate

²⁷ See David M. Scheie, with T. Williams and Janis Foster. *Improving Race Relations and Undoing Racism: Roles and Strategies for Community Foundations*, Rainbow Research, Inc., 2001 and Hedy Nai-Lin Chang, Nguyen Louie, Benjamin Murdock, Elena Pell, and Ted Scott Femenella. *Walking The Walk: Principles for Building Community Capacity for Equity and Diversity*, California Tomorrow, 2000. Mary Frances Winters. *Include Me: Making the Case for Inclusiveness for Community Foundations*, Council on Foundations, 1996.

²⁸ The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven (Connecticut), the Winston-Salem Foundation (North Carolina), the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (Wisconsin) and the East Bay Community Foundation (Oakland, California)

to diversity and inclusiveness, developed and implemented new internal strategies to address identified issues and shared their experiences and reflections with one another. The report discusses the opportunities and challenges facing foundations in addressing issues of race and diversity, provides examples of stories of change from the four participating foundations and includes guidance on how other foundations can begin to address such issues and ‘lead by example.’

The Long Island Community Foundation established an initiative entitled ‘ERASE Racism’ to address the issue of institutional racism within economic, political and social networks. The project has a number of strands, utilising education, research, advocacy and support to eliminate institutional racism on Long Island – particularly in the areas of housing, education and healthcare. Having incubated the project for three years, ERASE Racism is now an independent nonprofit organisation with a variety of funders, including the Long Island Community Foundation.²⁹

In Cincinnati, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation (GCF) has also begun to tackle the issue of race relations head on. Civil unrest in the city in April 2001 precipitated by the police shooting of an African-American man ‘exposed deep-seated issues and division between black and white Cincinnatians’, according to a recent article.³⁰ Following the unrest, the Mayor appointed a Cincinnati Community Action Now (CAN) to ‘achieve greater equity, opportunity, and inclusion for everyone by addressing the disparities that impact people in need, particularly in the African-American community.’³¹ By late 2002, the collaborative agreement had been signed, and Cincinnati CAN had completed its research and planning phase of work. Given that the funding for such a plan would need to be substantial if real change was to occur, Cincinnati CAN's leadership approached the GCF to help organise and manage a process to raise funds and provide grants for programme implementation over a five-year period. A funders’ collaborative was formed to efficiently and effectively marshal and manage funding for a specific and defined set of predetermined priority initiatives. *Better Together Cincinnati* was established in 2003 as a collaborative among 16 partners, and has

²⁹ For more information on ERASE Racism see www.eraseracismny.org/

³⁰ *Race and Equality: The Role of Community Foundations: Connect: The Newsletter of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation*, Fall 2004

³¹ At about the same time, a Cincinnati Judge appointed a special master to establish a collaborative solution to a class action lawsuit alleging racially biased policing on the part of the Cincinnati Police Department.

committed nearly \$6 million over five years, and agreed to work together to support a limited number of priority initiatives identified by Cincinnati CAN. To date, they have awarded grants to address improved police-community relations, economic inclusion and educational attainment opportunities. The Greater Cincinnati Foundation manages the programme on behalf of the funding partners.

Not content with just grant-making, the foundation's Governing Board convened a taskforce on 'Philanthropy, Race and Equality' to explore the role of foundations in supporting race relations. Supported by the Ford Foundation the task force defined two fundamentals to guide GCF's future civic leadership. First, the goal of GCF's activities — making grants, collaborating with other funders, convening groups of leaders — was to reduce racial disparities and develop a more equitable community. Second, to achieve a more equitable community a deeper community-wide understanding of the divisions which exist is required. Following its enquiries, the Philanthropy, Race and Equity Task Force concluded in November 2004 that people of colour were systematically being excluded from the Cincinnati community, hindering development and that the GCF had an important role to play in creating new opportunities for all. The GCF agreed on a strategy which would address individual leadership development, organizational change and systemic change. The GCF view this as an opportunity to 'expand its role as a civic leader'³² and has drawn up a programme of both internal and external strategies for its work.

The Kansas Community Foundation has similarly recognised that the issue of race relations is the most pressing issue in the Kansas City Region. Specifically, the foundation is investing in strategies to improve struggling neighborhoods and failing schools, and address major contributors to the region's racial conflicts and inequities. In addition, they are conscious of the need to address issues of equality and diversity within the nonprofit sector and have provided the necessary resources to create successful boards as diverse as the populations they serve, through their 'Sharing Power: Board Diversity' programme. According to the foundation:

³² *Race and Equality: The Role of Community Foundations: Connect: The Newsletter of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Fall 2004*

In addition to improving an agency's performance, board diversity encourages interaction of leaders from different backgrounds, cultures, religious, and racial groups. This interaction leads to understanding, acceptance, and progress in the area of race relations.³³

Following on from US-based examples of community-focused initiatives, attention now turns to the experience of a community foundation based in a post-conflict, socially divided society, namely Northern Ireland.

³³ for more information on the programme see www.projectequality.org/

4. Northern Ireland: Key Issues Explored

Background to the Conflict in Northern Ireland

The island of Ireland was partitioned in 1921, with the southern twenty-six counties gaining independence from Britain and forming the Republic of Ireland. The remaining six north-eastern counties remained part of the United Kingdom, with a population of around one and a half million, 65 per cent Protestant and 35 per cent Catholic. From 1921 until 1972, a devolved government in Northern Ireland operated with virtual autonomy from London on local matters. Sovereignty was retained in Westminster, as was responsibility for defence, foreign policy and other UK concerns.

Local political power in Northern Ireland remained exclusively in the hands of the Unionist Party, supported by the Protestant majority. The nationalist (Catholic) community had no role in government and experienced discrimination in many areas including voting rights, housing and employment. Influenced by the civil rights movement in the US, non-violent activists began a campaign for equality for the Catholic minority, which was met with a hostile and repressive response from the Northern Ireland authorities, precipitating a period of sustained political crisis.

A violent campaign for independence from the UK began in the late 1960s with a revival of paramilitary activity by the IRA (known as republicans) and a corresponding growth in paramilitary violence by those loyal to the British crown (known as loyalists). A bloody civil conflict ensued, involving State violence responses and the region went in to rapid political, economic and social decline, while the chasm between the Protestant and Catholic communities grew by the year. As the situation deteriorated, the British Government brought Northern Ireland under the direct control of the Westminster Parliament, where it remained until the signing of the peace agreement in 1998, marking a turning point in the conflict in which over 3,600 people were killed and tens of thousands injured.³⁴ The Belfast Agreement involved a constitutional change in the Republic of Ireland resulting in the ending of its territorial claim to Northern Ireland; cross-border bodies with executive powers

³⁴ A detailed analysis of the death and injury toll can be found in Marie-Therese Fay, Mike Morrissey & Marie Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The human costs* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

set up by the two governments; the establishment of a Northern Ireland Assembly based on power-sharing; and the early release of paramilitary prisoners. The Agreement was subsequently endorsed by referenda in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and, in December 1999, a legislative Assembly of both unionist and nationalist politicians was finally set up to share power in Northern Ireland, with Ministers and committee members drawn from both sides of the political divide. Whilst the ceasefires of the main paramilitary groups have remained - at least for the most part - intact, tensions both at a political and street level remain and the region is struggling to maintain the momentum of the peace process and to adequately address the impact of the conflict on the region and its inhabitants. The Northern Ireland Assembly has been in suspension since October 2002 and recent elections in the region indicate a growing polarisation in political support and a general pessimism for the future pervades.

The Third Sector in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has a thriving non-profit sector (commonly known as the community and voluntary sector) of between 4,500 and 5,000 organisations and employs 4.5 per cent of the total workforce.³⁵ The sector is engaged primarily in education/training, economic/community development/employment and advice, advocacy/information service provision. Cross-community and cross-border activities (which combined could be encompassed under the term 'peacebuilding' more generally) account for around 8 percent of the total, although many other organisations may have this as a secondary purpose to their work. With only 15.4 per cent of organisations being controlled from outside Northern Ireland, the sector demonstrates a largely self-sustaining voluntary and community sector.³⁶ Government (including central government, non-departmental public bodies/statutory agencies and district councils) is the single largest source of income for the sector, accounting for around 38 per cent of total income. Individual/unspecified donations account for around 28 per cent of total income to the sector.³⁷ Internally generated income

³⁵ State of the Sector III, Northern Ireland Voluntary and Community Sector Almanac 2002 (NICVA, 2002)

³⁶ While this comment might appear unnecessary to a US reader, the fact that Northern Ireland is only one of a number of 'regions' of the UK means that many organisations are based in London and other large cities.

³⁷ This compares to 34.7 per cent for the UK as a whole.

represents just 4.4 per cent of total income, comparing disfavouredly with the rest of the UK, at a figure of 29 per cent, highlighting the dependent nature of the non-profit sector on external funding. Corporate giving accounted for only 1.8 per cent of total income for the community and voluntary sector, although this figure is on the rise.

In terms of local attitudes to charitable giving, research has indicated that Irish and British societies tends to give generously to needs outside of their own contexts, primarily to developing countries and to assist with disaster relief. The prevailing attitude is that the government should provide social assistance through their tax-raising powers and there is no history of institutionalised giving (except, one could argue, to the church which has traditionally been a large recipient of donations in both Catholic and Protestant churches). However, there is a strong history of volunteerism and there appears to be a change in giving patterns and attitudes to local giving.³⁸

The role of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in addressing identified issues

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has been at the cutting-edge of supporting grassroots peacebuilding and social justice work since its founding as the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust in 1979. In that year, a number of community activists lobbied the then Labour Government to take a more active role in supporting social action and community development in Northern Ireland. With the conflict escalating and the divisions between communities deepening, the community workers had a vision of a locally-based grant making body that would help fund social initiatives leading to community development. The Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (NIVT) was established with the Government initially providing a £500,000 endowment to help get it started and then promising to match every pound NIVT raised to a limit of £250,000. The first modest grants were made to community project in the early 1980s on issues as diverse as disadvantaged youth, provision of basic social amenities and an emerging project for single

³⁸ For a detailed analysis of the role of the non-profit sector in peacebuilding in Northern Ireland see Cochrane, F and Dunn, S "Peace and Conflict-Resolution Organisations in Northern Ireland" in *Mobilising for Peace*, ed. Benjamin Gidron, Stanley N. Katz and Yeheskel Hasenfeld, 151-174. Oxford University Press, 2002

parents. According to the organisation, funding local initiatives and emerging social issues became the hallmark of NIVT.

In 1994, the organisation undertook an initiative to examine what community-based groups felt were the priorities for them in post-ceasefire Northern Ireland. In 1995 it published 'Peace: An Opportunity for Change' which identified nine priority areas for the foundation. In brief, they address issues related to the contribution of community groups to the neighbourhood/community regeneration process; capacity-building, training, education and employment for the long-term unemployed; social justice, human rights and equity; Early Years initiatives; community care; community relations and cross-community work; support for women's groups; community fora and participative democracy and issues related to deprivation.

The foundation considered that the most relevant voices in any grass-roots peacebuilding process were those of people who suffered most from the conflict, and that as a funder it should be prepared to "take risks for peace."³⁹ They prioritised those from locations most affected by the conflict, people who had been bereaved, injured or who were carers as a result of the conflict and politically motivated ex-prisoners, a difficult and often controversial area of work. Currently, the foundation works under three broad themes, namely *Supporting People*, which includes work with ethnic minorities, women and young people; *Strengthening Communities*, which includes work in building community infrastructure, working with rural communities and cross-border work with communities in the Republic of Ireland. Their final strand of work is entitled *Building Peace* and involves a wide variety of work to support reconciliation in the region. The foundation has administered funding to victims/survivors groups from both central government funding and the European Union, supported a programme for politically-motivated ex-prisoners groups, and provided vital funding to groups working to alleviate tensions during the particularly challenging summer months, when violence escalates in local communities. Originating from the European Union Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, the foundation also administers a range of grants under the theme of building community infrastructure over the past decade under the

³⁹ Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (1997) *Taking Risks for Peace*, Belfast: NIVT

banners of social inclusion, economic regeneration, active citizenship, community development in areas of weak infrastructure and the promotion of the 'social economy'.

Social justice is an issue which is given high priority in the strategic planning of the foundation and is an important element in their on-going programmes. An example of such work is the 'Having your Say' programme to engage the community in the drafting of the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and supporting initiatives around citizenship issues.

The foundation has also worked in partnership with other local and cross-border agencies to deliver programmes in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to support and encourage co-operation and reconciliation. They have developed a working partnership with Harvard University's 'Project on Justice in Times of Transition', which has offered the opportunity to open up a space for discussion and debate on the demands of peacebuilding in divided societies, and has facilitated visits by international experts in the field from other regions, including South Africa, Israel/Palestine and Chile. Atlantic Philanthropies, the foundation established by an Irish-American philanthropist has supported this, and other CFNI projects. In terms of other diaspora support, CFNI has also developed a partnership with the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) to initiate a programme entitled 'Communities in Transition' to proactive work in areas of weak community infrastructure and develop a long-term approach to persistent problems. In addition, in 1999, an American support group was established and formed the 'Board of Friends of the Communities of Northern Ireland', which does fundraising in the US for the Foundation, with the money raised going to support a range of community relations and community development projects across Northern Ireland.

5. Key role of community foundations: a discussion in the context of divided or societies emerging from conflict

According to Peter deCourcy Hero⁴⁰

[community foundations] are uniquely able to act simultaneously as conveners, catalysts for change, and grant-makers, they are creating new collaborations to forge new solutions to longstanding community challenges including crime, drugs, homelessness, youth development and cultural participation.’

Differences in local charitable giving and the needs of the communities create different emphases and areas of concentrated efforts. No two community foundations are alike and regional and cultural differences have emerged, been identified and debated within the sector as it develops and matures. As the literature on community foundations expands, so too, it seems, does the number of definitions and lists of characteristics of community foundations offered. Having previously acknowledged that the field is evolving and the emphasis on certain aspects of work differs according to a community’s needs, this section explores the key characteristics of community foundations and analyses them with respect to societies emerging from conflict. Given the international focus on the work of WINGS, I have chosen to explore the nine characteristics they have defined as identifying factors for community foundations.⁴¹

1. **Seeks to improve the quality of life for all people in a defined geographical area**

‘What is a community foundation? First, take the word ‘community’. It’s people being connected to each other by geography...’⁴²

⁴⁰ Peter deCourcy Hero (1999) ‘Early Stage Development of Community Foundations: Challenges to Growth’ in *Community Foundations in Civil Society*, ed. Bertelsmann Foundation (Bertelsmann Foundation, 1999): p.70

⁴¹ This set of attributes was developed by the global advisory committee of WINGS-CF

⁴² Suzanne Feurt, Managing Director, community foundations, Council on Foundations, Washington DC, USA in *Sowing the Seeds of Local Philanthropy: Two Decades in the Field of Community Foundations*, (Mott Foundation, 2001)

The notion that a community foundation exists within a distinct geographical area has been well-established since the first foundation established in Cleveland, Ohio in 1914. The linkage between community and place has been explored and analysed by academic disciplines as diverse as geography, anthropology and urban planning, and a whole body of work exists which debates the connection (or disconnection) between community and place. In relation to community foundations, Suzanne Feurt's highlights how the concept of 'community' differs between the US and Europe. She writes:⁴³

In the US, the concept of 'community' - a geographic place where people have strong local ties and a sense of identity and cohesion - is an immediately understandable point of reference for people. ... In Europe, personal identity and belonging follow more fluid cultural and linguistic lines and are not necessarily linked to the place where people live. The notion of geographic identity has been affected over the centuries by changing national and regional boundaries, patterns of land ownership by elites, and various political systems such as communism which have discouraged local initiative.

The concept of community in divided societies is fraught with difficulties and has often been at the root of the escalation from tension into violence between differing 'communities'. Using the concept of community as a geographical space poses challenges in the context of a divided society as different ethnic or religious groups tend to live close to each other in inward-looking communities, rather than in mixed neighbourhoods or districts. This separation of distinct groups may have been more commonly imposed (as in apartheid South Africa or in Israel / Palestine) or predominantly voluntary (as in the self-selection of areas to live in Northern Ireland)⁴⁴, however, it is ultimately based on issues of safety, sense of identity with others and results in the creation of more bonding, rather than bridging, social capital as communities develop in relative isolation from one another. Unless holistically addressed through significant policy decisions, the cycle is ultimately self-perpetuating and communities of identity will continue to be formed and consolidated within separate geographical areas.

In the case of the CFNI, the decision to establish a foundation which would cover all of Northern Ireland was made easier by the manageable geographical spread and relatively

⁴³ Suzanne Feurt (1999), 'International Perspective: Models, Experience and Best Practice' in *Community Foundations in Civil Society*, ed. Bertelsmann Foundation (Bertelsmann Foundation, 1999): pp. 35-38

⁴⁴ Neither of these distinctions is clear-cut and forced and voluntary movement both internal to a region and emigration outside of the region as a result of the conflict has been common experiences in all conflict regions. Voluntary movement towards single-identity areas is often a chosen safety strategy in times of conflict, which becomes solidified over time.

small population of the region. This directly defined the notion of ‘community’ as a common geographical space, but also acknowledged that within this geographical community there were also distinct communities of interest, ethnicity and religion.

The Chief Executive of the Uthungulu Community Foundation in South Africa addresses the thorny issue of ‘community’ from the outset. He said:

Right from the beginning, we had to make it quite clear to the general public that we were going to serve a defined geographical area, and not areas that were to fall outside our area. We spent a lot of time selling and marketing the concept to local communities. ... The common question we got in the process of selling the Community Foundation concept was how different were we going to be from traditional non-governmental and community-based organisations. We told these people that a Community Foundation has features of its own that quite often lack in other organisations. We told them that in the process of developing local communities we would be doing so with and through existing non-governmental and community-based organisations, through grants and capacity-building programmes. This approach immediately made us acceptable to all communities.⁴⁵

If the primary defining identity of individuals living in divided societies is not geographical, the challenge for community foundations is in working with the existing structures, whilst not perpetuating the divisions through short-term grantmaking in geographical areas, which fails to take a more holistic view of peacebuilding into account.

2. Are independent from control or influence by other organisations, governments or donors

The nature of a community foundation as an apolitical organisation is appealing to people because of its potential to become a unifying organisation—one that builds partnerships across the board with all races and stakeholders.⁴⁶

The importance of independence in relation to a community foundation cannot be overstated in a society emerging from conflict. Conflict regions are rife with tensions, suspicions and fears, power relations are unequal and words are loaded. A community foundation working to overcome inequalities and work with all communities—however

⁴⁵ Personal correspondence, May 2005

⁴⁶ Max M Legodi, programme director at South African Grantmakers Association, in *Sowing the Seeds of Local Philanthropy: Two Decades in the Field of Community Foundations*, (Mott Foundation, 2001)

difficult and controversial – and support peacebuilding work, must strive to maintain its independence from, and influence of, other organisations, governments and donors.

However, below this rhetoric lie two significant challenges for community foundations. Firstly, how can you be apolitical in a context where politics is king and addressing social justice issues is inherently a political act? Of course, a community foundation does not necessarily have to deal with the tough issues. It could—theoretically at least—avoid the controversial concerns of social injustice, inequality, exclusion and weak community infrastructure and support the arts, playgroups and provide scholarships, for example. However, this would be counter to the ethos of a community foundation which seeks to involve the community in identifying the most pressing needs in society and providing support (both financial and non-financial) to assist the community to address these needs in a collaborative fashion. Addressing these pressing needs in a society emerging from conflict is intrinsically political, and therefore the challenge of a community foundation in divided societies is not to be apolitical but to be removed from the partisan and adversarial politics which inevitably symbolise such regions and injustices at their root and provide everyone with an equal opportunity to develop and thrive.

Secondly, how do you remain completely independent from government when they are often a major source of funding? In societies emerging from conflict, governments are often an important source of funding, both in unrestricted and donor-advised funds. The challenge for community foundations is to strike a balance in accepting the administration of government funding (who are rarely neutral actors in the conflict) without being perceived as being controlled or influenced by the government or acting merely as a conduit for the pursuit of government policies.

However, it is not only government funding which can prove difficult to accept without strings. In 1995, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland had the opportunity to become an ‘Intermediary Funding Body’ for a number of programmes within the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE I) programme in 1995. A substantial grantmaking opportunity to administer £41.8 million over a five year period, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland expressed concerns early on in terms

of their administration of parts of the grant programming. Not only were they concerned that the independence of the foundation as a funder would be undermined, but they had concerns that the financial base of the foundation might be put at risk in the event of any financial difficulties with the programme. In addition, it indicated the potential difficulties associated with the sudden organisational expansion of the foundation, which could potentially endanger the ethos and collaborative structure they had developed, which may not be sustainable when the programme ended.⁴⁷

Conflict regions may become heavily reliant on outside sources of funding. However, community foundations must work hard to attract domestic funding streams so as not to become too heavily dependent on one source, which might compromise their independence and, ultimately, their standing within the community it is striving to serve.

3. Are governed by a board of citizens broadly reflective of the communities they serve;

“There is a real difference between do-gooders and change agents.”⁴⁸

The community foundation concept is a particularly attractive philanthropic structure given its goal of inclusivity and the opportunity for those who have previously been disenfranchised or marginalised to actively participate in the shaping of their communities. It also encourages giving at all levels. Building a successful board can be one of the greatest challenges to any community foundation. Recruiting and retaining board members who reflect the full spectrum of their community's ethnic, cultural, gender, age, and socio-economic diversity—and consequently variety of opinion and approach—is an on-going endeavour. Attempting to do so within a context where suspicions of others are high, working alongside current or former ‘enemies’ may not be an option, key individuals are already overstretched and overcommitted, and the issues to be tackled are sensitive and contentious, and the challenge becomes even harder. As a Mott Foundation publication reflects:

⁴⁷ ‘Taking ‘calculated’ Risks for Peace II, The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, 2002

⁴⁸ George Penick, President of the Foundation for the Mid-South. Seminar with International Fellows of CPCS, 5 May 2005

The board must include a variety of people from the community who are respected, credible and influential, and are concerned about the well-being of the community. The board will need members with diverse skills, including fundraising, managerial, legal, financial and media expertise.⁴⁹

This is quite a task in itself. Christine Delport of the Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation⁵⁰ expressed concerns over the potential for conflict-of-interest issues arising in the board membership.

We have to be aware that politics could come into play because of this time period for our country. It is what people breathe. As long as we know ahead of time and acknowledge it as a possible problem, it will be ok. When we bring people on board, we have to let them know we are asking them as individuals, not as someone wearing a particular hat.

However, it is often because of the particular hat that people are wearing – whether that be their specific expertise or experience, or standing within the community which is the reason they are approached to be on the board in the first place.

Chris Mkhize of the Uthungulu Community Foundation reflects on the challenge of developing a representative board:

The most difficult thing in any given situation is to deal with perceptions and suspicions. This is also the case with the South African society. The foundation is made up of all sectors of the South African society. Whilst the constitution of the Board may not reflect such representivity as was originally envisaged, as wide a spectrum of racial and cultural mix as could be managed currently make up the Board. Board members represent the communities they come from and keep the community abreast with developments in the Community Foundation in so far as operational issues and programmatic activities going forward, are concerned. In this fashion it becomes possible for all sectors of the community to feel a certain level of belonging and ownership of the Foundation.⁵¹

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland clearly reflects its ethos as an inclusive organisation in the make-up of its board, which includes a broad spectrum of individuals from non-profit, governmental, business and academic sectors, with a balance in terms of

⁴⁹ Mott Foundation (2002) Community Foundations: Building New South Africa Through Community Philanthropy and Community Development (Michigan: Mott Foundation)

⁵⁰ The Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation is located in the Northwest province of South Africa, where 80 per cent of the 1.2 million people live in remote areas with often very basic services.

⁵¹ Personal correspondence, May 2005

religion and gender – if not quite as successful in age. As with the non-profit sector in general, on the greatest challenges facing a community foundation is to fully reflect the diversity of the community, in both its board and its staffing – an issue which will be returned to later.

On-going research on community foundations working in post-conflict societies has identified a common theme, namely the visibility of the founder in the foundations operations.

In some cases, the founder was actively involved, either as board member or staff member. It was commonplace for the founder to have a direct connection with the conflict – sometimes as a result of a personal tragedy – such as the death of a loved one.⁵²

While this personal commitment to the foundation and its work is admirable and has its benefits, the foundation must be conscious to balance the need for passionate commitment of board members to addressing the needs of the community with some objective distance in order to make the most fair and balanced decisions. The rationale of the ‘community’ element of a community foundation is the local knowledge and participation. A particular challenge is to balance the need for a board to represent the community, with one which had a level of quality and credibility that will attract donors to invest in it.

4. Make grants to other non-profit groups to address a wide variety of emerging and changing needs in the community;

“If innovative philanthropy is to mean anything it must be based on the ability to scan the political, social and economic landscape, as well as being open and sensitive to the potential pulse points of change at the level of local communities.”⁵³

In divided societies, resource allocation, whether governmental or non-governmental, is a particularly thorny issue, where communities view the allocation of funding on a one-for-me, one-for-you concept, rather than based on need. The challenge for community foundations

⁵² ‘Foundations for Peace’, Jan Garrill and Barry Knight. Paper presented at Community Foundations: Symposium on a Global Movement, Berlin, December 2-5, 2004.

⁵³ Acceptance speech by Avila Kilmurray, Director, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland on receipt of the 2004 Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy in Europe, Athens, June 2004

is not to get drawn into this adversarial mode of working, and address presenting issues in inclusive ways which engage all sides in understanding and accepting that supporting one 'community' is ultimately benefiting all. A community foundation must find the balance between meeting the desires of *all* sectors of a community and addressing the specific needs of *particular* communities, which may create tensions or feelings of preferential treatment being afforded to one community over another.

Chris Mkhize believes his foundation in South Africa has met the challenge to date. He writes:

Our grant-making process is very fair, transparent and open to public scrutiny. We invite applications for funding, and have a grant-making community that looks at our guidelines for issuing grants and issues that address poverty, unemployment and conflict. The grant-making committee has to table its recommendations to our Board. We debate these recommendations and come up with decisions on who gets what ... When we get an application for funding we visit that project, to assess its capability in terms of managing the project and the support the project has to its local community. In short, we do a situational analysis before funding any project. This helps determine beforehand if that project would be sustainable in the long run.

In the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland they address the issue of effective grantmaking with the establishment of 'advisory boards' for each grant programme. These advisory boards consist of individuals from the community who have a particular knowledge or interest in the programme (and may also include representatives of the funding source at times) and the foundation makes a conscious effort to include a broad range of people from a differing political perspectives and backgrounds. Whilst a challenge to bring together a range of committed individuals in a particularly small region, the advisory boards are essential to ensure transparency and accountability to the grantmaking process.

However, a grantmaking programme is only as good as its programme officers. Programme officers remain the key link in the chain in ensuring that grant-seekers are treated respectfully, their applications are thoughtfully reviewed, the advisory boards are thoroughly briefed and successful applicants are supported throughout the life of a project. In divided communities, it is vital that programme officers have an in-depth knowledge of the local needs of communities and a finger on the pulse in terms of understanding the communities

they work with. Whilst certainly easier that it sounds community foundations in such contexts must ensure that their staffing is also reflective of the community, if it is to avoid accusations of bias towards a particular community.

5. Seek to build a permanent resource for the community, most often through the creation of endowed funds from a wide range of donors, including local citizens, corporations, governments, and other foundations and nonprofits

“When I ask people why they would not give to an endowment fund, they say the needs of society—poverty and unemployment—can be identified and addressed right now.”⁵⁴

The real challenge facing a community foundation in a society which has been significantly affected by conflict is to raise funds within a depressed economic context, where fiscal stability is uncertain and domestic or international investment is limited. In such contexts, the funding capacity may be very low, with a lack of local private wealth to sustain an emerging community foundation. However, without this community-based funding, foundations may become overly reliant on governmental support, which creates its own set of problems, as addressed previously. Whilst a foundations neutrality and credibility within the community may be compromised depending on the funds if chooses to administer, without it, it may not survive.

Additionally, a real test for a foundation is to develop a philanthropic culture within a population which had been preoccupied with other issues and is suspicious of where their donations might be spent. Conflict regions have often become heavily reliant on external funding sources, both from diaspora communities and international donors (in the case of Northern Ireland - from the European Union) and have become heavily reliant on foreign, rather than indigenous aid. As a society moves from violence to peace, it can also anticipate that the international donors who once took an interest in the region may begin to withdraw as other priorities emerge. The challenge for community foundations is to work with these funders in developing an effective exit strategy, which ensures that funding to provide sustained support in the form of endowments can support the local non-profit sector after

⁵⁴ Chris Mkhize, Executive Director of the Uthungulu Community Foundation, in Jaruzel, Maggie: ‘South Africa reflects on 10 years of democracy’ *Mosaic*, Volume 3, No. 2, June 2004 C.S. Mott Foundation.

their departure. Even in the USA where there is a ‘mature’ community foundation network, let alone in societies emerging from years of conflict, the concept of a community foundation is little known or understood. The task of raising the profile of community foundations amongst relevant community stakeholders and encouraging organised giving may be the ultimate test for a foundation.

Community foundations such as the Uthungulu Community Foundation⁵⁵ in South Africa have been supported in their work by international donors (most notably the Mott and Ford Foundations) to assist them in developing the community foundation model and encouraging South Africans’ interest in building endowments to ensure long-term sustainability and create a situation in which they can address the root causes of identified problems rather than funding short-term solutions.

Convincing potential donors of the value in contributing towards an endowment rather than dispersing the money and seeing tangible results immediately is a real challenge for community foundations. Chris Mkhize of the Uthungulu Community Foundation has identified this as an uphill struggle in their endowment building programme.⁵⁶ He reflects:

When I asked people why they would not give to an endowment fund, they said the needs of society – poverty and unemployment – can be identified and addressed right now. If you say to them that the right thing to do for sustainability would be to donate to an endowment fund, some people simply don’t understand that. Of course, we don’t want to argue with a potential donor, so we let them donate to a specific project.

South Africa is an interesting example of the adaptation of the ‘original’ community foundation model of the US to a specific context. Unlike the US where the individual is the primary donor to community foundations, in South Africa most of the donations are from the business sector. The Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation (GRCF), which was officially launched in 2000, has developed strong working relationships with two large platinum mines in the region. However, this does not work in all contexts. Howard Webber, head of the Voluntary and Community Unit in the British Home Office reflects:

⁵⁵ The Uthungulu Community Foundation is located in the eastern Kwa-Zulu-Natal province, a rural area with a population of 2.2 million, mainly black and living in poverty.

⁵⁶ Jaruzel, Maggie: ‘South Africa reflects on 10 years of democracy’ in *Mott Mosaic*, V3.2, 6/04 (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2004)

British companies interested in philanthropy had tended to spend money on short-term projects that bring quick and predictable results. It is very difficult to sell the concept of donating funds toward the building of endowment.

The community foundation concept has its roots in the United States where a strong culture of individual charitable giving and volunteering for local causes exists. This giving is often conducted openly and with public recognition and individuals continue to make up the largest category of donors to community foundations. However, this tradition does not translate directly to other contexts, where philanthropy within local communities (as opposed to international giving to the developing world) tends to be a practice of the upper classes or is delivered by a conduit such as the church. Public displays of charitable giving are less common as individuals' economic status is more of a taboo. The challenge for a community foundation working in a post-conflict society is to develop and encourage a broad portfolio of donors from ethically sound sources which will create a sustainable base from which to further attract donor-advised funds.

The recent challenge for the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has been the effective administering of around 42 million pounds in grants from the European Union of Peace and Reconciliation as flow-through grants while simultaneously addressing the issue of sustainability within the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland as this funding runs its course. While the fees payable to community foundations from flow-through grants provide a community foundation with predictable funds to support core and infrastructure costs, the development of a locally raised permanent endowment is what distinguishes a community foundation from other service providers and is what ultimately gives a community foundation its credibility. Those wishing to establish a community foundation should ensure that they do not become slaves to the donors rather than the community and explore of a community foundation is indeed a good model in low income areas where funding sources are scarce, and thus fee earning is limited.

6. Provide services to donors to help them achieve their philanthropic goals

“The best philanthropy occurs at the vital crossroads of the donor’s values and the needs of the communities.”⁵⁷

Donors are attracted to community foundations not only as a result of their charitable expertise and administrative services, but as a result of their evidence-based and professional advice and knowledge of the community, its unique dynamics and specific needs. In the early development of community foundations in the United States, assets were built on bequests, and only occasionally did the donors specify an area of interest, such as the arts or the elderly, for example. Typically these gifts were permanent endowments, with only the income from investments being distributed as grants. However, both in the US and in the rest of the world now served by community foundations, this picture is radically different, as foundations are established with gifts from “living donors” who expect some level of involvement in the distribution of grants—now known as “donor-advised funds”. The challenge for a community foundation in any context, not least one with a violent past, is to provide quality services to the donor, whilst not losing sight of the need to address the needs of its community of focus. Peter Hero, President of the Community Foundation Silicon Valley Foundation believes:

“We serve the community *only* if we serve the donor well”⁵⁸

Emmet Carson, President and CEO of the Minneapolis Foundation disagrees. He believes there currently is a crisis in the community foundation movement as a result of the challenge to be mindful of the needs of both donors and communities. He states:

At the heart of the crisis lies a choice between two different approaches – one that focuses on catering to the donors’ needs, the other that focuses on the community need ...The mission of the community-focused community foundation is to build unrestricted assets, and the customer is the community as a whole rather than individual donors.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Alan Broadbent, Maytree Foundation in Toronto Community Foundation Annual Report 1999/2000.

⁵⁸ ‘Community Foundation Silicon Valley: Evolving infrastructure to meet strategic needs’, Stanford Graduate School of Business, Case # PM-49, version (A) 02/27/03, p5.

⁵⁹ Emmet Carson, ‘A Crisis of Identity for Community Foundations’ in *The State of Philanthropy 2002*, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, Washington 2002, p7.

Research undertaken by the Triangle Community Foundation in the Raleigh-Durban area of the US⁶⁰ in 1997 on attitudes to philanthropy discovered that new donors:

- expect a return on their investment;
- want to be hands-on;
- are interested in addressing issues, not supporting institutions;
- want to see their dollars leveraged;
- are more interested in addressing root causes and making lasting change than they are in short-term amelioration.

Community foundations must be mindful to create a healthy balance between serving the needs of the donors and serving the needs of the community. This requires them to recognise, capitalise on, and utilise the knowledge within the organisation itself, and throughout the community as a whole. Writing on the issue, Fulton and Blau state that community foundations ‘are turning themselves into knowledge hubs about the non-profit issues and social concerns of their communities’.⁶¹ Again, a well-informed and knowledgeable board of directors and programme staff is vital to this success. Community foundations must ensure that all staff has adequate training to work in divided communities to ensure sensitivity to both the needs of the community and the donors requirements. A community foundations value will thus be determined by its ability to establish trusting relationships with both the foundation’s donors and the community it serves.

7. Engage in a broad range of community leadership and partnership activities, serving as catalysts, convenors, collaborators and facilitators to solve problems and develop solutions to important community issues

‘We are not just cheque-writers...’

So said George Penick, President of the Foundation for the Mid-South, in response to a question on the role of their foundation in serving the Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana

⁶⁰ Shannon E. St. John, “Donor Services: New Philosophy, New Opportunities” In *Building Philanthropic and Social Capital: The Work of Community Foundations*, ed. Peter Walkenhorst, 95-115. Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers, 2001

⁶¹ Katherine Fulton and Andrew Blau, ‘Trends in Philanthropy Today’ in *Discovering Philanthropy in the 21st Century*, working paper, June 2003, p7.

region.⁶² In societies facing social, economic and political challenges, merely assigning grants is not an option for effective community foundations. Foundations must ask more fundamental questions: What do we need to do to make our grant-making successful? How can we support capacity-building within communities? Who do we need to work with to ensure maximum effectiveness?

The notion of added-value had long been an important element of the work of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. One example is the foundations work around victims/survivors of the conflict. Alongside the administration of the Core Funding for Victims/Survivors Group Scheme for the Northern Ireland Office, the foundation supplemented the grant-giving with organizational support work to assist these non-profits (many of whom had only been established post-ceasefires of 1994 and were in the early stages of development) with the many issues which they would face. This included in-depth training on issues as diverse as trauma, group development, managing projects and policy development.

Uthungulu Community Foundation in South Africa also believes they have an important non-grantmaking role within the community it serves. According to the Chief Executive:

We are role-players in a significant number of community organisations. Local communities just feel we are an organisation that should now assist those organisations that must still develop. We assist traditional leaders, tertiary institutions, local government as well as civil society organisations. We do all this just to maintain our profile as a development and grant-making organisation. In some instances we charge organisations for our professional services. The money we get is used to benefit our Foundation. We have found this to be a great help in our advocacy campaigns for social transformation, justice, equity and dealing with a number of issues that still remain a problem as we continue to rebuild the South African society. South Africa does not yet have many organisations with an exclusive mission of building social capital or peace. We do this ourselves.⁶³

While this role is very important, it is vital that the local non-profit sector do not view the serving community foundation as competition for already scarce resources, but of added value within a community. George Hepburn, Director of the Community Foundation

⁶² George Penick, President of the Foundation for the Mid-South. Seminar with International Fellows of CPCS, 5 May 2005

⁶³ Personal correspondence, May 2005

serving Northumberland and Tyne & Wear in the north of England reflects on leadership as a role of a community foundation and the reticence they had in taking a lead within their community. He identified a number of reasons – or excuses – which have been put forward for not taking a leadership role including – ‘We lacked the resources’, ‘we would be muscling in’, ‘we would divide the Board’ and ‘it would put off donors’. However, he reflects that leadership does not have to be a grandiose endeavour and there are small and significant ways in which community foundations can play a role. He reflects that, indeed, leadership is not dependent on asset size, does not have to take up staff time (it can involve board members and volunteers), it need not be controversial and it can actually assist and compliment fundraising.⁶⁴

8. Have open and transparent policies and practices concerning all aspects of their operations; and

9. Are accountable to the community by informing the general public about their purposes, activities, and financial status on a regular basis.

These last two characteristics are linked and are related to how the community foundation is perceived, both within the context of philanthropy and giving, and in the context of the community it serves as a whole. In the context of violently divided societies, where bonds of trust have been eroded, corruption and black-marketerring is widespread, transparency and openness are vitally important if a community foundation is to be accepted and respected within a community. Chris Mkhize of the Uthungulu Community Foundation identifies this as one of the most difficult issues to address in the South African society. He states:

The most difficult thing in any given situation is to deal with perceptions and suspicions.⁶⁵

This is particularly true of foundations that are in receipt of international funding. Funding in regions of conflict is a challenging task for any international donor, and the process of setting up systems for open accounting, regular auditing and evaluation of programmes is crucial if relationships are to be build and maintained over the long term. One way to

⁶⁴ Hepburn, George ‘Learning to Juggle’ – article prepared for the Transatlantic Community Foundation Network

⁶⁵ Personal correspondence, May 2005

address this issue is in the composition of the board of the foundation, which must reflect not only the diversity of communities in the region, but also a level of community standing and respect.

Community foundations have to work hard to counter misperceptions of what they do, who they support and what their motivations for doing so are. They must be create a public face, disseminate information widely, via publications, websites and the media, and organise or support community based events and conferences on relevant topics in order to engage with the community and work collaboratively to identify and address local problems.

6. Benefits of Community Foundations in divided societies

Elan Garonzik writes:

‘...a community foundation levels the playing field and brings people together not just in common purpose, but to achieve something that is bigger than the whole.’⁶⁶

This, in essence, is the value of a community foundation and the significance it can play in a society which is beset by difference and a belief that little commonality exists. Through an exploration of the community foundation concept and having identified the challenges it can, potentially face, it is important to identify the many benefits which such a structure can bring to a geographically-focused community. A community foundation can, usefully:

- ◆ Provide a mechanism through which to convene and consult with communities – including the most marginalised and socially excluded – on issues which affect them;
- ◆ Identify, clearly articulate and address pressing needs within a community;
- ◆ Support and encourage local leadership through participation at board and advisory group level;
- ◆ Support the development and sustainability of the third sector or support communities in crisis;
- ◆ Bring disparate groups together by sector to engage in new and creative ways (non-profit, business, government and voluntary);
- ◆ Build bridges across divided communities, establish effective lines of communication, develop common projects and build trust across racial, ethnic, economic and political divisions;
- ◆ Create a safe space in which conversations on sensitive and controversial topics can take place;
- ◆ Supports the third sector through grant- and non-grantmaking activities;
- ◆ Encourage and build upon on local philanthropic practices and support voluntarism;

⁶⁶ Elan Garonzik 'Community Foundations and Civil Society' in *Community Foundations in Civil Society*, ed. Bertelsmann Foundation (Bertelsmann Foundation, 1999)

- ◆ Add value to a donor's distributions through the foundation's knowledge of community, research capabilities and staff expertise;
- ◆ Heighten a sense of community, community identity and responsibility;
- ◆ Leverage resources and encourage new collaborations and working partnerships;
- ◆ Are well placed to demonstrate leadership and risk-taking on social justice issues;
- ◆ Provide a professional and knowledgeable service through well trained and well informed staff members who champion the needs of a community;
- ◆ Provide both a useful driver and vehicle to support and encourage a healthy civil society.

7. Conclusions

It is clear from the research undertaken that the success of a community foundation in a society emerging from conflict is not merely monetary and cannot be measured solely in terms of grants provided. A community foundation really can act as a catalyst for change, if it truly involves the community it serves, has a strong knowledge and strategic view of where it wishes the community to go and the skills to bring the community there through collaborative effort. However, it is not enough to reflect on the benefits. We must seriously ask ourselves - are community foundations the most effective models in societies where divisions are deep and economic foundations are unsteady? Community foundations traditionally (at least in the US experience) have been driven by donor-advised funds and the development of large endowments. Before establishing a community foundation, significant work must be undertaken to ensure that endowments can be developed - or at least significant international assistance provided to support their development – and the structures that are put in place are sustainable and will attract further donors to them.

A real challenge for new regions exploring the concept of establishing a community foundation is to assist the community in understanding and accepting this new approach to philanthropy and community support and grantmaking - no mean feat in areas which have a limited tradition in organised philanthropy. Establishing a community foundation is not something that should be entered into lightly, without careful research as to its ability to achieve long-term sustainability. If established, the community must carefully analyse the four different roles that community foundations can play in society – namely grantmaking, donor relations, leadership and asset development and consider focusing their attention – at least for the first five years – on one or two of these functions, rather than attempting to juggle all four, and succeeding in none. If a community foundation does not succeed in creating a pool of local financial support and develop a range of unrestricted funds over time it will find itself particularly vulnerable to failure. A community foundation may only have one chance at success, as credibility will be lost and the concept dismissed. However, if it does succeed, it has an opportunity to play a crucial role in support and developing a sustained peace in its communities, both through its rhetoric and through its actions.

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