

SUMMARY REPORT ON THE CONVENING ON
PHILANTHROPY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE & PEACE
CAIRO, EGYPT - FEBRUARY 2009

by Avila Kilmurray

The Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice & Peace

Akwasi Aidoo, *Trust Africa*, Dakar, Senegal

Ana Maria Enriquez, *UNIFEM*, New York, US

Christopher Harris, *The Ford Foundation*, New York, US

Avila Kilmurray, *Community Foundation for Northern Ireland*, Belfast,
Northern Ireland

Barry Knight, *Centris*, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, UK

Lisa Jordan, *Bernard van Leer Foundation*, The Hague, The Netherlands

Vanita Mukherjee, *The Ford Foundation*, New Delhi, India

Stephen Pittam, *The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust*, UK

Albert Ruesga, *The Greater New Orleans Foundation*, New Orleans, US

Maya Wiley, *The Center for Social Inclusion*, New York, US

Karen Zelermyer, *Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues*, New York, US

with assistance from:

Linda Guinee, *Interaction Institute for Social Change*, Boston, US

Marianne Hughes, *Interaction Institute for Social Change*, Boston, US

SUMMARY REPORT ON THE CONVENING ON PHILANTHROPY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE

CAIRO, EGYPT - FEBRUARY 2009

The Convening on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace was a gathering of people, drawn from a wide range of philanthropic organisations that have an interest in the topic, but who have also been concerned enough to wrestle with the meaning, the processes and the assessment of the impact of philanthropy for social justice and peace. Every continent was represented at the convening, which took place in a region where the traditions of charitable giving date back over millennia.

This Summary Report represents a smattering of the discussion that took place during the preparation of the convening, and over the course of the gathering itself. It indicates that many questions remain unanswered, and much work remains to be done, but in the words of Christopher Harris (Ford Foundation), "If we choose, we can summon a creative turmoil in the field of philanthropy."¹

The Meaning of Social Justice: Catching a Swallow on the Wing

Is social justice a recognisable entity, a lens or an issue? Is it the connective tissue that ties together the best philanthropic endeavours of funders? To what extent is social justice a societal contract or relationship? Can it be global as well as regional or national? These are all questions that were considered during the convening.

*"For me, when I use the term social justice investment, I mean supporting work that is linked to social transformation, equal access to human and civil rights, redistribution of wellness, respect of all beings, human and not human – (without the planet there are not rights), and diversity, gender equity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and people with disabilities."
Amalia Fischer
Angela Borba Fund, Brazil*

There were conversations about what social justice meant to the participants, but so too was there consideration of what was social justice funding / philanthropy. On the subject of the latter, Nicky McIntyre (Mama Cash) spoke about the need to shift power imbalances in society that have a casual relationship to inequalities. Whilst speaking from the perspective of the Dalit

*Social justice funding is funding that addresses core inequalities and core reasons that create power imbalances in societies around the world. For Mama Cash we see philanthropy as power – and social justice funding is about shifting that power, redistributing it and addressing the core issues that create inequalities."
Nicky McIntyre*

Foundation in India, Santosh Samal argued that social justice should be seen holistically not in a compartmentalized manner; recognising that a primary component of social justice is the value

¹ It should be noted that all the direct quotations contained in this report are from individuals speaking in their personal capacity.

of equality with equity – and that equality has to be manifested in practice, Rita Thapa (Tewa and Nagrarik, Aawaz) from Nepal, reminded the convening that “The linkage with peace work is just mandatory. We cannot talk about social justice philanthropy without it being linked to just and equitable peace work”. The nature of that connection remained to be elaborated in practice. Two important international groups of foundations were present in Cairo, the International Network of Women’s Funds and Foundations for peace. They both are remarkably skilled at combining a discrete focus with a working approach that integrates a set of identities and injustices – what some call intersectionality. Their work deserves careful study.

An early session of the convening posed the question ‘What does philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace mean to you? In answer to this it was suggested that social justice philanthropy

“We need social justice to be an integrated focus in all of the issues we work on. It’s a lens as much as an issue. We need people to change their glasses prescriptions.”
Jen Peterson
Vermont Community Foundation, USA

needed to address/solve a certain problem which is variously described as disenfranchisement, marginalization, poverty, lack of self-determination or inequality. The problem exists not just for individuals but for classes of people – typically characterised by

aspects of race, gender, ethnicity, caste or socio-economic class among others. In addition to this, there were some nine different frameworks – or lens – that participants used to understand, and make sense of their social justice work –

- ◆ Justice and fairness
- ◆ Social contract theory
- ◆ Human Rights framework
- ◆ Etiological or root cause framework
- ◆ Distributive justice model
- ◆ Legality or proceduralism
- ◆ Re-valuation model
- ◆ Creative capitalism model.

However, notwithstanding, this family of framings, Albert Ruesga (Greater New Orleans Foundation) held that there was general agreement around the ultimate goal of a world free from poverty and other kinds of want, in which all people have dignity and participate in decision-making that most affects their lives.

Putting the Meaning to Work: The Importance of Context

Consistently over the course of the three day discussions there was the reminder of the importance of context. The popular resonance of the term social justice rang differently across the plains of Mongolia compared to the bustling cities of Toronto or Brussels; what was seen as radical in North America raised a mere shrug of the shoulder in Europe; and what was viewed as revolutionary in Central America was seen as a form of state solipsism in Serbia or Egypt. The political history of societies, combined with very different economic and environmental circumstances, ensured that the concept of social justice had to be adapted to local and regional conditions, while not been leached of its core meaning.

Scanning the state of the philanthropic field by region it was suggested that on Latin America it was the various Women’s Funds that almost exclusively lead philanthropy in terms of an explicit commitment to a social justice analysis – although it is often termed as social investment. It was noted that there is church-based philanthropy which can link social justice and peacebuilding elements through a structural analysis, but more often tends towards more traditional forms of charitable giving. Similarly in the Middle East it was felt that it is still easier

“I don’t like the words social justice, because I don’t understand exactly what it is. Justice is a very subjective word, although everyone thinks it’s objective. There is a constant conflict ... Our issue is how to empower unheard voices so they will participate in the public discourse that decides their future. We are looking for unheard voices..”
Eliezer Yaari
New Israel Fund, Israel

to get funds targeted at alleviating immediate need and engaging in visible work of a charitable nature. Despite an incredible dynamism in the emerging field of philanthropy, there remains a lack of understanding concerning social justice philanthropy. However Fairouz Tamimi (Arab Fund for Art and Culture – Jordan) asserted her belief that social justice funding is “About giving people equal opportunities to realize their hopes.” It was noted that an Arab Foundation’s Forum has been established which might offer the potential to progress the discussion.

“We work toward the growth of more muscular and inclusive philanthropy, helping local groups to give voice and opportunity to marginalized social groups... Some people hear the words social justice and all they hear is economic redistribution. That is a legacy we have to deal with in this part of the world. But fairness and equity are gaining more traction.”
Barbara Ibrahim
John D. Gerhart Centre for Philanthropy & Civic Engagement, Egypt

Despite the large number of well established – and often well endowed – philanthropic foundations in Europe there is still an absence of an explicit social justice lens with the exception of a small number of funders. The question was posed as to whether coordinated work with the European Union might promote a social justice approach. It was recognized that there has been considerable discussions around a social justice framing of philanthropic objectives in North America –

“The need for cultural self-determination in a society that protects multiple cultural identities. This is the Native American quest for social justice.”
Walter Echo Hawk
Native American Arts & Culture Foundation, USA

but much remains to be achieved. While there are clear examples of shared values within foundations, this has not always resulted in shared strategies, and tensions have been apparent between public and private funders. In addition there has been little evidence of funding for social justice as defined by indigenous peoples.

Foundations across the African continent are faced with human rights issues, as well as peace and security issues, that all impact on perspectives of social justice. Concern was expressed that the priorities of external donors and international NGO’s ran the risk of crowding out local policy setting and perspectives. While it was accepted that there were still all too few African philanthropic actors working to a developed social justice framework, it was felt that the field was developing in a positive manner. Bisi Adeleye – Fayemi (African Women’s Development

Fund) pointed out that since the convening of the African Feminist Forum ‘amazing things have happened.’ However equally, concerns were expressed that external funders from the West tend to shy away from issues related to peacebuilding, conflict and a range of social justice concerns, while funding that is made available is often linked to specific parameters of political behaviour. There still needs to be a deliberate strategy to close the existing gap that was perceived as existing between civil and economic rights.

“Social justice and economic justice are possibly the most under appreciated aspect of rights. I’m not saying individual rights are not important. They are. But I think there has been a misunderstanding that structural issues can be left to people to achieve, and that government need have no role in it.”
 Rotimi Sankore
 Africa Public Health Alliance and 15%+ Campaign, Lagos

Finally, participants from Asia argued for greater reflection on practice. It was felt that there

“Inequalities, social justice and peace are intrinsically tied together. Up to now we as grantmakers have looked at everything with tunnel vision and as singular issues. We have a lot to learn from each other. This is a very important moment in the “Rights” based discourse for the several organisations here to look at the causes and intersections of social injustice and conflict.”
 Sithie Tiruchelvam
 Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, Sri Lanka

was a lack of corporate understanding around social justice approaches despite the growth in philanthropic funding available in at least some societies in Asia. There was also a lack of ready data available on philanthropic giving, and there needs to be a deeper understanding of the structural nature of inequality and forms of oppression – particularly where groups of people are voiceless. The emphasis on shared reflection and learning was summed up by one

participant who argued for ‘greater understanding of why we believe what we believe and not presuming that we know what each other thinks and why.’

It was more generally accepted that there were noted silences with regard to social justice issues across continents. Apart from passing mention there needed to be deeper consideration of the impact of globalization, environmental degradation, consumerism and issues related to conflict and peacebuilding. There was also the need for a more explicit discussion of underlying values.

The Power to Believe in Miracles

In his introduction to the convening, Christopher Harris named the ‘end game’ – the ultimate concerns – of the participants, as mediated through their respective contexts -

- ◆ Eventual enjoyment of peace and physical security;
- ◆ Economic and environmental justice;
- ◆ Equal participation and protection under the law;
- ◆ Equitable access to the design and use of all public services;
- ◆ Cultural self-determination and respect for our multiple identities;
- ◆ All this supported by an accountable state and based on the fundamental values of fairness, rights and sustainability.

Addressing the convening on the vision behind the social justice framework adopted by Atlantic Philanthropies, Gara La Marche also stressed the importance of sketching the world

that we want to live in – “It is a world in which peace prevails against history and odds, and in which respect for individual liberties is coupled with a sense of collective social responsibility for the most vulnerable. It is a world in which the rule of law is respected, not undermined, in the name of democracy, and in which respect for human rights is the basis of policy, not expendable in a crisis. It is a world in which democratic participation and meaningful civic engagement are the norm, and where governments provide a baseline measure of support so all have the benefit of the proverbial level playing field. And we want a world in which the most vulnerable are viewed as most deserving of public support, not expected to live and die on their own.”

Whether this vision encapsulates lofty goals or a global miracle, both it, and the ultimate concerns outlined by Christopher Harris, resonate with values that accept –

- ◆ The value of each human life
- ◆ The value of collective, social solidarity
- ◆ The value of speaking truth to power
- ◆ The value of civic engagement and democratic participation
- ◆ The value of peacebuilding and non-violent change
- ◆ The value of multiple identities and cultures
- ◆ The value of sustainable economic and environmental justice

Challenging the silence that can negate a visionary approach, Betty Murungi (Urgent Action Fund Africa) called for the dismantling of systems of discrimination, patriarchy (especially as illustrated through militarism and an unquestioning status quo). While Mirna Cunningham (Global Fund for Women) emphasized the importance of building a shared value base among donors, staff and grantees of philanthropic organisations.

Working for Structural Transformation

The importance of focusing on structural transformation as a means of addressing issues of social justice was introduced by Maya Wiley (Center for Social Inclusion – USA). Agreeing with previous contributions, Maya held that a social justice approach was a lens rather than an issue, which should be utilized in order to address root causes of injustice, so that solutions can be permanent in nature. Working with Barry Knight (Centris – UK) the session presented survey results that analysed responses from individuals engaged in philanthropy. Four explanatory fields encompassed the majority thinking about structural transformation.

- (i) Political Structural Perspective – focus on government, politics and multifaceted strategies;
- (ii) Poverty Structural Perspective – recognition that issues of poverty lie outside of individual control and entail considerations of equity;
- (iii) Systems Structural Perspective – support for a perspective which holds that issues of employment, healthcare, education and other social systems are interconnected and require to be addressed;

- (iv) Individual Causation Approach – which is non structural in nature and places the emphasis primarily on what individuals can do themselves to address circumstances of deprivation.

Relating the structural transformation approach to philanthropy it was suggested that the following questions are posed by funders –

- ◆ What problem are we trying to solve?
- ◆ Who is the most marginalised or disadvantaged by the problem?
- ◆ What do we know about the history of the problem that needs to be addressed? (institutional structures, policies, attitudes, beliefs, etc.)
- ◆ What institutions / systems impact on the causes of the problem?
- ◆ What are the possible starting points to open up opportunities for structural transformation?
- ◆ What are the possible reactions and challenges?
- ◆ Who do we have to be in relationship with to develop the opportunities?
- ◆ How will we know if we are heading in the right direction for positive change?

"I have a wonderful cartoon, with this guy holding a little placard saying 'The end is nigh', and another guy saying, 'I remember when he use to be a crank'. We can say out loud what is happening in the world and not be seen as lunatics".

*Ken Wilson
Christensen Fund, USA*

A number of important caveats were recorded which included examining the nature of power relationships and how they work in practice. Concerns were also expressed that it was possible for funders to get the analysis right, but then adopt strategies that are not effective in achieving the desired structural transformation, whilst Luc Tayart de Borms (King Badouin Foundation) noted that change is often non linear in nature, and that the timing of both analysis and strategic implementation can be important. Lenka Setkova (Carnegie UK Trust) raised the question as to how structural transformation might be analysed and achieved at different levels – the local, regional, national and global levels and how connections can be made between them. She suggested that conversations are necessary about social justice at a global level as well as at a local level, with the former often being more complex and difficult.

"We have done a lot of work to understand the concepts of social change and social justice. This is all about changing power relations. And for me it isn't just about grantmaking, it is about my alliances.
*Betsy Richards
Ford Foundation, USA*

Grantmaking Strategies - the Weave of Change?

Addressing the convening, Sheela Patel representing Shackdwellers' International provided a graphic example of how a partnership between social justice philanthropy and local activism can achieve social change: Organising in some 32 countries, mobilizing over 104,000 families and creating housing units values at over \$142 million, Shackdwellers' International combines

advocacy, with awareness raising and community organising in a dynamic mix. Philanthropic organisations can also usefully adopt a mix of strategic approaches – supplementing grantmaking with capacity building, convening and advocacy support. Ana Criquillion (Central American Women’s Fund) highlighted the nature of Ola Joven – a \$400,000 initiative working with young women, through 100 small organisations, across six countries in Central America. Half of the money is spent on grantmaking with the remainder being invested in leadership training and movement building. During each successive funding round, the current grantees select the new participants.

“Philanthropy needs to be re-calibrated and social justice needs to come to the fore. It’s masked a bit and invisible to some. Will we be angry enough to do something together? Or will we simply list the problems and not develop any strategies?”

*Gerry Salole
European Foundation Centre, Belgium*

Avila Kilmurray (Community Foundation for Northern Ireland) described models of participative and consensual grant-making strategies that are informed by community development principles and empowerment. These have allowed for the active involvement of some of the most marginalized groups in grant making.

“Grantmaking Foundations are very powerful and privileged and we can be quite closed in a sense of not allowing the weakest to come into the highest echelon of decision making power. I’d like to see more Board members who have gone through the experiences of the organisations we fund.”

*Bharat Mehta
City Parochial Foundation, England*

Speaking from the perspective of a Trust that dates back to 1900, Stephen Pittam (Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust) repeated the words of the founder, Joseph Rowntree, who said ‘Charity as ordinarily practiced, the charity of endowment, the charity of emotion, the charity which takes the place of justice, creates much of the misery it relieves, but does not relieve all of the misery it creates.’

Inspired by the mission of seeking out the underlying causes of injustice rather than “remedying the more superficial manifestations of weakness or evil,” the JRCT engages in an iterative grant appraisal strategy, whereby they seek to form partnerships with people who have a passion and a creativity in striving for social change. Stephen reiterated the point that

“You have to be honest about where you are coming from. You have to be engaged in an entirely different way. Being able to bring people together; to give up power; being able to talk about evaluation and learning differently and actually bring in more voices and perspectives, both in design and in the process.”

*Anne Mosle
Kellogg Foundation, USA*

social movements do not start with Foundations, but the latter exist to be responsive and supportive to those individuals and initiatives that are able to question the accepted ‘common sense’ positions and to shake the established systems. His preference was a strategy which

located the Trust as a critical friend, but also as a convenor and a risk-taker in new areas of work. One such cited was the effort to negotiate appropriate banking facilities for Islamic Human Rights NGO’s.

Both Ana and Stephen emphasized the importance of adopting a listening – and a learning approach, which both builds an empathy with grantees/ partners and seeks to discern patterns of systematic change, which can in turn create the conditions for social change. However, it was accepted that a range of different grantmaking strategies can be designed provided that the essential understandings and questions were in place to ensure a social justice framing of the philanthropic endeavour.

“We’re in it for the long haul and fund issues containing key aspects of social justice for many, many years and we stick with it and occasionally we get wonderful breakthroughs... We see social change as being more a patchwork than a linear process. In any of our programmes we would fund a mixture of people working on the inside track for policy change in the short term, with people who are visionaries and have ideas that may take twenty years to come forward... “
Stephen Pittam
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, UK

Gara La Marche (Atlantic Philanthropies) also made a contribution to the convening on how Atlantic Philanthropies embraced a social justice approach to grantmaking, posing the question that if social justice is woven into the fabric of so many organisations and philanthropic

“The social justice field I think faces a definitional crisis... Not having a definition or being clear means the other side gets to win more easily... I hope we will be able to accept different definitions and not a unitary definition. We can be part of the same field but with several different definitions.”
Andrew Park
Wellspring Advisors, USA

institutions that are seeking to effect change – why is it so often unspoken, and what are the costs of that silence? He went on to suggest that, “When mainstream philanthropy neglects to acknowledge and deal with the way issues of race, class, nationality, gender and sexual orientation pose barriers to

bringing about the change and reforms they seek, there is a price to be paid, not only in a degree of complicity with these systems, but most of the time, in our very effectiveness.”

The strategic approach developed by Atlantic Philanthropies included supporting campaigns for policy change, but also investing in building the institutions and leadership necessary to tackle the structural barriers that pervert the course of social justice. Within this approach, and the social justice framing adopted, it is recognized that human rights are an essential element of social justice, although the latter is viewed as a more inclusive term, and consequently preferable for a global movement.

Boring down to the application of the frame to grantmaking strategy, a number of questions were identified as being crucial –

- ◆ Are we addressing the major obstacles to the full participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged people?
- ◆ What pieces of the infrastructure to address the problem are present, and what pieces are missing?
- ◆ Where can Atlantic make an investment to strengthen the field in order to achieve our desired ends?

- ◆ What combined array of tactics is necessary to make headway on a given problem?
- ◆ Given the scale of philanthropic resources available relative to the geography and the problem, if we are ambitious enough, can our investment be transformative?

These questions were set in an understanding of a social justice frame that asks not only who is disadvantaged and vulnerable and what their needs are, but also why that group of people is disadvantaged and vulnerable. What are the structural and institutional barriers that rendered them so, and what might be done to alter the structures and institutions that perpetrate that condition? In other words, how might structural transformation be achieved in practice?

Social Impact Analysis

“Things should be as simple as possible - but no simpler” - Einstein

The need to sharpen the lens of social justice philanthropy should also to be complemented by the need to identify criteria that will highlight what works – and perhaps more importantly

“Funders of social justice are challenged to discern which groups are really making a difference, and sometimes they end up funding things that sound good but don’t have much traction. I think the field would be stronger if funders were clearer about what they wanted to see and were better able to determine which groups can get something done.”

Aaron Dorfman

National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, USA

what doesn’t achieve the desired outcomes. The development of the social justice community as a ‘learning community’ was recognized as important. The question that stood as a headline in the session on Impact Analysis, was ‘How do you make a difference – and how do you know that you make a difference?’ A short play –

‘Kirsty’s Dilemma’ – highlighted the frustrations that these questions can give rise to. A range of preparatory work commissioned by the Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace offered a summary of Evaluation Frameworks that were felt to be relevant to social justice philanthropy. At least one framework adapted from original work developed with the support of the King Badouin Foundation (Belgium) was examined to progress the discussion.

A number of Case Studies were offered in order to support a discussion on impact analysis including one with the Dalit Foundation (India), prioritizing leadership training; educational development; support for legal rights; validation of cultural identity through the arts and organisational development support to meet its mission of Dalit empowerment. The Multi Agency Grants Initiative (South Africa) emphasised the enhancement of civil society at community level through access to financial resources and by building organisational capacity among marginalized members of

society, with some eight programme areas – Access to HIV / AIDS treatment, sustainable economic development; reducing levels of gender based violence; promotion of refugee rights; promotion of health, sexual and reproductive rights; support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights

“It is difficult to measure impact in a way that is broad enough, that isn’t simply looking for a single bullet. Impact analysis needs to reflect the complexity of the problem and support the theory of change.”

Suzanne Siskel

Ford Foundation, USA

in townships and rural areas; attention to the rights of farmworkers and the rural poor; as well as the enrichment of the cultural life of disadvantaged communities.

A number of points were flagged up as a baseline in this area – recognizing that evaluation and impact analysis tend to be skewed in favour of the donor / funder –

- (i) It is important to ‘own’ the questions that are the subject of evaluation.
- (ii) Equally, there should be a clarity in the answer to the question – ‘What do we want to learn?’
- (iii) Evaluation and impact analysis should be negotiated between donors and grantees.
- (iv) Power should not be handed over to consultants through lack of clarity of the purpose of evaluation.
- (v) The difficulty of many measurement criteria should be recognized – e.g. the measurement of increased dignity; sense of well-being and confidence.
- (vi) There should be a clarity around who captures the knowledge; who defines what knowledge needs to be captured; and what happens to that knowledge (learning and dissemination).
- (vii) It is important to have the structures and systems in place to learn from evaluation.
- (viii) There should be a balance between the time, effort and cost to the grantees of engaging with the learning derived from the evaluation.

“Flexibility and ‘out of the box’ strategies are critical to social justice grantmaking. We have to be prepared to make mistakes, hopefully not too many of them, but we cannot expect to produce excellent results all the time.”
Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi
Africans Women’s Development Fund, Ghana

In addition, a distinction was made between the evaluation of individual projects funded, and an impact analysis carried out on a portfolio of funded programmes with the sense that there should be time spent on defining the assumptions that underpin any assessment of the success of a portfolio. Concerns were expressed about the rigidity of logic approaches and the real risks associated with short-termism (USA) and an overly narrow outcomes mantra (UK). Reflecting on the experience of Atlantic Philanthropies, Gara La Marche, noted how the measurable deliverable outcomes set for programmes, that also were coated with detailed strategic objectives, still required the ‘connective tissue’ of a social justice framing to make the work fully coherent both internally and externally. This comment re-iterated the point that the technical needs to be informed by the substantive objective, and goals needed to be broken down into learning systems.

“You can wake up someone if they are sleeping, but if they are pretending to sleep, you cannot.” - Nepalese Folk Saying

The importance of internal reflection as well as an external assessment of the field of social justice was recognized and featured as a horizontal theme throughout the convening. The self-disempowerment of philanthropic organisations was noted in situations where they failed to utilize their full range of assets. One of these is the ability to convene a wide range of stakeholders, but also to open doors to decision-makers for their grantee/partners; and to stand with partners that are at risk or under attack for challenging systematic or structural injustice. Peggy Saika (Asian Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy) offered an example of this in practice when she described the initiation of publishing a report on the impact of the 9/11 attacks on Arab, Middle eastern and South Asian communities in the USA.

“Many social justice grant-making foundations are happy giving grants to social justice organisations, but are not comfortable taking positions themselves. As such, they are not leveraging their own power to support change.”

*Lenka Setova
Carnegie UK Trust, UK*

“A key learning is that people want to stand up on behalf of those communities that are still trying to find a way to stand up for themselves. It’s the best of who we can be... To be able to speak our truth and to act and behave in a way that builds philanthropic capital for the broader good.”

*Peggy Saika
Asian Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, USA*

The issues of internal as well as external power relations was also touched on, with the question being asked – How do we deal with the grantee/funder relationship as well as between our own organisations and our grantees? As Ana Criquillion (Central American Women’s Fund) noted, “With social justice funding, we focus not only on what you do but how you do it. How

you build allowances and relationships with you partners?”

The argument was made that this also had to leave room for the development of contextually relevant forms of social justice philanthropy, a point underlined by Michael Roberts (First Nations Development Institute) when we

“To me there are a few different components to social justice funding. It is the money supporting work for social justice. It is the process of making the grant that involves the communities themselves. Is the process transparent? Who has the power to make the funding decisions? Where does the money come from? Does it come from companies that are involves in thwarting social justice? All of these things are important.”

*Priscilla Hung
Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training, USA*

argued that “Philanthropy for indigenous and disenfranchised groups can’t be built on the model that disenfranchised us in the first place.” This is an approach that Walter Echo-Hawk (North American Arts & Culture Foundation) reiterated in his presentation to the gathering on the final day.

The challenge of being effective philanthropists for social justice was raised in discussion of the issue of movement building and the development of alliances. As Katherine Acey (Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice) termed the challenge, “How do we use the power in this room –

the power, between us and among us?” The potential to build alliances between public and private philanthropy was referred to, as was the potential of partnership with change foundations’ – fundaciones del cambio – in South America and with local funders working in

“Social justice funders need to figure out some new ways of working more closely together. It’s very hard to collaborate and we need new models that go beyond merely pooling our money. How do we develop funding strategies that don’t undermine the movements we fund? How do we work more closely in the interests of social justice and at the same time be respectful grantmakers?”

Katherine Acey

conflict areas, such as those members of the Foundations for Peace Network. The critical contribution of regional networks of grantmakers was also referred to – the Network on African

Grantmaking, as well as the Arab Foundations Forum. Reference was also made to the thematic funders’ networks such as the Network of Women’s Funds and the International Human Rights Network. The role of such networks in expanding the pool of

“The Arab Foundations Forum could serve to build a solid infrastructure to move from charity to social justice philanthropy. It would be good if we could bring in some of the charity foundations to be part of our sessions, so we could discuss this idea with them... It is a big opportunity that we missed in the past.”

Atallah Kuttab

Welfare Association, Palestine

philanthropic participation in the area of social justice can be invaluable. In so doing, however, it is important to identify organising strategies that can demonstrate to funders that they can be more effective in realizing their mission by working within a social justice framework in a more explicit manner.

On a practical level Martin O’Brien (Atlantic Philanthropies) suggested that the most productive collaborative work tends to occur around specific concrete and shared interests. With this in mind there is an inherent value in building relationships. The ability to build relations with those individuals and groups most marginalized from power and decision-making was another theme that informed the overall convening. There was recognition that in order to support of social justice and peace, the work had to be participative and inclusive in nature, not withstanding the difficulties of established organisational hierarchies and structures. Such a participative approach could build the intellectual and social capital of foundations to complement their reserves of financial capital. As Akwasi Aidoo (Trust Africa) said, “One of the important things that we are missing in the world of social justice philanthropy is the voice of the poor. We need to figure out a way of finding organisations of the poor ... not those working on their behalf, but the poor themselves. They need to come directly into the conversation. They need to be here; we need to close that gap.”

The openness to being self critical about the internal structures within philanthropic organisations as well as the preparedness to invest in the research and development (R&D) aspects of social change, was matched by an awareness of the importance of the language used. Both Marta Tellado (Ford Foundation) and Mark Rosenman (Caring to Change) touched on the need to dress the values, visions and missions in words that would make the ideal of social justice visible and concrete for a broader range of donors and partners. As Marta Tellado argues: “If we have a collective vision around social justice, we ought to have a collective consciousness about it” – and the concurrent ability to communicate that consciousness to a wider audience. However, notwithstanding this the Nepalese saying still rings true ‘You can wake someone if they are sleeping but if they are pretending to sleep, you cannot’.

“We’re not being sufficiently critically reflective about the way we are approaching the problems at hand. We are limiting ourselves. Too many foundations are too afraid of being risk-taking. They won’t readily admit making mistakes. We have a real lack of self-critique even though we pride ourselves on being critical thinkers. We too often stop short in our analyses and program designs.”
Mark Rosenman
Caring to Change, USA

And so to work...

In opening the convening Christopher Harris (Ford Foundation) explained the interest of the Ford Foundation in promoting philanthropy for social justice and peace, while tasking the participants to consider how we together can begin to identify, and then build the capacities that we need to have more philanthropy for social justice and peace’. He spoke about the role of key philanthropic institutions – of whatever denomination; the contribution of networks of funders with a social justice dimension to their remit; and the still yet to be filled role of support organisations and agencies, which would underpin the field with an accepted body of knowledge and practice and a supporting infrastructure. During the course of the convening there was much reference to the nature of the philanthropic partnership with the many courageous NGO’s that are pushing the boundaries of social justice and peacebuilding locally, regionally, nationally and globally. The ‘To Do’ list that emerged out of the convening discussion reflected all these elements and more. In summary these touched on the following areas -

“In my lifetime I’ve been involved in change that people have said never would happen. Only through hope can we make change.”
Kelly Brown
Marguerite Casey Foundation, USA

(i) The sharing of Information

- ◆ Case Studies about lessons drawn from funded programmes – what works as well as the learning from difficulties and complexities
- ◆ Data concerning the restrictions on philanthropic giving in certain communities and the risks to advocacy groups.
- ◆ Information focused on specific contextual leaning, including regional profiles.

- ◆ Information on thematic social justice issues – e.g. LGBT, Women etc.
- ◆ The possibility of establishing a web resource to maintain contact and discussion

(ii) Collaborative Working

- ◆ The identification of common priorities/ programmes for foundations to engage in shared investment
- ◆ The possibility of developing ‘pairing relationships’ between private and public funders but also between the North and regions of the global South
- ◆ The option of individual philanthropic institutions working with funders that are members of thematic and regional Funders’ Networks around specific aspects of social justice and peace
- ◆ The importance of taking regular stock of the nature and strength of the connections and inter-connectedness.

(iii) Internal Philanthropic Development

- ◆ Developing strategies to break down the barriers to enable funders to adopt a social justice lens in their grantmaking
- ◆ The identification of a pool of individuals that can develop and manage social justice portfolios and programmes
- ◆ The option of exchange/ placement of staff to expand their range of expertise and bring fresh thinking to organisations
- ◆ The use of philanthropic endowments and assets to, at best, proactively promote social justice, and at least to do no harm.
- ◆ The use of the added value contribution of foundations – with their powers of convening; advocacy and validating.
- ◆ The critique of power relations both within philanthropic organisations, as well as between them and in relation to their grantees/ partners

(iv) Evaluation and Impact Analysis

- ◆ The development of further thinking and approaches in this area.
- ◆ The formation of a ‘google group’ to progress communication.

- ◆ The provision of a summary of tools available to date, and a rolling critique of such tools by users.

In short there was an acceptance that there was a need for literature and tools; for a greater range of rigorous data and analysis; and the support of appropriate training, education and learning – but more fundamentally there was a need for a larger universe of grantmakers that held a shared consciousness of and commitment to philanthropy for social justice and peace. This will require continuing networking; a focus on the nature of structural transformation and social justice on the round (not forgetting the challenge of ‘peace’) and a recognition of the specific challenges of context (it was pointed out that dependence on web-based links was limited in Nepal where the electricity supply only worked for some eight hours per day).

“I have a very ambitious hope and dream that this will be the first step towards helping to build a social movement of sorts, a social justice philanthropy movement, or at least a minimally functioning network that can add value to what we do individually and also help to level the playing field between donors and grantees.”

*Akwasi Aidoo
TrustAfrica, Senegal*

And so, despite the hurdles, there was an excitement in the room about possibilities, about new relationships, about the need to work together in new ways and there was a willingness to begin to build the capacities that are currently lacking. Those capacities – defining the work, the ability to undertake structural analysis of injustice, the skills to craft grantmaking strategies related to the structural analysis, the facility to analyse social impact, and the ability to mobilise resources for social justice and peace – all need pioneering efforts to establish real tools and activities for helping philanthropy in its work to support social justice and peace. Several Cairo participants volunteered to help move this work forward and the Working Group that designed and convened the event promised to play a facilitative role to support those volunteers and to help engage other national and international funders to provide financial assistance. The energy that emerged during the Cairo gathering might well propel the development of important new efforts to influence philanthropy to increase funding of social justice and peace.

Christopher Harris (Ford Foundation) opened the convening with Seamus Heaney’s poem ‘The Cure at Troy’. Heaney wrote –

*‘History says, Don’t hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.’*

To create the space for the rhyming of hope and history, old problems need new questions asked of them: a particularly appropriate role for philanthropists committed to social justice and peace.