



2015 ANNUAL MEETING & FEDERAL POLICY BRIEFING
OUT OF MANY, ONE
MAY 5-8, 2015
WASHINGTON, D.C.

OVERVIEW



From May 5 – 8, 2015, the Peace and Security Funders Group (PSFG) held its Annual Meeting and Federal Policy Briefing in Washington, D.C., with over 70 current and prospective PSFG members from 42 grantmaking institutions attending. The annual meeting is an opportunity for PSFG members and prospective members to network; engage in strategic conversations with leaders in the field of peace and security; and develop their grantmaking skills. Highlights included:

- Four sessions, including a “TED-style” opening, which showcased PSFG’s diversity but also its unity of purpose; a panel on best practices for building public-private partnerships and cross-sector collaboration; and interactive sessions on how to engage religious actors and how to creatively leverage grant dollars;
- Meetings of PSFG’s three working groups: Women, Peace, and Security; Nuclear; and Conflict and Atrocities Prevention;
- Networking opportunities, including a kick-off Cinco de Mayo party at the Mott House, the ever-popular “speed networking,” and plenty of informal coffee breaks;
- A keynote by provocative author Sarah Chayes on the link between corruption and conflict; and
- A pre-conference workshop with the OpEd Project.

The biennial Federal Policy Briefing on May 8 was an opportunity for PSFG members to engage in conversations with colleagues on Capitol Hill and in the Executive Branch. Thirty PSFG members met with over a dozen Senate offices on issues ranging from nuclear security to genocide and atrocities prevention. They also heard perspectives on the 114th Congress and Obama administration priorities from NGO leaders, and senior congressional and Executive Branch staff.

OUT OF MANY, ONE



PSFG Steering Committee co-chair Ariadne Papagapitos (Rockefeller Brothers Fund) and PSFG Executive Director Alexandra Toma welcomed members with an update on PSFG since the last annual meeting (see box below) and a look ahead to 2015-2016.

PSFG continues to implement its re-vamped strategic plan – PSFG 2.0 – increasing its members’ capacity, drawing more funding into the peace and security field, and facilitating strategic collaboration. Alex referenced a *Grist* [article](#) as an example of how PSFG members are diverse, but united in advancing a more peaceful, secure world (to read Alex’s short remarks, click [here](#)). Ariadne highlighted several success stories – like the [CAR Peacebuilding Partnership](#) – and enjoined members to continue

engaging with and supporting PSFG. In 2015 – 2016, PSFG will:

- continue engagement with policymakers around the shared vision of a more peaceful, secure world, including meetings on countering violent extremism (June 2) and U.S.-Russia relations (June 5);
- renew its focus on narrative, including a mapping project with the Foundation Center and lifting up members’ grantmaking success (and failure) stories to highlight best practices;
- increase its outreach, led by PSFG’s Program Director Meredith Stricker ([contact Merry](#) if you want to join the Outreach Committee); and
- continue supporting its members in learning, including through webinars, the monthly newsletter, movie screenings and ad hoc convenings, and more!

PSFG by the Numbers

Since our last annual meeting (April 2014), PSFG has grown to 58 members, a 33% increase, and...
51% dues-paying members → **97% dues-paying members**
1.5 full-time staff → **2.5 full-time staff**
FY2014 budget: \$294,992 → FY2015 budget: **\$590,445**

PLENARY SESSIONS

DIVERSE, BUT COLLABORATIVE

Mehreen Farooq, World Organization for Resource Development & Education

Michelle Breslauer, Institute for Economics & Peace

Michael Breen, Truman National Security Project

Pamphile Nyandwi, Cordaid

Jodi Vittori, Global Witness

Moderator: Alexandra Toma, PSFG

This panel of TED-style talks addressed different aspects of peace and security, tied together through PSFG’s collaborative efforts to advance the field. Presentations touched on themes of failure, innovation, learning, and collaboration. Mehreen Farooq discussed failures in supporting local peacebuilding, such as the international community empowering the “wrong” group and primarily funding Westernized, English-speaking elites. In her talk on innovation, Michelle Breslauer cited the need for broader communication strategies and the importance of taking time to understand your partners. Discussing partnerships, Pamphile Nyandwi highlighted



the importance of meaningful engagement with local communities and ensuring that local communities define the needs, plan, and actions that need to be taken. Jodi Vittori called for the need to look at the root causes of conflict, especially economic drivers, and noted the lack of international standards on basic transparency and accountability. Finally, Michael Breen discussed building blocks for collaborating with unlikely allies: first, start with the change you are seeking to see, then identify the problem you are looking to solve, then work on telling an inclusive story.

BUILDING INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS



Ryan Alexander, Taxpayers for Common Sense
Mickey Bergman, Aspen Institute
Alexis Bonnell, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Andreas Hipple, GHR Foundation
Moderated by Lukas Haynes, David Rockefeller Fund

Drawing on their experiences building public-private partnerships (PPPs), panelists shared best practices to replicate and pitfalls to avoid when launching

innovative partnerships. Panelists stressed the importance of ensuring that projects are locally owned and driven: having partners on the ground setting the priorities yields greater accountability. Because many unspoken assumptions often preclude PPPs, particularly among foundations, it's important to be clear about expectations and boundaries from the start. Citing the value in working with new and different partners on international issues, panelists recommended looking for points of agreement, especially when working with “unlikely allies.” When entering into any partnership, partners should ask themselves two questions: how will this partnership be better for me? And, how will it make me look good? Funders should be flexible with their timelines and expectations: building partnerships takes a lot of time and effort. Finally, partnerships should be enjoyable: the most successful partnerships are fun.

ASSESSING RELIGIOUS FACTORS AND ENGAGING RELIGIOUS ACTORS

Brad Braxton, The Open Church (Baltimore)
Larry Cox, Kairos: The Center for Religions, Rights & Social Justice
Liora Danan, U.S. Department of State
Palwasha Kakar, U.S. Institute of Peace
David Hunsicker, USAID
Moderated by Melanie Greenberg, Alliance for Peacebuilding



Panelists shared the complexities of the term “religious engagement,” stressing the importance of understanding the ways religion affects different contexts. We need to engage not only with religious leaders or elites, but also with informal leaders with religious influence. All panelists stressed the importance of *not* instrumentalizing religious leaders. Larry Cox shared his failure to engage religious leaders on human rights; they perceived his efforts as a “rent-a-collar” approach, as opposed to being true partners. Rather than seeing religious leaders as merely tools to achieve goals, funders should see them as partners and look for common goals. David Hunsicker emphasized the importance of understanding where diverse communities and actors come from and what their concerns are. While working with religious partners can be valuable, it is not without challenges. Liora Danan broached the tensions that emerge when working with religious leaders who have conflicting values. Finally, panelists noted that inevitably, when working with religious groups, we end up supporting a particular political act. Palwasha Kakar added that funders should be open and transparent about the implications of their funding.



INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PEACE AND SECURITY GRANTMAKING

Ellen Friedman, Compton Foundation
Stacia George, USAID, Office of Transitions Initiatives

Erika Gregory, N Square
Sally Smith, Nexus Fund

Moderated by Eli Sugarman, Hewlett Foundation

Coming from different funding perspectives, these panelists shared their insights and tips for utilizing effective approaches to grantmaking in

order to achieve greater impact. Funders need to be smarter about learning from failure – and to do that, they might actually need to formalize time for institutional learning. Understanding local contexts and cultivating unlikely partners are key strategies. Funders need to highlight multiple storytellers and stories, especially those of local leaders who often have much to share but no platform from which to do it. Overall, it's important to trust your intuition, take risks, and challenge “status quo grantmaking” if it isn't working. Finally, panelists noted that funders should look for ways to translate existing peace and security issues to new crowds, reinvigorating dialogue in the process.

KEYNOTE

Sarah Chayes' book, *Thieves of State*, was the subject of her interview-style closing keynote with Keith Porter, President of the Stanley Foundation. In order to synthesize her thesis for the group, Chayes focused on a few main pieces of advice for funders. First, it's important to contextualize our current situation. Corruption and weak governance ebb and flow, and the world is experiencing a particularly bad historical moment that began in the mid-90's. Second, and crucially, don't sweep corruption under the rug. There's a tendency in the philanthropic sector to look at the good (e.g., wells dug), but to ignore the bad (e.g., bribes paid along the way for the well). Chayes urged funders to go in with eyes wide open, ask discerning diagnostic questions about which organizations are instruments of the corrupt apparatus, and to beware of contributing to corrupt revenue streams. Finally, in the context of shrinking opportunities for civil society abroad, there's a tendency for funders to be more compliant with those involved in corrupt networks. Funders need to guard against this, ideally banding together to put collective pressure on corrupt systems.



PARTICIPATING MEMBERS & PARTNERS

American Jewish World Service ♦ Arca Foundation ♦ Bridgeway Foundation
 Carnegie Corporation of New York ♦ Catalyst for Peace ♦ Channel Foundation
 Charitable Foundation/Institute for Economics and Peace ♦ Chino Cienega Foundation
 Cloverleaf Foundation ♦ Colombe Foundation ♦ Compton Foundation ♦ Cordaid ♦ El-Hibri Foundation
 Foundation for Middle East Peace ♦ GHR Foundation ♦ Global Peace Building Foundation
 Humanity United ♦ Hunt Alternatives Fund ♦ Institute for Inclusive Security
 International Human Rights Funders Group ♦ Jubitz Family Foundation
 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation ♦ Millstreet Foundation ♦ Milton Lauenstein
 Peace Development Fund ♦ Peace Direct ♦ Ploughshares Fund ♦ PRBB Foundation
 Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH ♦ Rockefeller Brothers Fund ♦ Samuel Rubin Foundation
 Secure World Foundation ♦ Skoll Global Threats Fund ♦ Stewart R. Mott Foundation
 Alan B. Slifka Foundation ♦ The Nexus Fund ♦ The Stanley Foundation ♦ USAID
 U.S. Dept of State ♦ United States Institute of Peace ♦ Urgent Action Fund ♦ Wellspring Advisors

2015 FEDERAL POLICY BRIEFING

Approximately 30 PSFG members attended the biennial Federal Policy Briefing on May 8, 2015. Participants heard from non-governmental (NGO) experts representing conservative and liberal viewpoints, senior staff from both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate (and both personal and committee offices), and from Executive Branch officials

from the Department of State and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. After lunch, participants met with over a dozen congressional offices to discuss various peace and security issues, ranging from Israel/Palestine to nuclear to genocide prevention.



The NGO experts agreed that *now* is a key moment in peace and security policy: ideas matter in Congress and there's a great deal of intellectual ferment on the Hill in an era of increasing international complexity. Some conservatives are saying that peace is the new big idea. But we also need more thinking on how to deliver political rewards to our peace and security champions. Panelists agreed that working in a "transpartisan" manner is yielding political success since this mode of working transcends politics and focuses on bringing together disparate stakeholders around issues they all care about (e.g., cutting defense spending). Funders cannot ignore the fear frame around peace and security issues, but they can meet the public where they are and provide creative (peaceful) solutions to the world's problems. Finally, the peace and security community needs to do a better job of engaging young people.

The Executive Branch panel focused on current events, including the Iran deal, which is the Obama administration's biggest opportunity and will be their focus for the next 18 months. Panelists agreed that developments in the Middle East loom large in U.S. foreign policy and are here to stay for the foreseeable future. Answering a question on combatting violent extremism, panelists admitted that Executive Branch agencies lack the technical capacity to address the issue, so they are looking for partners. A key challenge is ISIS and its attempts to infiltrate immigrant communities in the West, spreading its philosophy to the U.S. and Europe. We need to get to the bottom of why this happening and what's attracting the new recruits.

The congressional panel emphasized that the window for progress under the Obama administration is closing very quickly, especially in the Senate. Many Senators are running for President, complicating matters. In addition, Congress operates under the pressure of the calendar, so NGOs should know what important dates are coming up to stay apace with Members of Congress. Knowing when Congress will fixate on your issues is very powerful. Finally, panelists agreed that it is very difficult to make the case to legislate for preventive action in the current iteration of our political system because the daily activities are so focused on short-term goals.