The Good, the Bad, and Ugly: The Role of Funders in Conflict
A Comparison of Discussions Among Funders
November 2014

IHRFG Conference (January 2014)	PSFG Conference (April 2014)	EFC Conference (May 2014)
Moderators: Alexandra Toma, Executive Director, PSFG and Ellen Friedman, Executive Director, Compton Foundation **Panelists** • **Mark Freeman**, Executive Director, Institute for Integrated Transitions (*Practitioner—think tank*) • **Ariadne Papagapitos**, Program Director, Peacebuilding, Rockefeller Brothers Fund (*Funder*) • **Andrew Hudson**, Deputy Executive Director, Crisis Action (*Practitioner—policy advocacy*)	**Moderator:** Evelyn Thornton, Institute for Inclusive Security/Hunt Alternatives Fund **Panelists:** • **Clare Lockhart**, Institute for State Effectiveness (*Practitioner—think tank*) • **Bridget Moix**, Peace Direct (*Practitioner/Funder*) • **Gary Slutkin**, Cure Violence (*Practitioner—conflict resolution*) • **Andrew Hyde**, State Department (*Practitioner—government*)	**Moderator:** Alexandra Toma, PSFG **Panelists:** • **Haki Abazi**, Rockefeller Brothers Fund (*Funder*) • **Sarah Holewinski**, Center for Civilians in Conflict (*Practitioner—advocacy*) • **Stephen Pittam**, Former Trust Secretary, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and Global Greengrants Fund (*Funder*)
Audience	**Audience**	**Audience**
• Funders (human rights)—international • Practitioners	• Funders (peace and security); primarily American	• Funders; primarily European
Key Takeaways	**Key Takeaways**	**Key Takeaways**
• Funders are reluctant to devote resources to conflict zones because of quickly changing and unpredictable situations. • Funders can easily misunderstand the context and underlying causes of conflict. Funders must research and analyze the "drivers" instead of the symptoms of conflict. For example, what are the implications that policies are having on the conflict? • Funders can and should support advocacy efforts to spread public awareness about the underlying issues of conflict, such as the small arms trade.	• Funders need to think more intentionally on how to build sustainable peace by supporting long-term peacebuilding work. • Funders need to be smarter about supporting alternative peace processes that engage and support constituencies for peace, rather than focusing on "spoilers" to the peace process. • Panelists emphasized the need to support work that is locally-driven, -led, -owned, and -implemented while cautioning that it is important that the local constituents be proponents of peace so as not to strengthen the "thugs."	• Donors are sometimes apprehensive about taking risks and not knowing if the work they support will work out or not. For example, funders may be slow to fund newer, innovative organizations due to a lack of understanding of the impact these organizations can make. • Before engaging in a conflict situation, funders should learn about the conflict, analyze it, understand what needs to be done, and where things currently stand. Overall, it's better to be strategic and invest where funders have experience and understand the context.

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• Funders should dedicate resources to increasing prevention efforts and stopping conflict before it occurs. • Funders can play a role in mobilizing civil society, creating networks that protect citizens from violence, and preventing and stopping conflict. • There is a need for donors to provide grantees with core funding, which provides critical flexibility in difficult and rapidly changing contexts. • Funders that are nimble, flexible, creative, and willing to take risk are able to play a key role in bringing diverse parties together and creating spaces for dialogue. • Foundations must be accountable to local civil society. • Large amounts of funding do not necessarily solve the problem. What has been important is ensuring that marginalized voices and women's movements have been part of the peacebuilding processes.	• Funders should work with local partners to understand how they can best support and amplify the work of local organizations. • Greater collaboration amongst funders is necessary to more efficiently mobilize resources and maximize impact.	• Funders should look for points of entry at the local level; however, in supporting local level efforts, they should not ignore broader efforts taking place. Sometimes the international community does have a role to play: supporting only local organizations may not be sufficient. • Peacebuilding work is long-term. It is important to commit to long-term support; however, staying the course does not guarantee success. • Donors should constantly evaluate the impact of their support, if it is not working, then sometimes it is best to leave. • Funders should consider connecting NGOs that work on conflict with long-term domestic agendas. • Donors should act to *prevent* conflict. • Foundations need to be connected to their partners/grantees and to the situation.

RECURRING THEMES

- In-depth knowledge of the context and conflict is imperative. Funders should not engage unless they have done their due diligence.
- More resources need to be devoted to conflict prevention.
- Supporting locally led initiatives is critical. Funders should also consider the interplay between local, national and international efforts.
- Funders should seek to support the work of their partners and be sure to stay connected to grantees and partners.
- Peacebuilding work is long-term and requires a long-term commitment.
- Funding in conflict and post-conflict settings is inherently risky: funders must be willing to assume some degree of risk.