A report of the Africa Grantmakers’ Affinity Group Annual Meeting

Downtown Convention Center
New York City
January 18-20, 2006
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The Africa Grantmakers’ Affinity Group (AGAG) is a membership organization of foundations currently funding or interested in funding in Africa. AGAG has its roots in the South Africa Grantmakers’ Affinity Group, a loose network of donors involved in South Africa during the 1980s. In 2000, this group was reconstituted as the Africa Grantmakers’ Affinity Group and expanded its mandate to include all of Africa. In 2001, AGAG established an office and began the process of growing from a loose network of foundations into a formal organization.

AGAG carries out a range of activities to further its mission to promote increased and more effective funding by foundations for Africa. It has 37 private and corporate foundation members, primarily in the United States, but also includes foundations based in Europe and Africa. AGAG seeks to establish itself as a forum for foundations to build and share knowledge about grantmaking in Africa to assist grantmakers in their efforts to better address Africa’s development challenges.

The AGAG Annual Retreat is an opportunity for grantmakers to network with each other, catch up on new developments at their respective foundations, and discuss issues of mutual interest. This report summarizes the discussions of AGAG’s sixth annual meeting held in New York City.

For further information on AGAG and its activities, please consult the AGAG website, www.africagrantmakers.org. For copies of this report, contact agag@africagrantmakers.org.

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Introduction

The Africa Grantmakers’ Affinity Group (AGAG) Annual Meeting took place at the Downtown Conference Center in New York City from January 18-20, 2006. This year’s meeting assembled nearly 60 participants representing 40 different funders, the largest group since AGAG’s inception in 2000. The group reflected different approaches to funding practices, and a range of thematic and geographic focus. The participants included new grantmakers, experienced grantmakers, and grantmakers new to Africa.
In her introductory remarks, AGAG’s Director Niamani Mutima charted AGAG’s evolution and said that the size of this year’s meeting reflected the growth of AGAG’s role as a resource for Africa grantmakers. She invited the group to share their perspectives and learn from each others’ unique experiences and to support AGAG’s efforts to encourage increased and more effective funding in Africa through building and sharing knowledge.

The meeting agenda focused on cross-cutting issues relevant to all Africa funders, such as efforts to strengthen the organizations they support, facilitating networks and making connections among grantees, and the role of advocacy. The meeting also included a discussion with two journalists who report on African issues which explored how media reporting on Africa can draw attention to important issues such as HIV/AIDS and armed conflict but can also reinforce negative stereotypes of a “broken” continent. This year, AGAG teamed up with the Funders’ Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Human Rights to organize a session on how the recent changes in U.S. policy have affected Africa grantmakers working in the area of health.

The plenary sessions were structured around questions the participants received in advance of the meeting, which allowed time for reflection and resulted in richer group discussions. The sessions generated lively discussion and, in some cases, less consensus than disagreement. Often the discussion moved beyond the original questions to explore issues related to how funders view their work.

During the session on facilitating networks one participant referred to the intrinsic value of networking and networking meetings. The quality of discussion and interaction among members at this year’s meeting proved an end in itself and set the stage for further exploration of a range of issues in the coming year.
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The foundations represented at the meeting fund in a variety of areas, including health, education, economic development, and democracy and governance. The types of support range from core expenses, organizational capacity-building projects and, in some cases, a combination of both. This diversity in funding strategies was reflected in a lengthy discussion on the merits of different approaches and which contributed more to strengthening grantee organizations. For grassroots and community based organizations in most African countries, there is limited access to funding support.

While project support is more easily defined, no clear definition emerged from the discussion on the differences between core support and support to build capacity. Definitions ranged from core support as those line items which include overhead and administrative expenses only to what some defined as “capacity-building”— projects which provide managerial training and assistance or which help the organization to carry out activities that would build its sustainability. The discussion revolved around an analysis of the merits of alternate funding approaches and how each helps to strengthen organizations.

Conversation starters William “Bill” Moses, Senior Program Officer of the Kresge Foundation, and Marcia Thomas, Director of USA for Africa, began the session by discussing their respective foundation’s approach and how it helps to strengthen the organizations they support.

For many foundations working in Africa, a major challenge is how to design and implement programs that help strengthen the organizations they support. This session explored some of the strategies, approaches, and challenges facing Africa grantmakers.
Bill Moses explained that the Kresge Foundation’s “bricks and mortar” funding model is based on the premise that creating a physical base for an organization spurs growth and helps create a sense of ownership. Having a physical building focuses the organization and also provides leverage for future fundraising opportunities including capital campaigns which help strengthen organizations in the long-term.

Marcia Thomas said that beyond financial support for specific projects, helping grantees build sustainability is a role that USA for Africa feels is important. This is achieved in a number of ways: through engagement—helping grantees determine their services; assisting grantees to work collaboratively with others; and working with grantees to explore income-generating activities that can lead to long-term sustainability.

The discussion was open to the group to comment and share their perspectives. Many of the foundations represented primarily fund projects and provide funding for core expenses or capacity-building projects as a secondary priority. The question was raised why and how these choices affected the issue of strengthening grantee organizations.

One funder cited a survey undertaken by her foundation whose aim was to determine the ratio of project support to general support. Findings included concerns regarding developing a dependent relationship between grantee and funder, and a fear that control issues may lead the grantee to feel obligated to pursue a “donor driven” agenda. For many funders, concerns regarding mismanagement of funds were more prevalent with core expenses grants than with project support, but others
felt that core support could be monitored just as efficiently as project support, provided the budget line items were clear for both funder and grantee. Often-times the issue is not whether perceived mismanagement of funds is taking place, but whether or not the funder and grantee share the same perspective of what is an acceptable use of funds. An example was cited where grantees had listed an acceptable use of core expenses as including payment for funerals.

Some funders felt that there was less inclination to support project work because funding for core expenses does not culminate in easily-measurable results like goal-oriented program funding do. In addition, project completion also creates a feeling of accomplishment and a clear sense for the funder of having an impact on the grantee organization, while support for core expenses may not.

But no organization can function on a daily basis or build strength without core support, and therefore any project successes are premised on the availability of funds to cover operational expenses. While funders agreed with this general principal, often their guidelines favor supporting projects rather than core expenses.

There was a short discussion on identifying the best time during an organization’s evolution to provide a core support grant. “Sustainability awards” are one example of support given to an organization during its start-up phase to provide support for a short time. These funds have a great deal of flexibility in use, such as to buy property, equipment, or to hire a fundraiser to expand the funding base. Other uses of core support include:

- as part of the funders’ exit strategy
- to provide seed funding for start up NGOs or CBOs to establish their identity and then to provide project support
- to build capacity and decrease funder dependency, enabling an organization to establish its own direction
The discussion turned to how project support contributes to an organization’s overall growth and development.

Some funders adopted a practical approach and suggested that budgets for program proposals submitted by grantees reflect accurate operating expenses through inclusion of a decent overhead line item, or by adding an administrative line item to every project budget to cover items which were not project-based but necessary to an organization’s operations.

Finding ways to give advice on the administration of projects is just as helpful as giving financial support, and collaboration with other foundations is important especially when funders are restricted to only supporting program work. Funders may not be able to support all of the grantee’s needs, but they can provide introductions to other foundations that do, and they can help grantees by introducing new ideas and concepts that may help them raise the necessary funds elsewhere.

If one goal of funders is to strengthen the organizations they support, then how can funders evaluate success? Several measures were suggested which depended on whether the funder gives support for specific projects or core support for organizational expenses.

An example given described a situation when the funder could not support the grantee’s needs beyond its mandated construction project. However, the funder introduced the concept of leveraging the new building to introduce a capital campaign. The organization hired a fundraiser to conduct a fundraising campaign which actually raised more than the initial capital needs. This helped strengthen the organization far more than had the initial building project.

“success is reflected in the growth of the organization’s capacity, both in terms of administrative and management efficiency as well as in the organization’s ability to set and achieve its goals.”

There was general consensus that success is reflected in the growth of
the organization’s capacity, both in terms of administrative and management efficiency as well as in the organization’s ability to set and achieve its goals. However, when support is given for core expenses and not for a specific project, it becomes a challenge to measure growth. **One way to measure the impact of core support is to establish specific organizational objectives with the grantee which could be assessed at regular intervals.**

For funders such as the United Nations Foundation who fund exclusively through the UN, success is measured by system-wide change. UN agencies work with governments, NGOs, and CBOs in a specific country or region on such broad issues as strengthening health care systems. One measure of success is when government agencies and NGOs work together and achieve measurable objectives.

While the achievement of an organization’s mission is a measure of success, this is a long-term process. **Supporting institutional development through helping to empower individual leaders to overcome the obstacles they faced in building an organization is another measure of success.**

The impact of funding depends on both the amount and size of the organization. For example, for grassroots organizations the average grant is less than $4,000, but for universities and larger institutions grants can exceed $1 million. Both amounts can make a significant impact on the organization. It is not necessarily the size of the organization that determines success but the size of its vision. Also, funder flexibility is important when it comes to financial support. If an organization grows, then funders should consider increasing the size of their grants.

At the end of the session some questions for further discussion included:

- Can strong organizations exist in an environment where governments are weak?
- What is the effect of the strength of an organization on a country?
- How can funders provide core support while maintaining a spirit of volunteerism?
- Social movements and core support issues of change and adaptability
The second session focused on the role of advocacy and how to determine the local climate and most effective approach to supporting social change.

The session opened with a discussion on the role advocacy played in the programs of three funders: Julie Hayes, Africa Regional Director of the Open Society Institute (OSI), which includes a network of local foundations operating throughout Africa; Penny Fujiko Willgerodt, Vice President and Senior Philanthropic Advisor of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors; and Mark Milner, Manager of IBIS, a Danish foundation operating in South Africa.

Julie Hayes explained that support for advocacy grantmaking is reflective of OSI’s core agenda to promote a more open society, so the foundation plays a dual role of donor and advocate. She added that OSI’s support of advocacy initiatives in Africa have resulted in local foundations acting as think tanks or incubators for policy ideas derived from interactions with local grantees.

Penny Fujiko Willgerodt said that, as an advisor to individual donors, she focuses on civil society issues, the development of democratic processes, and the promotion of human rights. Many of the organizations working on these issues include an advocacy component in their programs. Mark Milner said that mobilizing grantees to assert their own rights and to promote policies which reflected their own interests rather than those of the State had created a central role for advocacy among the grantees that IBIS supports.
The discussion opened up to include the perspectives of other participants and the role they felt advocacy played in their grantmaking programs. Some funders felt that grantees often cannot achieve their mission goals without support for advocacy as an integral part of funding. Others viewed support for advocacy programs as a way to leverage funds and attract the interest of other funders. However, it is important to keep in mind that the intrinsic value of advocacy is supporting a space for debate, which aids the development of civil society.

These viewpoints were countered by several participants who expressed a variety of concerns regarding support for advocacy initiatives.

**Too much focus on advocacy efforts could lead to drop-off in project support and dilute the mission of the grantee,** and funders needed to consider whether it was more effective to support organizations that work on advocacy directly or to support organizations that combine advocacy with their program activities.

Some funders expressed that even though they saw the value of advocacy, their support was restricted by program guidelines. One funder suggested that supporting advocacy issues should be left specifically to funders with this as their institutional focus.

“Policy changes introduced since September 11 have made daily operations more difficult for international funders supporting advocacy.”

Participants considered how to support grantees working for social change, even if they do not fund advocacy projects themselves. Funders could provide grantees with introductions to other foundations that could support the advocacy component of their work. Some participants suggested that funders should strive for greater flexibility and consider the context in which the grantee is operating. In addition, if grantees can make an impact on policies that affect the environment in which they operate, then funders should support them.

Although funders may be restricted in supporting advocacy, they could advocate on behalf of issues at regional and international forums, including the United Nations.

Some introspection took place during the session in discussing how flexible funders could be in supporting
grantees whose positions on issues did not coincide with theirs. Funders agreed this was a challenging question, and acknowledged the danger that promoting their advocacy interests might influence grantees and detract from their own original focus.

Advocacy has different meanings in a variety of contexts for funders. For some, an important aspect of advocacy was their role in encouraging policy change in the U.S. or in international forums which affect their grantees. For others, advocacy was tied up in the context of campaigns for systemic change which affect grantees in the countries where they are based. Still other funders support programs which help train grantees to develop their skills as advocates in specific areas.

Policy changes introduced since September 11 have made daily operations more difficult for international funders supporting advocacy. Challenges include increasingly rigorous administrative burdens, which have placed a strain on funders with smaller budgets as well as on grantees. A specific issue raised was the forthcoming S220 Tax Relief Bill, which seeks to restrict the ability of donor advised funds to support international projects. Funders are involved in lobbying efforts to have the bill dropped, but agreed to take the issue back to their foundation staff and increase efforts to lobby against this proposed legislation.

Despite current restrictions, some funders have developed models to help facilitate a smoother transfer of funds to support the advocacy activities of grantees working in difficult circumstances. But for most funders, options are limited and the transfer of funds in general, including those which support advocacy activities, has become increasingly difficult.

The issue of lobbying and its relation to advocacy work both domestically and internationally surfaced as a key concern. Funders expressed confusion about the legal restrictions under recent legislation. In some cases, participants acknowledged that this might be due to poor communication between foundations’ legal and program staff. Other funders said there was not enough clear information available on the impact of current legislation on funding.
Facilitating Networks and Making Connections Among Grantees

The foundations represented work with different kinds of networks throughout Africa, including national and international university networks, networks of grassroots groups in different countries, gender-based networks, professional networks and loose social movements which operate regionally. This session focused on how funders can help facilitate networking opportunities for grantees, and how networking supports both the work of grantees and funders. As one participant observed, funders occupy a unique position because they have a “bird’s eye view” of the activities of each grantee and therefore can play a special role in bringing grantees together.
Jennifer Anderson-Bahr, Senior Program Officer of the Firelight Foundation, and Andrea Johnson, Program Officer of the Carnegie Corporation, began the discussion by comparing two different examples of working with networks in Africa. The Firelight Foundation regularly convenes meetings of their grassroots grantees on a country-by-country basis, while the Carnegie Corporation supports universities as part of a foundation consortium in six African countries called the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa Initiative.

For Firelight, which works with grantees in one country, the challenges are different from those of Carnegie, which works with universities from multiple countries. Each grant awarded by the Firelight Foundation includes a networking component, so grantees are contractually obligated to meet with each other. Ms. Anderson-Bahr added that for many of the networking meetings, Firelight facilitates the meeting but identifies a grantee that has the capacity to lead the process and set the agenda.

In the case of the Partnership, facilitating meetings and interaction between the network of universities is more complicated. The Partnership uses a model of organizing preliminary face-to-face meetings between grantees to initiate interaction, which allows grantees to follow up through e-mail communication and meetings among themselves.

The discussion moved from comparing different examples of networking models to consider whose interests grantee networking meetings served better—those of the funder or those of the grantee? Both funder and grantee benefit from the ideas generated during networking. For example, the
idea for the bandwidth initiative arose during a networking meeting between foundations and university grantees convened by the Partnership. The need for increased bandwidth was raised by the grantees, and then developed and incorporated by the foundations into the Partnership’s main initiative.

For funders, a positive aspect of networking meetings is that they provide an opportunity to monitor and evaluate what grantees feel works and does not work for them. Meetings also provide funders with an opportunity for grantees to learn about funders’ current interests. Another participant noted that the quality of proposals she received from grantees improved following networking meetings where grantees had an opportunity to learn from each other and to interact with the funder.

Feedback from grantees suggested that networking meetings provided them with an opportunity to meet with peers, and to learn how other groups are conducting campaigns. In addition, meetings provided an opportunity for grantees to learn facilitation skills, such as how to present an argument and how to conduct meetings. The great value of networking was that it helped to break the isolation of individual grantees and increased the learning process for the group. Grantees derived great value from realizing that others were facing similar challenges and that this was very helpful for the grantee in confidence building. For researchers, networking meetings provide a vehicle for funders and grantees to share their ideas and research and explore ideas new to the field.

Although networking meetings generally provide a very positive experience, funders should ensure that diverse grantees are included in the selection process. In some cases, certain grantees were always represented on the “conference circuit” and it appeared that these grantee meetings had become more of a personal networking experience and less of an opportunity for less traveled and less sophisticated grantees to participate.

The discussion turned from considering the pros and cons of networking activities to consider the format of networking meetings in more detail. Issues raised included how to ensure that meetings convened by funders address the interests of both funders and grantees. Some participants felt that this was not possible and that funders should have no part in networking meetings apart from providing the funds to make meetings possible. Although funders can facilitate meetings they should not control the meeting process, which should be left to the grantee.
Another issue raised was who attended these meetings. Some felt that opening up networking meetings to various groups including non-grantees would be beneficial to the discussions, while others felt that including non-grantees was difficult because of the power differential between the two groups.

One participant suggested that it might be beneficial to bring different actors together whose common interests are not so obvious. AGAG was cited as an example of a successful network that brought together a very diverse group of actors who worked together effectively. But funders must remember they are part of the process of moving civil society forward and their role is to encourage groups of disparate interests to meet and debate. Funders need to think “outside the box” and look beyond a specific set of grantees with the same viewpoint if they are serious about building civil society and the democratic process.

Finally, the impetus for the networking idea should come from the grantee and not from the funder. Although some funders may feel drawn to support a network idea that conveniently encompasses a certain category of grantees, this kind of synthetic organizational model does not gel in the long run, although the grantees may come together at the funder’s suggestion, because there is no common agenda.

Beyond the specific benefits of networking and networks for grantee and funder, funders should focus less on the outcome or goals of networks and more on the intrinsic value inherent in the action of networking itself. If the network doesn’t achieve a particular outcome this should not mean the experience should be viewed as a failure but rather as part of the process of building knowledge.

Apart from the intrinsic value of networking as an activity, issues for further discussion included how networking opportunities can add value to the field of philanthropy as a whole.

“funders should focus less on the outcome or goals of networks and more on the intrinsic value inherent in the action of networking itself.”
Changes in U.S. policy have made international grant-making an increasingly challenging environment for funders. This session focused on how U.S. policy has affected funding for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment in Africa. U.S. policy affects all international funders and the issues that affect reproductive health rights cut across all sectors and have implications in conflict or post-conflict countries.

This session was co-sponsored by the Funder’s Network on Population, Reproductive Health & Rights, and was moderated by Denise Shannon, Director. Shira Saperstein, Deputy Director of Women’s Rights and Reproductive Health of the Moriah Fund, and Barbara Klugman, Program Officer for Sexuality and Reproductive Health at the Ford Foundation began the session by sharing their experiences in funding in this area.

Shira Saperstein of the Moriah Fund discussed recent policy changes under the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) legislation\(^1\) and the

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1 PEPFAR represents a major shift in U.S. HIV/AIDS policy: 80 percent of the new bilateral assistance will be directed to AIDS treatment and care. The remaining 20 percent will go toward HIV prevention activities, and of this amount, at least 60 and U.S. HIV/AIDS Assistance, Population Action International, An unofficial Guide)
“global gag rule” which have affected funders who support women’s rights and reproductive health programs in Africa.

While there have been some positive benefits from the PEPFAR legislation—an increase in funds to Africa overall, as well as more funding for HIV/AIDS programs and some money for research into microbicides—the constraints that accompany PEPFAR have had far-reaching and generally negative consequences for groups working on reproductive health for women, especially for those who also work on HIV/AIDS.

2 In January 2001, the Bush Administration reinstated restrictions on overseas health care organizations, officially known as the Mexico City Policy and called the Global Gag Rule by family planning supporters. Under these restrictions on programs supported by USAID, no U.S. family planning assistance can be provided to foreign NGOs that use funding from any other source to: perform abortions in cases other than a threat to the life of the woman, rape, or incest; provide counseling and referral for abortion; or lobby to make abortion legal or more available in their country. Under the “global gag rule” activities that are jointly supported with family planning and HIV/AIDS funds are subject to the gag rule. For example, if a youth-focused HIV/AIDS assistance project is supported with funds from both family planning and HIV/AIDS accounts, the entire project is subject to the gag rule restrictions. In any project that is co-funded with family planning assistance and other health funding, regardless of the amount of family planning. (IBID)

Ms. Saperstein discussed the effects of PEPFAR legislation in Uganda, a country often cited as a model in the fight against HIV/AIDS due to its progressive government-led education and prevention programs known as “ABC” (Abstain, Be Faithful, Use a Condom). In response to the restrictions of PEPFAR funds, the Uganda government now promotes abstinence as its only anti-HIV/AIDS tool, marking a change from a comprehensive approach to an abstinence-only message. Consequently, PEPFAR funding restrictions have severely curtailed the operations of many NGOs.

For example, one major recipient of PEPFAR funds, The AIDS Support Organization (TASO), formerly offered a broad range of services to a large number of clients. Although TASO has received huge amounts of funding under PEPFAR, because of the accompanying restrictions the organization now has less flexibility and less control over its own priorities and programs. PEPFAR funds cannot be used for nutrition or other support services, and PEPFAR funds cannot be combined with funding from European donors who advocate safe-sex practices including condom use.
Other restrictions imposed by recent policy changes have affected vulnerable populations, including sex workers, and many family planning clinics which advocate safe sex or give abortion information have been forced to close. In some cases, it is speculated that the emphasis on abstinence has led to reduced condom availability. Withdrawal of U.S. funding from the United Nations Family Planning Association due to the “gag rule” has resulted in negative consequences for the field of family planning and reproductive health in general.

Ms. Saperstein concluded by listing recent policy developments which she believed were affecting the field of grantmaking in general. These included the dismantling of USAID and its new alignment with the State Department, USAID “branding” requirements which were ineffective in the anti-U.S. environment, and recent U.S Treasury guidelines which have forced funders to fund in coordination with government agencies. In addition, new restrictions on donor advised funds under the proposed SS20 tax relief could make it more difficult for smaller funders to support groups in Africa.

Barbara Klugman focused on a human rights argument as the basis of her opposition to PEPFAR legislation. Funder opposition to PEPFAR is not based on unwillingness by funders to support values other than their own. Rather, funders have a moral imperative to assess “evidence of impact” of programs educating citizens and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in the context of human rights. The orientation of the PEPFAR legislation promotes abstinence as the primary approach to HIV/AIDS prevention, and this leaves citizens— especially youth— more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. As human rights advocates, funders were bound to oppose the premise of PEPFAR guidelines.

The same argument could be applied to the issues of abortion and family planning, which were also affected by recent policy changes. Although abortions are legal in a number of African countries, they are performed in substandard and under-funded health facilities. Loss of funding for these clinics has led to increased mortality for women. Although a stated aim of the “global gag rule” had been to decrease the number of abortions, there has been no reduction, but rather reduced access to quality health-care services and more unintended pregnancies.

In addition to isolating vulnerable communities like sex workers, PEPFAR legislation ignores the reality of development issues. Sex work is an economic necessity for many women. A realistic response to the issue is not to argue for
abstention which simply ignores the cross-cutting issues of sexuality and economics but to face the problem and provide protection. Failure to respond practically increases the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, especially in areas of conflict where women are often the victims of rape and sexual violence.

Ms. Klugman encouraged those funders who do not actively fund reproductive health programs to acknowledge the complexity and centrality of sexuality issues to all development areas. In particular, HIV/AIDS affects human capacity-building and economic development throughout the continent and should be part of any development or grantmaking planning undertaken by funders.

A number of participants commented that both Ms. Klugman’s and Ms. Saperstein’s discussions of the effects of U.S. policies on funding for health and reproductive rights funders were related to issues raised during the previous session on advocacy. **Funders can act as advocates for women at international and domestic forums** where sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and reproductive rights are on the agenda, and they should be prepared to support the agendas they advocate with the same determination as those with conservative agendas.

The discussion turned to the role of faith-based funding in Africa and faith-based organizations’ policies affecting family planning and HIV/AIDS. In Uganda the message of abstention has been tied to a religious message as opposed to a secular reality. While faith-based coalitions have played a major role supporting development issues, churches generally work on HIV/AIDS treatment rather than prevention, and therefore could not be relied upon to provide significant support in this area.

Alternative: A real challenge churches face in the areas of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS is to recognize the needs and position of women. To the degree their philosophy permits, churches must give women a greater role in shaping church responses to these issues and should attempt to build bridges with other groups working in these areas.
The final session discussed whether the media helps raise the profile of the needs of Africa, or, by focusing on crisis, famine, and conflict, if it reinforces the perception of Africa as a continent that is broken and hopeless.

Two journalists, Evelyn Leopold, Reuters Bureau Chief at the United Nations and Nathan King, the South African Broadcasting Company’s (SABC) correspondent at the United Nations discussed their experiences covering Africa. Although no consensus was reached on how best to balance the “double-edged impact,” there was a lively discussion on some of the issues affecting news coverage from and about Africa.
Both journalists cover stories from the United Nations, but their perspectives are very different. Ms. Leopold was the editor of Reuters for Africa, based in Nairobi, from 1986 to 1989. She traveled between eight Reuters offices on the continent—now all closed—from South Africa to Morocco. She has been Chief Correspondent for Reuters at the United Nations since 1990.

Mr. King is New York Bureau Chief for Feature Story News (FSN), an international independent broadcast news agency that supplies radio and television broadcasts for South African audiences from the United Nations for the SABC. He has covered Darfur, Sudan, for SABC and was part of the press corps that accompanied UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2004 and 2005.

Ms. Leopold began by citing the news stories on Africa in Reuters for that day. Of the five news stories, four focused on conflict in Sudan, Eritrea, the Delta region in Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire. One story focused on the establishment of a pan-African news agency in Kenya. Similar stories were covered by other news outlets including the BBC. These stories served to illustrate the focus of the session—the tendency of the news to portray Africa as a continent of conflicts.

Both guests agreed there was a double-edged impact to reporting on Africa and that addressing the problem posed difficulties. They agreed that bad news from Africa, such as the crisis in Darfur and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, does receive overwhelming attention in the news media. However, part of the problem facing journalists is the reality that there are many negative issues currently at play in Africa—issues which, as journalists, they are obligated to cover.

Both Ms. Leopold and Mr. King pointed out that the disproportionately negative media coverage is compounded by the fact that coverage of Africa is limited in general. One reason was that news coverage is expensive, especially when covering a continent as large as Africa. Ms. Leopold said that maintaining multiple bureaus throughout the continent is not a feasible option for many media outlets, and that communications to and from
Africa are very expensive. Many outlets have a handful of journalists who are based in regional centers but cover multiple countries. Both journalists said that the lack of capacity on the ground resulted in a focus on those areas harboring the “big stories,” which generally have a negative focus. To report stories other than “big” news, outlets would need more staff in more countries. Another cost factor affecting budgets for coverage on Africa is security, and covering conflict areas requires extra security, adding to the cost/return calculations of media outlets covering news from Africa and detracting from the possibilities of covering other stories.

Ms. Leopold suggested that another reason for the lack of U.S. coverage of Africa news is that historically the U.S. does not have as many ties to Africa as do European countries— notably France and the United Kingdom. Both France and Britain broadcast international radio programming to and from Africa. These countries have more bureaus and journalists, and include much broader African news coverage as well as coverage from African journalists.

Finally, both journalists said that before one even considers the issue of negative coverage one needs to remember that journalists writing stories on Africa generally have to contend with a public who knows very little about the complexities and diversity of Africa in the first place. For many Americans, Africa is oversimplified and considered as a monolithic entity. This presents problems for journalists covering any news story about the continent.

Apart from the logistical challenges of covering Africa with understaffed bureaus, coverage is influenced by the orientation of specific news outlets. Ms. Leopold said that Reuters, for example, tends to look for stories with an economic angle. For this reason, stories which relate to aid, budgets, and development are covered, and usually feature the stronger African economies, notably South Africa, and stories which affect the world economy such as Nigerian oil. Mr. King explained that for historical reasons, the editors at SABC encourage stories coming from the UN which focus on pan-African projects.

The discussion turned to the question: If U.S. bureaus were not covering Africa, was there a possible solution to increase the capacity of the local media and journalists? Some funders do support media training and capacity-building in Africa. Ms. Leopold was asked about the impact training programs for local journalists. In her experience, a major problem was that local journalists trained by foreign news outlets want to work for foreign outlets
and not for local stations because the local press offered less money and less job security.

Both guests concurred that the problem with coverage of Africa lay not with the capacity of African journalists but with the fact that most of the news did not come from African sources but from non-African media outlets. This spoke to a larger question of coverage about Africa by Africans in the U.S. media. Mr. King suggested that if a pan-African news agency challenged the hegemony of U.S. media outlets there would be a market in the U.S. He cited the popularity of the Africa-focused and Africa-produced programming of RFI and the BBC among African immigrants in the U.S. as evidence that there was a market for broader Africa programming.

In response to a question regarding changes in Africa coverage, Ms. Leopold said that, from her perspective, Africa-focused news had not increased during her time as a journalist. In terms of trends, coverage of South Africa since the end of apartheid has become less important, with the exception of coverage of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Although there is more coverage of stories from the rest of the continent, there is not a lot more coverage of Africa in general.

Mr. King compared coverage of South Africa in Africa with coverage of Africa in general. He said that South Africans tend to focus on their country and less on the rest of the continent. Another participant noted that Africans outside South Africa seem to know a lot about what is happening in South Africa rather than vice versa and concurred that this was related to the economic and media power of South Africa.

“before one even considers the issue of negative coverage one needs to remember that journalists writing stories on Africa generally have to contend with a public who knows very little about the complexities and diversity of Africa”
The question was raised as to how news agencies cover “difficult” stories in countries unsafe for journalists. For example, how do the media cover Zimbabwe where local independent media and international journalists have been subject to regular threats and intimidation? Both reporters said that this kind of situation was very challenging for journalists, but the approaches Ms. Leopold and Mr. King outlined were very different.

Ms. Leopold said that Reuters in New York receives news from Zimbabwe via a complex route from local journalists, but currently has no staffers there. Mr. King explained that because of the special relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe, SABC does have access to the country. However, he emphasized the difference in editorial perspective of U.S. and South African news outlets covering the Zimbabwean story and said that access should be considered in light of political and editorial perspectives.

Participants briefly discussed the role of technology and news distribution and to what extent ownership of technology affects news distribution and the news agenda. On the one hand, it was suggested that ownership of the means of news distribution, e.g. via satellite technology, could allow the news agenda to be controlled by a limited group. Mr. King suggested that rather than focusing on the politico-economic nature of satellite ownership, funders should consider the positive impact that technology, especially the Internet, has had on communications.
CONCLUSION

One of AGAG’s core values is respect for a diversity of opinions, approaches, and experiences among Africa grantmakers as well as for new voices and ideas from the broad range of stakeholders working in African development. This year’s meeting held true to those values and was replete with new voices and diverse opinions. It was also characterized by the recognition of some of the common challenges funders face. Reflecting an exponential growth since its establishment, AGAG’s 2006 annual meeting attracted nearly 60 funders from the United States, Europe and Africa. Coming together at this unique forum, their goal was to build and share knowledge from their varied grantmaking experiences.

AGAG’s diverse membership presents a challenge when convening the annual meeting in drafting an agenda that addresses issues relevant to a range of Africa funders. Choosing a meeting format which facilitates sharing and building knowledge without being unwieldy or lacking in focus is equally challenging. This year, AGAG decided to focus the meeting agenda on broad cross-cutting themes that affect all grantmakers, while each session format was based on a set of questions to keep the discussion focused on its key issues.

At the 2005 annual meeting issues relating to differences in approach and areas of interest distinguished the sessions, while
this year the commonalities which AGAG members share characterized more of the discussion. Changes in U.S. policy have made it more difficult for all funders to interact with grantees, transfer funds, and administer grants internationally. In addition, the “global gag rule” and restrictions on PEPFAR funding have posed difficult challenges, causing a ripple effect throughout the field of African development regardless of program focus.

Another theme which arose during this year’s meeting was how funders perceive themselves and their role in relation to the issues they work on. For some participants, the current political context in the United States led to a greater consideration of the potential role they can or should play as advocates, both on behalf of their grantees, or in support of their institutions’ positions in general. No consensus was reached on this issue, but the strong link between the issues of policy and advocacy emerged as a clear challenge for Africa funders.

A theme which carried over from last year’s annual meeting was the importance of building organizational capacity and sustainability—a key goal for most funders. Whereas last year’s discussion focused on the specifics of organizational effectiveness in grantmaking, this year’s discussion focused on broader approaches to building an organization’s strength. Funders’ diverse funding models—which include project and core support—as well as how funders can be effective when restricted by specific mandates in their approaches to funding, were considered.

The theme of working within the restrictions of specific mandates arose during more than one discussion. However, instead of focusing on the limitations their mandates imposed, funders discussed how they could leverage what grantees could achieve with their support, and when to collaborate with other funders to achieve what they could not. The group consensus was that to achieve
this level of collaboration, building knowledge about each others’ activities was crucial.

As journalists Evelyn Leopold (Reuters) and Nathan King (Feature Story News/South African Broadcasting Company) discussed in the final session on reporting on Africa, there remains a need to increase coverage of Africa and present a more balanced view among the general public.

A lack of U.S. public awareness of African issues continues to hamper the efforts of those working on policy and development issues. Less knowledge means less interest, thus leading to less support for development in general.

“success is reflected in the growth of the organization’s capacity, both in terms of administrative and management efficiency as well as in the organization’s ability to set and achieve its goals.”

A possible remedy to overly negative and underreported news from Africa is building the capacity of Africa-based news agencies to disseminate their product to U.S. audiences.

The 2006 AGAG annual meeting helped to build capacity on two levels. First, it enabled grantmakers to discuss ways in which they could learn from each other to help build the capacity of their grantees despite the limitations of mandate or funding approach. Consequently, AGAG members were able to move closer to achieving one of the forum’s key objectives—to help grantmakers build knowledge from shared experiences to become more effective grantmakers.
## Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi</td>
<td>Co-Founder and Executive Director</td>
<td>The African Women's Development Fund</td>
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<td>Akwasi Aidoo</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Trust Africa</td>
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<td>Dr. Russell Ally</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>South Africa Office</td>
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<td>Jennifer Anderson-Bahr</td>
<td>Senior Program Officer/Interim Executive Director</td>
<td>Firelight Foundation</td>
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<td>Catherine Bryant</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
<td>Izumi Foundation</td>
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<td>Rob Buchanan</td>
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<td>International Programs Council on Foundations</td>
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<td>Karen Colvard</td>
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<td>Julie Anton Dunn</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>International Rhino Foundation</td>
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<td>Victoria Dunning</td>
<td>Director, Grantmaking Program</td>
<td>Global Fund for Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoe Estrin</td>
<td>Foundation Fellow</td>
<td>General Service Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Flood</td>
<td>Grants Committee Member</td>
<td>Cotswold Foundation</td>
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<td>Andrea Flynn Sequeira</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
<td>CityBridge Foundation</td>
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<td>Yuri Futamura</td>
<td>Foundation Associate</td>
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<td>Elaine K. Gallin</td>
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<td>Elan Garonzik</td>
<td>Vice President, Programs</td>
<td>ELMA Philanthropies Services (U.S.) Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrea Gay</td>
<td>Director, Children's Health</td>
<td>United Nations Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amy Goldman</td>
<td>President and Chair</td>
<td>Better Way Foundation</td>
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<td>Margaret Green</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Better Way Foundation</td>
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<td>Anya Guyer</td>
<td>Senior Program Officer</td>
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<td>Julie Harvey</td>
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<td>Natália Kanem</td>
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<td>Sharon B. King</td>
<td>President</td>
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<td>Barbara Klugman</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
<td>Ford Foundation</td>
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<td>Jennifer Lentfer</td>
<td>META Coordinator &amp; Program Officer</td>
<td>Firelight Foundation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Participants

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Manager, Corporate Contributions
Johnson & Johnson

Vance G. Martin
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Micole Martini
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Open Society Institute

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Open Society Institute

Mark Milner
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Joyce Lewinger Moock
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Rockefeller Foundation

Lydia Morris
Grants Committee Member
Cotswold Foundation

William Moses
Sr. Program Officer
Kresge Foundation

Nancy Muirhead
Assistant Secretary & Program Officer
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Open Society Institute

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United Support of Artists for Africa

Rachel True
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Global Health Through Education, Training and Service

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Vice President and Sr. Philanthropic Advisor
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

Katherine Wilson
Assistant Program Officer
Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation

Monica Winsor
Trustee
William H. Donner Foundation
## Meeting Agenda

**Wednesday, January 18, 2006**

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  **Opening Reception and Dinner**
Moran’s Chelsea Restaurant, 146 Tenth Avenue, at 19th Street New York, NY 10011

**Thursday, January 19 and Friday, January 20, 2006**

Downtown Conference Center, 157 William Street, New York, NY 10038

8:30 am – 9:30 am  **Breakfast** (at Downtown Conference Center)

9:30 am – 10:00 am  **Welcome, Overview and Introductions**

  **Welcome:** Andrea Johnson and Akwasi Aidoo, Co-Chairs
  
  **Overview:** Niamani Mutima, Director

10:00 am – 11:00 am  **Strengthening Organizations in Africa**

  How does your Africa program contribute to the overall health and well being of your grantees? How do you determine the best approach? Does your Africa program target a specific type of grantee? (community, grassroots, research, university, government, etc) with a specific focus (local, national, or regional)? What is your theory of change that supports this approach to achieve your Africa Program goals?

  **Discussion Leaders:** Marcia Thomas, USA for Africa
  
  **Advisors:** William Moses, Kresge Foundation

11:00 am – 11:30 am  **Break and Free Time for Networking**

11:30 am – 12:30 pm  **Advocacy and Grantmaking in Africa**

  What role does advocacy play in your grantmaking program? How do you determine the local climate and determine the most effective approach? How has your support of advocacy affected your grantmaking program?

  **Discussion Leaders:** Penny Fujiko Willgerodt, Rockefeller Philanthropic Advisors
  
  **Advisors:** Julie Hayes, Open Society Institute
  
  **Advisors:** Mark Milner, Manager, IBIS

12:30 pm – 1:15 pm  **Free Time for Networking**

1:15 pm – 2:30 pm  **Lunch**

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm  **Concurrent Sessions**

  1. **Intuition in Grantmaking** – sponsored by Global Greengrants Fund
  2. **Collaborative Monitoring and Evaluation for Community-based Grantees and Funders** – sponsored by the Firelight Foundation
  3. **Accountability for International Philanthropy** – sponsored by the Council on Foundations

3:30 pm – 4:30 pm  **Facilitating Networks and Making Connections**

  How do you facilitate networking opportunities for your grantees, locally, nationally, and regionally? What is the value to your program? What are your strategies for determining the impact of facilitating connections among your grantees? What is the role of national, regional and international conferences in supporting networking among grantees?

  **Discussion Leaders:** Andrea Johnson, Carnegie Corporation
  
  **Advisors:** Jennifer Anderson-Bahr, Firelight Foundation

4:30 pm – 5:30 pm  **Wrap Up Session**
Meeting Agenda

**Friday, January 20, 2006**

8:30 am – 9:30 am  Breakfast

9:30 am – 10:30 am  U. S. Africa Policy: Implications For Grantmakers

This session is co-sponsored with the Funders’ Network on Population, Reproductive Health & Rights. How does U. S. foreign policy impact the work of grantmakers? How can grantmakers respond when U. S. policy directly hinders their ability to carry out program goals? How can funders work with their grantee to address this situation? What about the indirect impact of U. S. policy on cross-cutting issues?

**Discussion Leaders:** Denise Shannon, Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health & Rights
Barbara Klugman, Ford Foundation
Shira Saperstein, Moriah Fund

10:30 am – 11:00 am  Break

11:00 am – 12:30 pm  Conversations With/dialogues On: The Double Edge Impact Of Reporting On Africa

A moderated discussion with journalists on the double edge of media coverage of Africa and how best to provide information that fosters public interest while avoiding stereotypes of this diverse continent.

**Guests:** Evelyn Leopold, Chief Reuters Correspondent to the United Nations
Nathan King, Correspondent, Feature Story News and South African Broadcast Corporation

12:30 pm – 1:00 pm  Closing Session

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm  Lunch
VISION AND MISSION

AGAG’S VISION is to be a resource for foundations and their staff members to enable them to be more effective in their work so that they, in turn, can better serve their grantees in Africa.

AGAG’S MISSION is to encourage increased and more effective foundation funding in Africa.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2004-2006

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING
AGAG is committed to creating knowledge about the grantmaking community, including mapping where foundations are working and analyzing strategic grantmaking approaches, with a primary focus on U.S. foundations. AGAG also strives to build knowledge within the organization about major development initiatives in Africa that affect the grantmaking context.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING
AGAG is committed to creating networking opportunities for the staff of member foundations so they can more easily form professional relationships, share information, and explore opportunities for collaboration. AGAG will disseminate information about the field of foundation funding in Africa to the larger philanthropic community.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Akwasi Aidoo  
TrustAfrica  

Russell Ally  
C.S. Mott Foundation  

Jennifer Astone  
Firelight Foundation  

Raoul Davion  
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation  

Andrea Johnson  
Carnegie Corporation of New York  

Don Lauro  
David and Lucille Packard Foundation  

Gail McClure  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation  

Joyce Moock  
Rockefeller Foundation  

William Moses  
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Malusi Mpumlwana  
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