

THE SERIES TOOLKIT

Shifting Power in Grantmaking to Improve Child and Youth Outcomes

The resounding call to more fully engage the communities we serve has the power to spur innovation and amplify impacts. But what does it mean, in practical terms, to make this shift as funders?

The International Education Funders Group, Elevate Children Funders Group, and the Children, Youth, and Family Funders Roundtable partnered with Firelight Foundation to examine these questions in a six-part series.



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learn the story behind the photo

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SERIES OVERVIEW

Shifting Power in Grantmaking to Improve Child and Youth Outcomes

The Shifting Power series was designed to help funders in child education, rights, and wellbeing, explore what shifting power means for them, and **how they can value community action and agency in their grantmaking**. The series highlights case studies, evidence, and experiences of diverse organizations and foundations who are making the shift themselves. From an expert panel exploring why community-centered grantmaking is critical, to workshops demonstrating frameworks and tools you can start using today, this series seeks to support grantmakers as they make practical shifts for community-driven systems change.

The series consists of six webinars with reflection activities and peer coaching to support funders as they apply learnings to their own work. Speakers include experts in learning and scaling, changemakers from leading foundations, and academic experts.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SHIFT POWER?

For the purpose of this series...

Shifting power means **centering children, community, youth, and parents** – their perspectives, needs, voices, agency, and systems

- in all aspects of our grant making for children and youth. Participatory grantmaking, community-based work, or engagement with communities in which the power of decision-making or impact-framing still lies outside the community fail to shift power. Approaches that pre-determine an ideal state and subcontract with community organizations to achieve it, fail to shift power.

Truly shifting power means **doing so in all key areas**, as we:

- Define problems, challenges, and opportunities;
- Define and analyze problems;
- Identify root causes;
- Identify ideal states;
- Decide actions to be taken;
- Determine priorities;
- Identify definitions and indicators of success, impact, sustainability, scale, and more; and
- Examine who we all see ourselves as responsible and accountable to.

Resource & Recording Library

Session recordings, readings, and other resources recommended by our panelists to deepen learning and serve as an additional resources for discussion




Session 1

-  Watch the full session recording
-  Re-Envisioning the Role of Community Based Early Childhood Programs in Promoting School Readiness
-  Reconstructing Children’s Rights Institute
-  Bottom-up approaches to strengthening child protection systems

Session 4

-  Hidden in Plain View: Philanthropy, Mission Statements, and White Supremacy
-  Anti-Blackness Is Global and Gendered – Philanthropy’s Response Must Be, Too
-  Less Talking, More Listening: Philanthropy and Indigenous Peoples
-  How can power-shifting philanthropy learn from power-shifting programmes?
-  Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation



Session 2

-  Watch the full session recording
-  Check out Dr. Shallwani's recommended reading, Community-driven Systems Change [here](#) (or read the one-pager [here](#)!)
-  View Dr. Shallwani's slides





Session 5

-  Watch the recording of opening remarks [here](#)
-  Charity vs solidarity
-  How white people conquered the nonprofit industry
-  The White-Savior Complex Industrial Complex
-  White dominant culture & something different
-  Localisation is not a “trend” or an “outcome” that can be achieved by outside-in actors

Session 3

-  Watch the full session recording
-  What does it mean to play with fire
-  Partnering with Philanthropy in Native America
-  Building Indigenous Power and Investing in Indigenous Self-Determination
-  Funders’ most powerful resources are the young people they seek to serve

Session 6

-  Watch the full session recording
-  Time to Decolonise Aid
-  Sources of Power
-  Levels of Participation

Firelight tools used in discussion:

Why is shifting power vital to improving child and youth outcomes?

Experts share why community-centered grantmaking is more than “a good thing to do”

This session launched the series by exploring why a shift towards more community-centered grantmaking is critical in the realization of children’s rights, education, and care in the 21st century and why investing in grassroots systems must be valued in strengthening long-term systems for children and youth.

Key Takeaway: Listening promotes ownership > ownership promotes accountability > accountability supports sustainability.



Zanele Sibanda

"This is a process of learning, because it does fundamentally challenge what we believe about change and how change happens."

Zanele shared her experiences learning how much more effective and lasting outcomes can be for adolescent girls when they are centered in the programs and actions that seek to support them.

Skip to **14:26** to hear from Zanele

 Watch the full session recording [here](#)



Beatrice Matafwali

"Appreciate that communities already know - they have been doing this for a long time. Give them the opportunity to surface indigenous practices."

Dr. Matafwali pulled from her experiences researching, designing, and evaluating ECD & education structures in Africa to reflect on the contrast between outcomes of programs which involve communities and families from the beginning versus those who do not.

Skip to **23:28** to hear from Dr. Matafwali

 Check out Dr. Matafwali's recommended reading [here](#)



Ghazal Kesharvarzian

"The tendency has been to replicate Anglo Saxon models of child welfare rooted in structural racism and colonial legacies... If we don't put children, young people, families, and communities at the center of decision making, we will replicate this cycle."

Ghazal reflected on her deep experience in the care sector, sharing why centering children, youth, and community is essential in the de-colonization of the sector and the prevention of child separation.

Skip to **34:40** to hear from Ghazal

 Check out Ghazal's recommended reading [here](#)



Michael Wessels

"We need to make a historic and transformational shift... It begins with humility. We have to ask ourselves, why is it that we think we know better than local people what's best for their children?"

Mike reflected on his research regarding strengthening community-based child protection, sharing why centering communities, children, and youth is essential to realizing effective child protection systems.

Skip to **47:20** to hear from Mike

 Check out Mike's recommended reading [here](#)

Why is shifting power vital to improving child and youth outcomes?

Experts share why community-centered grantmaking is more than “a good thing to do”

Questions from the chat:

Who do you support to do the "deep listening" that is needed?

In my experience, the funding organization selected community based organizations (CBOs) from the communities where the girls lived. Not all of them were youth-led, but some were. The CBOs are the ones who were supported to do the listening. We provided tools in the local language and an orientation on the process. Once listening was completed, the organizations worked to find themes across the groups of girls. Then we organized a week-long session of work to make sense of what the girls said and to reflect on the insights and then work with the partners to use the insights to develop program frameworks. They took the frameworks to the girls to work with them on developing the content for the program that was funded. All through the process the CBOs received accompaniment and resources for the process. - Zanele

What is "ethnographic learning"?

Ethnographic learning means learning about local context using rapid ethnographic methods such as participant observation, accompanying local people through daily activities, and discussions with people and groups positioned differently in the community. The learner adopts a position of being a student & asks questions without using technical terminology that positions the learner as the expert. Further information and tools are available on communityledcp.org. - Mike

How can we scale? Should we even focus on scale?

As we engage in these discussions, we have to be mindful of bringing in the same types of definitions, terminologies, parameters, measurement tools etc. One of the ways in which the sector has done harm is the imposition of these measurement and metrics that are often externally imposed. It will be useful to think differently within all aspects of this work. Who is asking to go to scale -- the donors or the community members? Why scale? What does scale mean to local community? - Ghazal

What balance is needed between deeper slower local consultation and design process; and the hard work of breaking the monopoly of power in our field?

I think both go hand-in hand. We can only work locally if the monopoly of power in our field is broken. Therefore, we cannot separate out the two discussions and philanthropic foundations can play a major role in this balance. One can argue that localisation hasn't worked for this very reason -- the power continues to be held by these larger institutions and distribution of funds to local organizations ends up being tokenistic. - Ghazal

If funding comes from a family who has a particular area they want to focus on - how can you find a middle ground between the goals of a foundation and the needs/perspectives of the community?

Join us for session #4, *How are funders shifting power? What funders are doing differently and how they made the transition*, where the whole session will dive into questions just like this.

How can we approach the challenge of adjusting child safeguarding measures for youth/different age groups?

There are excellent examples of child safeguarding measures designed and implemented by young people. **FRIDA** and **With and For Girls** are two examples of funds in which young people designed the safeguarding. I would recommend reaching out to these funds to see how they have been able to engage meaningfully with young people. **Search for Common Ground** (Saji Prelis) is also another excellent resource/expert. - Ghazal

What is needed to shift for the funder to accommodate a power-shifting approach?

In my experience, the model challenged funders to fund *organizations* not programs. This is one of the uncomfortable shifts that Ghazal talked about when shifting power. By selecting organizations and partnering with them, funders do not leave the process open, but rather make a commitment to work with the organizations on the listening, analysis, and sensemaking process. That means the organizations that participate in the process know they will get funding. What shifted was that, instead of pressure to develop a program that meets funder requirements, the partners worked to ensure that the program responded to the needs of girls. As a result of the girls and the partners being engaged in the process, no one felt like the process was open, but rather they all went through a transformational process that was supported with resources, tools, and platforms as well as space and time to develop the program and get funding to implement the program. - Zanele

Check out session #4, *How are funders shifting power? What funders are doing differently and how they made the transition*, where we dive into this question.

How do we approach grant administration (small grants are especially tough to administer as it's often the same amount of work as administering large grants)

I think its helpful to speak with other donors who have been able to do this successfully (**OSF**, **Wellspring**, **Urgent Action Fund**) and they have let "administration" or "philanthropic bureaucracy" to hinder the work. There are creative and innovative ways to do and peer donors can be a resource. - Ghazal

How do we shift power?

Practical steps and tools to help funders move towards community-centered grantmaking

In traditional philanthropy, power has overwhelmingly been with white people in the Global North - these are the decision makers, even if other communities are consulted. However, we know that shifting power to community-based organizations (CBOs) is more effective, relevant, impactful, and sustainable. Shifting power is uncomfortable and raises questions of trust and privilege. Luckily, there are tools to support this difficult process. In this session, Dr. Sadaf Shallwani with Firelight shared insights from their journey of listening deeply to CBO grantee-partners in order to better support them in creating lasting change for children, youth, and families. CBOs overwhelmingly called for community-driven systems change.

- Key Takeaways:**
- **Community driven systems change is not represented by linear inputs and outputs. It's the process and community ownership that will create and sustain real change.**
 - **Building and sustaining authentic relationships with communities in shifting power is vital. Developing mutual trust is fundamental to success.**
 - **We need to approach philanthropy as an act of justice and solidarity, in which we walk with and are guided by people in the communities we seek to serve.**



Dr. Sadaf Shallwani

What is community-driven systems change? Community-driven systems change is an approach to development and social transformation that emphasizes the insight, leadership, and ownership of the people who are living and experiencing issues at the community level, and their work to create lasting change in the systems and root causes that underlie the critical issues they seek to address.

Read more in the full report

How can funders support community-based organizations to catalyze community-driven systems change? The research shows that CBOs conceptualize success and impact differently than traditional funders. For example, while traditional philanthropy emphasizes reach, scale, and cost-effectiveness as success, CBOs seek meaningful improvement in community members' lives, and reaching more people in need.

Therefore, as funders we need to:

- Reconceptualize the role of community-based organizations (CBOs) in global development efforts
- Redefine success, impact, sustainability, and effectiveness
- Reimagine funder-CBO relationships

Read more about these strategies starting on Slide 20



Watch the full session recording [here](#). Watch the first 32 minutes for Dr. Shallwani's presentation, or skip to **33:30** for the Q&A!



Check out Dr. Shallwani's recommended reading, Community-driven Systems Change [here](#) (or read the one-pager [here](#)!)



Check out Dr. Shallwani's slides [here](#)

How do we shift power?

Practical steps and tools to help funders move towards community-centered grantmaking

Questions from the chat:

Can you provide a definition of youth-led organizations under the umbrella of CBOs?

Read ECFG's recent report, *Shifting the Field*, which was driven and informed by children and young people and their eco-systems.

How do we fight against the pervasive and harmful discourse of CBOs as needing capacity building (one way flow of knowledge).

We need to have a broader understanding of capacity around relationships and partnerships so we can more appropriately value the capacity of CBOs. A lot of the time it's also about grantmaking processes, meaning notions of capacity are based on what funders need but if we shift to thinking about what communities need we will value other capacities.

Can you share anything about the gender dynamics of working with CBOs and managing power relations at this level?

Firelight has allowed these issues to surface through their reflection processes - they have tools to raise questions about CBO internal power dynamics. Firelight also seeks to model positive dynamics in their interactions. These issues are not resolved within the wider sector, and still need work.

Can you expand more issues related to how "money moves" through the system from donors, to iNGOs, to CBOs/YLOs? What practices can be put in place to make these dynamics/relationships more equitable?

Check out session #5, *What can you do in practice? An experiential journey into shifting power in grantmaking*, where we tackle this question.

How do you manage patriarchy and ableism and classism in CBOs?

It's important to recognise that power dynamics are rampant in all spaces. Community can be defined broadly and so what Firelight tries to do is create safe spaces to allow these issues to surface and address. Firelight always tries to engage unless there are major red flags. They think about: Who are the decision makers? Who is missing? How do we bring the people who are missing into the conversation? Firelight has developed tools to help identify these issues and expand community engagement.

There are lots of organizations that are very results oriented which is why it's so refreshing to hear about this approach. What do you think of log frames versus theories of change?

It's important not to undermine CBOs by having them too closely associated with external actors. This can really harm them. A theory of change is more nuanced than log frames, though not perfect. What's important is not to be prescriptive when we use any of these tools.

So much focus on "system change" is targeted at the Government and policy level. But often this is being pushed within context where Governments are weak, not accountable etc....thus potentially not actually the right investment to make. But when we look to work through CBOs this is not always viewed favourably by donor decision makers. How do we get away from it being an either / or investment pathway when it comes to grant making?

Systems level discourse has tended to be top down and focused on macro level policy changes that are often not enforced at local level. So even when you are working at the macro level it's important to complement with bottom up approaches, which also strengthens accountability. We will continue to reflect on this issue in future sessions.

Does community-centered grantmaking work?

Exploring case studies from around the world

This session elucidated the evidence for community-centered grantmaking with case studies from around the world. Through stories of impact, grassroots leaders, academics, and funders shared evidence from the field regarding the impact of community-centered grantmaking.

“We can’t just free children from harm and not engage them in the dismantling of the system that harmed them.” - Dr. Ramatu Bangura



Dr. Ramatu Bangura

“We don’t engage [young people] in movements because we think it’s unsafe or unsavory even. And what we often do is miss an opportunity to engage young people in the struggle for their own liberation. And what that robs children of is a level of self efficacy.”

Dr. Ramatu Bangura is the Director of the [Children's Rights Innovation Fund \(CRIF\)](#). Ramatu has spent the last 25 years engaging in organizing, advocacy, and research on a host of issues impacting transnational girls.

Skip to [06:43](#) to hear from Dr. Bangura



Check out Dr. Bangura's recommended reading [here](#)



Lucie Cluver

“There was almost no end to the ingenuity with which these community based organizations were able to reach families, when governments were not able to. When many larger organizations were essentially in crisis.”

Lucie Cluver is a Professor at [Oxford University](#) and [at the University of Cape Town](#) where she works with a team to provide evidence that can improve the lives of children and adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Skip to [21:27](#) to hear from Lucie



Watch the full session recording [here](#)



Andreas Hipple

“We’re invested in indigenous evaluation processes that are not just perpetuating long held paradigms of western research that have been well documented to do harm in indigenous communities and are trauma inducing. It’s about storytelling, listening, and understanding how impact and change is defined by communities, families, and children themselves.”

Andreas Hipple is Executive Director of [Better Way Foundation](#), a Minneapolis-based private family foundation working to strengthen the systems that nurture and support young children and their families.

Skip to [31:31](#) to hear from Andreas



Check out Andreas' recommended reading [here](#) and [here](#)



Jones Mwalwanda

“When initiatives are being designed by the donor and maybe a consultant, then given to the young people to do, the attitude towards that programming is totally different... They are not interested in the funding, they are interested in solutions to their problems.”

Jones Mwalwanda is the Executive Director of the [Foundation for Community Livelihood and Development \(FOCOLD\)](#), a non-partisan community-based organization in Malawi striving to facilitate community systems driven change.

Skip to [42:58](#) to hear from Jones



Check out Jones' recommended reading [here](#)

Does community-centered grantmaking work?

Exploring case studies from around the world

Questions from the chat:

You said, “child rights have been used to punish people for their poverty” - I wonder if there were times when they were also used to protect people from poverty?

I would argue that the same systems of children’s rights are rarely turned on those with structural privilege. In many countries like the United States, the vast majority of reports to child welfare systems are for neglect, which more often is due to poverty, for example, children left unsupervised while parents are working, children lacking food or shelter, etc. Too often these reports do not trigger the provision of adequate supports or if those supports are offered, they are accompanied with threats of children being removed from their families. Too often, it is a punitive system that treats poverty like a character flaw, rather than a phenomena built into our economic and social structures. Also, those systems are disproportionately turned on racial, ethnic and other minority groups. This model is problematic but we still see elements of child protection systems in the US being exported and replicated globally. - Ramatu

Do any of you find that children and young people with disabilities are actively engaged or hindered from participating in your efforts?

We have not explicitly grappled with this in our work in Indigenous communities in the States, but our CBO partners in Tanzania have made a significant push to engage children with disabilities in their programs. And yes, it is difficult – stigma is a major factor within many communities, as well as the physical barriers to participation. There’s so much more to learn and do on this. - Andreas

We are building the partnerships and relationships with disability rights groups and funds to ensure that young people with disabilities are fully active in our portfolios. We have earmarked slots from children and youth with disabilities and are working with those partners to put the right accommodations in place. It is still unfinished work. - Ramatu

When more traditional donors are just starting to become more participatory, they often work more closely with community funds until they can really shift their systems. They cut a check and shift the "risk" to the community fund. As community funders, how do you wish traditional donors did this differently when working with you?

Supporting community foundations is absolutely a great option, and for some traditional funders it may even be the best option for the long term, particularly if the community foundation truly delivers a community-driven process. I would still encourage the traditional funders to work to engage board/leadership on these issues, since it takes work for many to develop a deeper appreciation for why a community-driven approach is so important. I also think we need to redefine “risk.” I would argue that funders face much greater risks when they invest in externally driven solutions than if they invest in community orgs and leaders who are rooted in the community’s assets and strengths, with a keen awareness of challenges and opportunities to effect sustainable change, accountable to the people around them. - Andreas

Community based organization will always be the best system to work with and it will help in championing change in the community, if community funders consider the community driven systems change then their resources are in good hands and they should be assured of the positive impact and sustainability, under the community driven systems change there are less risks of the community funds being miss used and abused. Based on my experience some community funders have consider exit strategy framework and it defines when they will exit and the roles or what will happen when will they be exiting and the strategy also discuss about the sustainability thereafter, this help the community-based organization to get prepared and outline on how they should prepare the ground, catch up and maintain the services or the activities related to the project.- Jones

I am conflicted about this question. On one hand, I don’t believe that private philanthropy is designed to hold the relationship-building and sustained support to build thoughtful and meaningful participatory grantmaking, particularly as long as the allocation and ultimate decision-making of funding is held by their boards. That said, I think participatory grantmaking is in most cases better held by community funds. I think the framing the question as one of risk speaks to the underlying problem with much participatory grantmaking when it is seen as a risk mitigation tool (ie. avoiding criticism from activists and colleagues, a way to make programs effective, etc.) rather than an ideological belief that those living the challenges we are entitled to leadership and the resources for their work. - Ramatu

Does community-centered grantmaking work?

Exploring case studies from around the world

Questions from the chat, continued:

How do we ensure that financial resources do not jeopardize community work, ownership and sustainability?

This is a tough question and I'm especially curious about how my co-panelists might answer it. For us at Better Way Foundation, our partnership development process pays special attention to finding orgs with strong and effective leaders and internal cultures of shared leadership within their teams. This gives us confidence that our support will enhance community work, ownership and sustainability. It's also our job to put in the time to listen and understand our partners' work, and to ask good questions about issues like this. Part of doing good community-driven philanthropy is giving up control, or the illusion of control, and to create a relationship that is trusting and transparent. - Andreas

A sudden influx of resources into community work can profoundly impact the dynamics in a movement, particularly in spaces that have been sorely underfunded creating a feast/famine dynamic. Long time underfunding in a space fosters distrust not only among funders but among peer organizations and activists. The mistake we often make is imagining it is the funding that jeopardizes the work, when in reality it is the long time lack of funding and the uncertainty of how long that funding will be available. So, I think the answer to the question is to stick around long enough to hopefully outlive that distrust and to ensure that work can be sustained. It means connecting movements to other funders and for funders to figure out how they sustain a longer term funding eco-system to foster trust in movements. Sustainability comes out of sustained and dependable funding base, with funders who are accountable and understand the dynamics in the spaces they are funding. - Ramatu

In my view, the following should be considered:

- Align the strategic issues of the community funders with the development priorities of local communities, and government to create “shared value”
- Recognizes that a multi-stakeholder approach reduces community funder control but adds value by building local ownership and complementarity around shared interests
- Supports communities in defining and meeting their own development goals and aspirations through participatory planning and decision making
- Seeks to avoid dependency, encourage self-reliance, and create long-term benefits that can outlast funder support
- Invests in capacity building, participatory processes, and organizational development to enable local communities, institutions, and partners to take progressively greater roles and responsibilities
- Uses outcome and impact indicators to measure the quantity and quality of change
- Uses participatory methods of monitoring to build trust and local ownership of outcomes

- Jones

How are funders shifting power?

What funders are doing differently and how they made the transition

In this session, funders reflected on their own experiences shifting power in philanthropy. Panelists shared ways they have responded to the challenge of thinking and doing differently, and discussed the "how" of successfully partnering with boards and other stakeholders.

We were thrilled to be joined by our moderator, Mark Guy, senior program officer with GHR Foundation, and our panelists, Rachel Kerry, Executive Officer of CAGES Foundation, Patrick Obonyo, Programme Manager at Ikea Foundation, and Lisa Bohmer, Director of Hilton Foundation's Global Early Childhood Development program.

Key Takeaway: Institutional change takes time, and implementation is often imperfect. However if we recognise that we are on a journey with communities and begin to address inequalities in our funding practices and decision-making, our impact can be amplified.

Here are seven recommendations we heard from our panelists:

#1 Embody commitment and courage.

- It's essential for foundation leadership to recognise that **inherent power imbalances exist within philanthropy** and development aid.
- If we are to drive change, leaders at all levels must be dedicated to this work, taking their time to build trust and commitment towards shifting power.
- It takes **courage to embrace power shifts** because it requires more than small changes, we have to change the strategy of your foundation. Shifting power requires thinking differently about many aspects of the work you do, including who you hire.
- **We have to be brave in the boardroom** - build trust with your board and be prepared to challenge the board.

#2 Focus on relationship building and human connection.

- We need our boards and/or leadership to **reserve time and resources for connecting with grantees and communities**.
- We need to be careful to **move beyond tokenism** (e.g. via youth or community advisors) and actually give decision making power to constituents / community.
- **We need to be mentored by young people.** Try reverse mentorship, which offers an opportunity to interact directly with young people, and start shifting how you work with young people.

#3 Take a values-based approach to grantmaking.

- **Many foundations jump straight to grantmaking criteria and solution-building, which runs a high risk of missing community priorities.**
- **Start with identifying and setting organizational values**, rather than focusing on solutions first. This can help build accountability around strategies and ultimately decision making.
- **Listening, learning and humility** are essential values that drive shifting power. How can you institutionalize practice to honor these values?

Check out this week's recommended reading:



Hidden in Plain View: Philanthropy, Mission Statements, and White Supremacy



Anti-Blackness Is Global and Gendered – Philanthropy's Response Must Be, Too



Less Talking, More Listening: Philanthropy and Indigenous Peoples



How can power-shifting philanthropy learn from power-shifting programmes?



Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation

How are funders shifting power?

What funders are doing differently and how they made the transition

We were thrilled to be joined by our moderator, Mark Guy, senior program officer with GHR Foundation, and our panelists, Rachel Kerry, Executive Officer of CAGES Foundation, Patrick Obonyo, Programme Manager at Ikea Foundation, and Lisa Bohmer, Director of Hilton Foundation's Global Early Childhood Development program.

#4 Build the evidence for leadership and/or boards.

- Ample evidence exists to show that **traditional philanthropy is not working**. We should leverage this reality with boards and/or leadership to argue the need for shifting power.
- Board members often come from different fields, so they don't always understand the fundamental inequality in aid. **We need to increase understanding of boards, providing the opportunity for them to learn and reflect on this journey.**
- Cost effectiveness and efficiency should be part of the evidence base, as **shifting power gets more done for our dollars**. That can speak volumes to boards and/or leadership.

#5 Flip traditional accountability practices.

- The traditional structure for philanthropy is to hold grantees accountable. Flip this - **how is the board accountable to the community?**
- In all phases of this work, including the early days of this work, **we need to center equity and people with lived experience so we are better informed** - this needs to become an expectation across all our work.
- Boards with business backgrounds respond well to accountability and conditions of sustainability. **We have had 200+ years of colonization with devastating impacts, showing us that the traditional way isn't the best way - it clearly hasn't worked.**

#6 Shift learning and data practices

- Need to be flexible around monitoring, evaluation, and learning methodologies. Evaluations are not measuring the right things. That needs to change - **let community define what success looks like.**
- **We often don't know what communities think**, how they are experiencing our interventions, and then we fall into the trap of "serving" people and mostly focusing on the numbers served.
- We need to commission formative research, and **get the right people within communities to find out how we are perceived** and what is true impact.
- We need to **ensure data remains in the community's hands** to do with as they see fit.

#7 Redefine risk in your grantmaking.

- Traditional philanthropy often sees the communities worked with as high risk. Where that notion still exists, we have to push back and call that out as a highly problematic mindset.
- We need to acknowledge that the most risky grantmaking is the grantmaking that creates no impact for the children, youth, and families we intend to serve.
- **Focus on the existing assets in communities, not just the deficits and challenges they face. Build upon those for more sustainable impact - which carries less risk.**

What can you do in practice?

An experiential journey into shifting power in grantmaking

In this session, we explored what donors can practically do in their own grantmaking to support community-driven systems change. We took a deeper, more experiential dive into Firelight’s tools to explore how funders can improve their grantcraft.

Key Takeaway: In philanthropy and in global development, being in solidarity requires donors and other holders of power and wealth to walk with, and even be guided by, people and communities, as we navigate this messy, gradual, difficult, and long-term work of creating both small and large shifts in underlying systems and norms.

We began with a brief presentation from Dr. Sadaf Shallwani, who introduced three frames of reference to keep in mind throughout the discussions:

1. Charity, justice, solidarity. What are the values, frameworks, and principles that we want to guide us?

Charity is usually one directional – those who ‘have’ wealth and resources are the ones with the power to give – and to determine who they will give to, for what causes, and how funds can be used. It comes from good intentions, but nevertheless often involves band-aid, short-term fixes that focus on symptoms. Historically, charity often goes hand-in-hand with colonialism, coerced religious conversion, paternalism, and a sense of superiority for the giver.

Justice is all about addressing imbalances in the system and shifting power towards more equitable distribution of resources and control, and a fairer system. We recognize that there are imbalances of power and privilege, and that we are part of these imbalances. In many ways, we are complicit in and benefit from these imbalances. Working for justice means reflecting on where and how we might need to relinquish power so that it may be more equitably distributed.

Justice approaches often go hand in hand with an ethic of **solidarity** – the sense that **we are all responsible to fight injustice towards ourselves and others**. Solidarity is about being together, **united**, supporting one another. Solidarity recognizes that we can work together to effect change. **This sense of solidarity is actually more in line with the original meaning of the word ‘philanthropy’ – love of one’s fellow humanity.**





2. Individual and institutional biases and racism underpin inequitable systems.

It is impossible to change practices without first doing difficult work internally – both in ourselves and in our organizations. We risk coopting terms and practices while still perpetuating white supremacy, Global North imperialism, white saviourism, and more. You may change language and processes superficially, but underlying structural biases and barriers may continue to harm the people we seek to serve and support.




This week's recommended resources:

-  How white people conquered the nonprofit industry
-  The White-Savior Complex Industrial Complex
-  White dominant culture & something different
-  Charity vs solidarity

Firelight tools featured in discussions:

-  Designing a new initiative that supports community-driven systems change
-  Grantmaking for community-driven systems change
-  Guidelines for interactions with community-based organization grantees and their communities
-  Capacity strengthening for community-driven systems change

Recommended reading from our facilitators:

-  Localisation is not a “trend” or an “outcome” that can be achieved by outside-in actors
-  Our most powerful resources are the young people we seek to serve
-  Watch the recording of opening remarks [here](#)
Skip to **02:00** to for a brief presentation from Dr. Sadaf Shallwani

3. How do we define effectiveness, impact, and success? Who gets to define them?

How might those definitions be **subconsciously shaped by underlying mindsets**? Identifying those unconscious mindsets will help us **question and dismantle them**, and create space to build new mindsets, systems, and practices. Shifting power is also about **control over conceptualization, design, and definitions of success**.

What can you do in practice?

An experiential journey into shifting power in grantmaking

The group then split into two breakout discussions, which were not recorded. High level reflections from the rich discussions included:

Breakout Group 1: Designing an initiative

Critical questions that arose:

- Who decides problems/ opportunities/ actions/ goals/ measurements?
- Who conducts the stakeholder interviews? How can the local community be involved in the appointment of consultants? How can children be prepared to engage in the decision-making process? How can language and outreach issues be avoided?
- **Questions to be posed to the community:** What are the issues? What are the solutions? How can the project support these solutions?

Reflections from the group:

- Prior to the implementation phase, a development phase should be added to project plan to collect evidence and to give space and voice to all stakeholders, e.g., children, parents, members of the local community, etc.
 - Adding the development phase to the project plan may feel risky because the outcomes are not clear at the point of designing.
 - Funders must understand the importance of the discovery phase and have to agree to the risks that come with it.
- A sense of ownership is created when the community is involved and engaged in the design of the project.



Designing a new initiative that supports community-driven systems change

Breakout Group 2: Capacity strengthening

Critical questions that arose:

- How often do we get feedback from grantees and sit together to make decisions?
- How do we share in successes and think beyond money?
- What is the right balance to strike?
- Who gets to decide what capacity actually means and for what goal?

Reflections from the group:

- We have very corporate definitions of what capacity means in the Global North. Communities in the Global South may define capacity very differently.
- So much of this work is top-down decision making, which ignores the strengths and contributions of CBOs at all levels of project visioning, implementation and evaluation.
- It is crucial to consider communications approaches outside of our Northern habits (utilize WhatsApp in addition to email, etc.)
- Safeguarding is a big challenge. It is important to first build confidence so communities don't worry about potential undermining.
- CBOs must be involved in setting priorities.
- One way to identify where strengths are is with asset mapping.
- Trust and open communication is crucial. Organizations may be afraid that they won't get funding if they admit to having capacity needs.



Capacity strengthening for community-driven systems change

How do you capture impact in community-centered grantmaking?

Examining evaluation strategies for community-driven systems change.

In this session, we explored what donors can practically do in their own learning, evaluation and measurement practices to support community-driven systems change and discussed how funders can think differently about MEL when investing in community-centered efforts.

Key Takeaway: In community-driven systems change, the purpose of learning and evaluation is not about monitoring, judging, or evaluating the value or effectiveness of a particular CBO or assessing the number of beneficiaries reached. In community-driven systems change, learning and evaluation are about genuinely learning, reflecting, and adapting, within the security of a trust-based partnership. First and foremost, evaluations should be useful to the CBO and community so they can track their work and progress towards lasting change in ways that are meaningful to them.

We were thrilled to be joined by MEL Specialist Ronald Kimambo and Dr. Shama Dossa. Here are four key recommendations we heard from our panelists:

1. Open your mind to alternative MEL methods: Focus on processes and indicators that are relevant to community-driven systems change.



“One of the challenges we have is that we are schooled in a particular methodology or practice of doing evaluation in a certain way. It’s like a formula - this is how you do it, this is what is acceptable, and this is what the donor wants and there are no other ways to think about it... There is a different way of looking at this, and a lot of advocacy needs to happen with donors so they know that different ways of doing evaluation are as important.” - **Dr. Shama Dossa**

- Whose definition of “impact” are we using? Take the opportunity to consider alternative perspectives on change.
- Evaluations can often be viewed as a policing process rather than a learning process. There are methods that are well suited for learning, such as community asset mapping, networking and peer evaluation methods, and other participatory methods.
- As funders we need to think about how we can honor and allow for alternative knowledge construction from our grantee partners, shifting beyond methods whose primary purpose are meet fill donor objectives.

2. The process of evaluation is essential: Support community processes and indigenous knowledge and practices.

- Avoid the “tyranny of the tools,” where tools become the center of all evaluation processes. Tools are simply ways to implement the process. If we get tied to them, they cease to be effective and we risk failing to see the information that is truly meaningful. When we focus on process and use tools as a starting place, then they can be tweaked to meet the unique needs of the community.
- Nurture your partners and work to unblock potential by simplifying engagement and methodology to ensure they really work with the community. Ask yourself, “are the communities and CBOs able to use this methodology on their own?”
- Evaluations are designed to assess progress or impact so we can understand what’s working well and what we might do differently to strengthen the initiative. Done well, they teach us that lack of success, as we initially understood it, doesn’t mean failure or wrongdoing.

“The process needs to be transformative for the people involved... communities themselves should be at the center.”
- **Ronald Kimambo**



How do you capture impact in community-centered grantmaking?

Examining evaluation strategies for community-driven systems change.

3. Engage communities from the start: Co-create shared learning agendas and evaluation frameworks.

- Let communities decide what will be evaluated, as they are better placed to understand the real on-the-ground impact.
- Include community in the knowledge management processes of participatory evaluations. Consider what happens to the data that is gathered and how reports are written up. Ask yourself, “who gets to write the report? Who owns and has access to the data? Who decides what should be published and disseminated and to what audiences?” Data is powerful, so it is important to ensure that communities have access to their information and are able to own their stories.

“We are experimenting with a shared decision making structures to show that CBOs, womens funds, and donors can work together in a shared decision making model to do grantmaking. We are gathering evidence in different ways, instead of imposing requirements on grantees and telling them this is what we want from you and what success means to you, we ask them what does success mean to you and how would you like to demonstrate it? These models are gathering evidence to show that doing things differently works.” - **Dr. Shama Dossa**

4. Be open, honest, and transparent with community: Build two-way trust and open communication into all evaluation and learning processes.

“They need to trust you, because over the years they have been working with donors who will use MEL as a way to end partnerships. It takes time and you need to be consistent in what you are saying and doing.” - **Ronald Kimambo**

This week's recommended resources:

-  **Time to Decolonise Aid**
-  **Sources of Power**
-  **Levels of Participation**

Firelight tools featured in discussions:

-  **Learning and Evaluation for Community-Driven Systems Change**
-  **Watch the full session recording [here](#)**
Skip to 40:45 for the audience Q&A

- Acknowledge power dynamics exist, and work to share power authentically before and during a participatory evaluation process.
- Ensure that grantee partners know that you won't use the data and information provided against them - that these are not punitive measures - but to help us learn.
- Open up brave spaces for grantee partners, where they're allowed to challenge and question processes. Ask yourself, “do we give communities a chance to ask how we are using resources? How do we manage partnerships? Do we provide the support they require? Do we simplify enough? Are we creating dependencies?”

SHIFTING POWER IN GRANTMAKING TO IMPROVE CHILD AND YOUTH OUTCOMES

Speaker, Panelist, & Expert Biographies

Thank you to all of the incredible speakers who offered their time and expertise to this series



Dr. Sadaf Shallwani seeks to work alongside people and communities to create and use knowledge for social justice. She conducts and facilitates participatory research and knowledge generation from Global South perspectives in the areas of early childhood development, primary education, child rights, and the effectiveness of grassroots civil society. Sadaf serves as Director of Learning and Evaluation at Firelight Foundation, where she plays a key role in the organization's efforts to shift power closer to community-based organizations and their communities in Sub Saharan Africa, and fully embrace and operationalize community-driven systems change.



Zanele Sibanda has spent her career working for social and gender justice. Early in her career she worked at the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for Children where she supported evaluation of community led-economic development in four cities. Building on that work, she joined Chicago United, a racial justice organization, where she served as the Program and Policy Director. After working on the social, political, and economic empowerment of women in Zimbabwe, Zanele spent a decade advancing the rights of children and adolescent girls as the Director of Programs at Firelight Foundation. She led a grantmaking team that managed a \$15 million fund reaching over 200 grassroots organizations. In that role she transformed the foundation's funding model, accompaniment strategy, and learning approach. Most recently Zanele supported the Children's Rights and Violence Prevention Fund on a grantmaking strategy and accompaniment for partners across three countries to build girls' power. She also designed the first participatory grantmaking program at Purposeful, a feminist hub for adolescent girls. She is currently the Director of Fenomenal Funds, a feminist funder collaborative where she is leading efforts to shift power and resources to movements supporting the rights of girls, women, and LGBTQI movements.



Ghazal Keshavarzian has significant experience working in the field of child protection, women's health, conflict resolution, and human rights in the United States, Africa, Asia, Middle East, and the CEE/CIS. She has worked on women and children's health, protection and education issues as a consultant, researcher, development practitioner, and program manager. She is currently an independent consultant. Prior to consulting, she was the Director of Elevate Children Funders Group. Prior to joining ECFG she was a Senior Associate with Maestral International and independent consultant, where Ghazal supported the mapping and assessment of child protection systems, conducted evaluations of NGOs, conducted alternative care assessments, developed national alternative care guidelines for the governments of Kenya, Liberia and Nepal, and written numerous child protection policy briefs and research papers. Prior to joining Maestral, she managed the Better Care Network (BCN), a global information exchange platform on the issue of children without adequate family care. Previous to BCN, Ghazal managed child protection and maternal health programmes with a number of NGOs in Georgia and Azerbaijan as well as worked as a researcher with human rights organization. She holds a B.A. in Sociology/Anthropology from Carleton College (United States) and Masters in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University (United States).

Speaker, Panelist, & Expert Biographies

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Dr. Beatrice Matafwai is an Associate Professor at the University of Zambia in the Department of Educational Psychology, Sociology and Special Education. She was an Early Years Fellow of the World Bank from 2017-2019 where she supported Malawi and Zambia country offices working across sectors to promote investments in Early Childhood Development. She is currently serving as Early Childhood Development technical consultant for Firelight Foundation supporting community initiatives in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia. Her main research interests include; Early Childhood Development, Language and Literacy, Child Assessment, and Development disorders. She is particularly interested in strengthening the quality of Early Childhood Development and child assessment using culturally responsive approaches. Beatrice has published articles and book chapters in the area of Early Childhood Education, child assessment, and Learning Disabilities.



Michael Wessells PhD, is Professor at Columbia University in the Program on Forced Migration and Health. A long time psychosocial and child protection practitioner, he has conducted extensive research on the holistic impacts of war and political violence on children. He has worked extensively on issues of recruited children and is the author of *Child soldiers: From violence to prevention*. Currently, he is lead researcher on inter-agency, multi-country research on community-led child protection, including strengthening linkages with government-led aspects of national child protection systems. This work has included learning from girls and boys directly about their lived experiences of violence and their coping and resilience amidst adversity. He regularly advises UN agencies, governments, and donors on issues of child protection and psychosocial support, including in communities and schools.



Dr. Ramatu Bangura is leading the design and inception of the Children's Rights Innovation Fund (CRIF). Prior to CRIF, Ramatu previously served as a Program Officer for the NoVo Foundation's Advancing Adolescent Girls' Rights Initiative where she resourced work to advance the rights, leadership and safety of adolescent girls in the United States and in the Global South. Ramatu has spent the last 25 years engaging in organizing, advocacy and research on a host of issues impacting transnational girls, including early and forced marriage, sexual violence, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and educational access for English Language Learners; in the United States and Central America. Ramatu earned both a Masters of Education (EdM) and Doctorate of Education (EdD) from Teachers College, Columbia University.



Lucie Cluver is a Professor at Oxford University and at the University of Cape Town. She works closely with a superb team of partners and students. Together, they collaborate with the South African government, UNICEF, World Food Programme, UNAIDS, USAID-PEPFAR and CDC, UNDP, IAS, the World Health Organisation and Global Fund, with End Violence and other international NGOs, to provide evidence that can improve the lives of children and adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa. Professor Cluver co-leads the COVID-19 emergency child abuse prevention response, which has reached over 196 million people in 198 countries with parenting support during the pandemic www.covid19parenting.com.

SHIFTING POWER IN GRANTMAKING TO IMPROVE CHILD AND YOUTH OUTCOMES

Speaker, Panelist, & Expert Biographies

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Jones Mwalwanda is the Executive Director of the Foundation for Community Livelihood and Development (FOCOLD), a non-partisan community-based organization in Malawi striving to facilitate community systems driven change by empowering community structures to champion change. They focus on helping underprivileged children, youth, and women attain good health, education, and livelihood in rural areas. Jones holds a degree in Developmental Studies. In addition to 14 years with FOCOLD, Jones serves on different boards in Malawi, including the National Youth Council of Malawi and the Community Partnership for Relief and Development, among others.



Andreas Hipple is executive director of Better Way Foundation, a Minneapolis-based private family foundation working to strengthen the systems that nurture and support young children and their families. Andras previously served from 2011 through 2017 as a senior advisor to both Better Way and its sister foundation, GHR Foundation. At GHR, he led the Inter-Religious Action initiative, a ground-breaking effort to advance partnerships between religious actors and secular institutions in the international development and peacebuilding fields, improve the evidence base for inter-religious collaboration and strengthen social cohesion in plural societies. Before entering the philanthropic sector, he worked for an international NGO leading strategic organizational development programs for local NGOs in Nigeria, Mozambique, and elsewhere in Africa. Andreas was a Peace Corps volunteer in Benin for two years and began his career as an analyst for an investment consultancy in Minneapolis. He holds an M.A. in international relations from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a bachelor's degree in economics from Carleton College.



Ronald Kimambo works closely with his Firelight colleagues, consultants, and CBO grantee-partners in developing and implementing monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks for each of our strategic initiatives, enabling us to assess progress on organization-level, community-level, and child- and family-level outcomes that are of interest to our grantee-partners, our donors, and Firelight. Recently, he has been working with CBO grantee-partners in embracing community-driven systems change (CDSC) – an approach to development and social transformation that emphasizes the insight, leadership, and ownership of the people who are living and experiencing issues at the community level, and their work to create lasting change in the systems and root causes that underlie the critical issues they seek to address. He works with Firelight colleagues as well to operationalize organizational commitment to community-driven systems change in all systems, processes, and interactions with CBO grantee-partners. He specialized in learning and evaluation through training and practice, who brought to Firelight rich experience in designing and implementing L&E systems. Ronald came to Firelight from Aga Khan University in East Africa as a Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, before being promoted to Manager of Projects. Prior to that, Ronald worked as a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Strategic Information Manager with the African Medical and Research Foundation (now AMREF Health Africa) in the Tanzania country office. Previously, he spent several years working with the Tanzanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare as a Health Administrator cum Monitoring and Evaluation Lead for donor-funded projects implemented at South West Highlands Zonal Health Resource Centre. Ronald holds a Masters of Science in Health Monitoring and Evaluation from Jimma University - Ethiopia and a Bachelor of Public Administration in Health Services Management from Mzumbe University - Tanzania.

Speaker, Panelist, & Expert Biographies

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Jonathan Kifunda is the Founder and Executive Director of TAI and holds a Master in Project Management and a Bachelor degree in Education and started his career as a teacher. Coming from a rural village in Tanzania, Jonathan worked his way up through dedication and commitment. Jonathan has extensive experience in leading a team of professionals, develop and manage sustainable projects and managing large (inter)national grant and investment trajectories both in the NGO as Social Business sector.



Tomaida Banda is Firelight Foundation's As a Program Officer, managing their child marriage and girls' empowerment initiatives in Tanzania, Malawi, and Rwanda. Tomaida is a social worker by profession and holds a Masters Degree in Social Work from the University of Zimbabwe. She has 18 years of experience in child protection and development work, as well as in capacity building of community-based organizations. She has worked with both government and civil society. She joined Firelight from Child Protection Society (CPS), a former Firelight grantee-partner in Zimbabwe, where she served as the Executive Director. CPS is a child rights organization that works with communities to bring about change in the lives of vulnerable children and their families and focuses mainly on the reintegration of children outside family care, community-based care of children, girls empowerment, early childhood stimulation, and access to early education and development for vulnerable children. From to 2015 to 2018, she also served as the Chairperson of the Child Welfare Council of Zimbabwe, which advises the Minister of Social Services on matters relating to the welfare and well-being of children and monitors the overall situation of vulnerable children in the country.



Carolyne Ng'eny has over 14 years of experience in managing interventions aimed at social justice for disadvantaged populations – including women and girls, youth, marginalized communities, and people in low-income communities in eastern and southern Africa as well as India. Her experience spans across project and program management, capacity development, and organizational development for community-based and civil society organizations. As a Program Officer at Firelight Foundation, Carolyne manages Firelight's secondary education and early childhood development (ECD)/early learning initiatives in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia. Trained in project planning and management and a teacher by profession, Carolyne joined Firelight from Edukans Foundation. During her time at Edukans, she served as a Senior Programmes Officer in Kenya to support civil society organizations and schools to achieve Education for All (EFA) goals and to improve quality, access, retention, and transition of students in educational institutions in marginalized and disadvantaged areas.



Dr. Shama Dossa is a learning and evaluation practitioner/academic based in Pakistan. She has recently joined Fenomenal Funds as Feminist Manager Learning & Evaluation, a global feminist philanthropy initiative to support women's funds. Shama holds a PhD in Adult Learning and Community Development from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), at University of Toronto and specializes in qualitative research, particularly feminist, decolonizing, participatory and arts informed approaches. Shama has previously held several leadership positions including Director for Evaluation, Research and Learning at, Aga Khan Foundation Afghanistan; Associate Professor, Program Director in Social Development & Policy, as well as Assistant Dean at the School for Humanities and Social Sciences at Habib University in Karachi. She has worked with national women's movements in Pakistan as well as at the Asia Pacific Region with ARROW (Asia Pacific Resource and Research Center). She identifies as a Muslim Woman of Colour and a Transnational Feminist, and currently serves as Chair of the Board for Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Center one of the oldest national feminist organizations in Pakistan. She has just completed a longitudinal feminist digital ethnography titled FACT (Families and Communities in Times of COVID19) as part of a ten-country collaboration with University College London. Her most recent publication is on New Feminisms in Pakistan with a specific focus on the Aurat March which will be published in 2022 in the Routledge Handbook of Gender in South Asia.

Speaker, Panelist, & Expert Biographies

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Mark Guy is a senior program officer with GHR Foundation's Children in Families initiative. Mark supports GHR's array of partners in Cambodia and Zambia who are working collaboratively in each country to strengthen social welfare systems at local and national levels and prioritize family- and community-based care for children. In addition, Mark has served multiple terms as the Steering Committee Chair of Elevate Children Funders Group, the leading global network of funders focused exclusively on the wellbeing and rights of children and youth. He is also an active member of the Evidence for Impact Working Group within the Transforming Children's Care Global Collaborative Platform, an interagency forum with the ambition of setting collective priorities and achieving collective impacts for the children's care sector. A global development professional with over 15 years of experience, Mark previously split his time between GHR and its sister foundation, Better Way Foundation, supporting community-led Indigenous language and cultural revitalization early childhood development partnerships across seven different Native nations in the US, as well as advancing a collective of partnerships with various local non-profit organizations in Tanzania and Lesotho.



Rachel Kerry is the Executive officer of CAGES Foundation, founded by Paul and Sandra Salteri in 2009 with an objective of supporting community-led initiatives ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children reach their full potential. Rachel joined CAGES Foundation in 2011 where her responsibilities include strategic giving, partnership management, social impact measurement and overall administration and governance. Rachel has led the foundation in creating giving models which support self-determination; ensuring autonomy and power is given with funding to amplify impact. Under Rachel's leadership CAGES Foundation was a founder of the Australian Philanthropic Benchmark, a tool to measure a philanthropic foundation's performance. Rachel has been working in philanthropy and corporate-community relationships for over twenty years including corporate grant-making roles and social responsibility within the travel industry. Rachel has also spent time consulting to various non-profits around governance and establishment of strategic philanthropy programs. Rachel was a founding member of the First Nation Funders Working Group in Australia and is an active member of the International Funders for Indigenous people network where she was on the planning committee for the 2020 virtual convening.



Patrick Obonyo has more than 15 years of professional experience in philanthropy, international development, philanthropic advisory and managing large social investments across Europe, Asia and Africa. On top of his work at the IKEA Foundation, he also sits on the board of Family for Every Child, a network of 42 community-based organizations working across the world to improve Children's' wellbeing. Patrick has a Master's degree in Statistics from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and MBA from Erasmus University in Rotterdam, where he has researched on strategic change and impact optimisation in a philanthropic organisation.



Lisa Bohmer leads the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Global Early Childhood Development initiative, working in concert with government, other funders and grantee partners to improve caregiver well-being and early childhood development outcomes in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and the United States. Bohmer has more than 30 years of experience with programs, research and grantmaking in the areas of early childhood, HIV and AIDS, maternal and child health, reproductive rights, and the empowerment of women and girls. Prior to joining the Foundation, Bohmer was director of program partnerships with the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. Past positions also include HIV/AIDS director for UNICEF in Ethiopia, senior advisor to the president of the Nike Foundation, program director at the Pacific Institute for Women's Health, and Ipas' regional representative for East and Southern Africa. Her background also includes five years living and working in Ethiopia and consultancies with numerous organizations including UNFPA, the International Center for Research on Women, South Los Angeles Health Projects and the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services. Bohmer recently served as chair of the Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS, on the Executive Group for the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) and on the board of directors for Funders Concerned About AIDS. Bohmer has a master's degree in public health from UCLA.

Series Co-hosts and Organizers

Thank you to the donor networks and teams that came together to make this series possible



Firelight Foundation

Firelight is a multi-donor public charity fund that raises money from foundations, individuals and institutions to support community-based organizations (CBOs) in eastern and southern Africa. Firelight supports catalytic community-based organizations that are working with their own communities to build smart, sustainable, and potentially scalable solutions to the challenges faced by children and youth in eastern and southern Africa.



Elevate Children Funders Group

ECFG is the leading global network of funders focused exclusively on the wellbeing and rights of children and youth. We support children and youth by building a community of funders and creating spaces for: Greater learning and effectiveness in how we use our individual resources; More collaboration and alignment across our varied philanthropic strategies; Collective action for more and better funding, and support for our wider field.



Children, Youth & Family Funders Roundtable

The Children, Youth & Family Funders Roundtable is a cross-issue forum where funders can exchange information and accelerate learning on the effects of inequality and stability on children and families. The goal is to engage funders in deep strategy conversations that are cross-issue, focused on the whole family, and done in partnership with other affinity groups.



International Education Funders Group

IEFG is a member-led learning and collaborating network for foundations, donor-advised funds, and other private grantmakers. We focus on basic education in the Global South, from early childhood to secondary, formal and non-formal, youth skills, and adult literacy. We aim for grantmaking, convening, and collaborating activities to have a marked positive impact on global basic education.

Interested in continuing the conversation? [Let us know!](#)