



Building Bridges Across Sectors

**From Program Priorities and Operations in
Foundation Building Sourcebook: A
practitioners guide based upon experience
from Africa, Asia, and Latin America**
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Section 8 Building Bridges Across Sectors

This section returns to the issue of the leading role foundations can play in building bridges between civil society, government and the business sector. Some of the experiences described influenced national policy while others produced impact at the local level.

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What Roles Can Foundations Play in Building Bridges Across Sectors?

Foundations can play an important role in creating opportunities for civil society organizations to improve their communications with government and the private sector and work together on common agendas. Two common ways they build bridges between sectors are:

- Convening people working on similar issues both within and across sectors by sponsoring meetings, workshops, working groups and other fora
- Building partnerships—relationships between individuals or groups around cooperation and responsibility to achieve a mutual goal—that will result in a greater impact against a social or economic goal

Building Bridges Between Civil Society and Government

In most of the cases in this section, the foundations sought to bring government agencies at the local and national level into communication with organizations from civil society. As in many instances, government and civil society are both trying to deal with some of the same social and economic issues; collaboration can bring new ideas and proposals into the policy arena and can empower civil society organizations with new information and resources. Both sides benefit in the long run.

The examples of the two Philippine foundations show that foundations can play a role in getting independent civil society organizations a seat at the table. Some elements that facilitated their role in building bridges to government were:

- Good contacts with key influential officials who have an expressed interest in collaboration with civil society
- Programmatic flexibility to take advantage of opportunities when they arise
- A track record of accomplishments in tackling social issues
- Resources to invest in processes that involve risks and may take considerable time to bear results

Building Bridges Between Civil Society and Business

Experience shows foundations can play a critical role in reaching out to the private sector and enabling businesses and entrepreneurs to play a more effective role in tackling pressing social issues. Foundations, like the Philippine Business for Social Progress, that were created by the business sector have an advantage, of course. Other foundations without business origins face a bigger challenge in developing partnerships with that sector.

The experience of three non-corporate foundations—Esquel Ecuador Foundation (FEE), Puerto Rico Community Foundation (PRCF) and Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE)—that have engaged the corporate sector in partnerships is discussed in this section. Another case is the Children and Youth Foundation of the Philippines (CYFP), which has promoted partnerships around the needs of children and youth at both the national and local levels.

These examples show that bridges between sectors were built at many levels where they did not previously exist. These connections, in turn, leverage new resources, create new policy initiatives, and improve the sharing of information and skills. Foundations are able to take risks where other institutions, particularly government institutions, may be more constrained. The building of partnerships requires foundations' best efforts to facilitate shared objectives and purpose.

Summary Points

Foundations can play a key role in building collaboration between civil society organizations and governments. This can take place at both the national and local levels. The collaboration brings multiple benefits. First it serves to bring innovative ideas and skills into government agencies in both the design of social policy and the delivery of services to the public. Second it enables civil society organizations to access information and resources that increase their effectiveness. Third it ensures that both public and private institutions are working together towards common goals avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring maximum impact.

Foundations, particularly corporate foundations, are well placed to facilitate cooperation between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the business sector. Such cooperation can benefit civil society by bringing in additional skills and resources in areas such as financial administration, credit management and marketing. The business sector for its part benefits from the advice of the CSOs in strengthening the impact of their programs at the community level.

Board membership can be a critical factor in facilitating the building of partnerships with other sectors. Those foundations that have leading representatives of different sectors on their boards are at an advantage when building collaboration and partnerships between sectors. They can draw on a wide array of personal networks to open up opportunities and build trust and confidence.

Example 1

Enhancing Individual and Corporate Social Responsibility
Esquel Ecuador Foundation

The Esquel Ecuador Foundation (FEE) has brought together government, business and civil society leaders to discuss major concerns facing the nation and jointly craft solutions in a number of areas. One major challenge it identified was the need to encourage greater social responsibility by wealthy individuals and corporations in the face of increasing poverty and social unrest.

As a first step in addressing this problem FEE commissioned research to identify existing patterns of philanthropic giving. This resulted in the publication in 1998 of a study on corporate social responsibility in Ecuador.⁶⁴ Esquel then convened a major national conference to share this information with heads of corporations, opinion leaders, the press and academics. International experts also attended to share the experience of other Latin American countries in promoting social responsibility and philanthropy. These activities resulted in the design of a National Program for Social Responsibility. The program is described as follows:

The main objective of this National Program for Social Responsibility is to strengthen the practice of social responsibility in Ecuador. Social responsibility is defined as non-paternalistic efforts to promote lasting change in the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment for all Ecuadorians. This focus is designed to have an impact on social and economic development in Ecuador through increased funding from the private sector to projects carried out by NGOs, projects carried out by businesses themselves and corporate policies which improve living and working conditions for workers, their families and the community.⁶⁵

This program's three sub-objectives are described as follows:

1. Promote social responsibility through incentives and public awareness campaigns in order to increase the number of businesses and business leaders who understand the issue and put into practice social responsibility actions.
2. Facilitate the practice of social responsibility by:
 - offering technical assistance and training to businesses and business leaders which allows them to improve the quality, reach and impact of their social responsibility activities
 - offering training to NGOs, which improves their ability to raise local funding
 - creating links between the nonprofit and business sectors so as to increase collaboration between the sectors for specific development projects
3. Disseminate the topic of social responsibility broadly among Ecuadorian society, but with special emphasis on the business community through collaboration with the media, publications and the creation of a Resource Center on Social Responsibility.⁶⁶

Towards these objectives, FEE has proposed a broad range of activities to reach out to wealthy individuals and businesses.

Program Activities

Promote Social Responsibility

- A National Award for Social Responsibility
- Introduce the Theme of Social Responsibility to Business Schools
- National Campaign of Social Responsibility

Facilitate the Practice of Social Responsibility

- Creation of Local Committees
- Technical Assistance and Training
- Technical Assistance and training for NGOs
- Opportunities to Offer Time and Talent
- Seed Capital Fund for Joint Esquel/Private Sector Projects

Disseminate the topic of social Responsibility and Serve as a Source of Information

- Publish a Book on Social Responsibility
- Media Coverage of Social Responsibility
- Bulletin on Social Responsibility
- Development of a Resource Center
- Support the Creation of a Corporate Grantmakers Association⁶⁷

A number of actions have already been taken to develop the national program. The book on Social Responsibility has been published and a national meeting of corporate foundations and corporate giving programs was held in 1998. It resulted in a joint plan of action to strengthen and increase corporate philanthropy through corporate foundations. Working groups were created to develop: 1) capacity-building programs and proposals for the reform of the legal and tax environment relating to the nonprofit sector, 2) programs to increase public awareness of the role of the nonprofit sector, and 3) opportunities for individual social responsibility.

The research and convening completed to date has increased FEE's recognition as a major actor in promoting increased social responsibility in Ecuador. The plan of action will ultimately involve the creation of partnerships between corporate and non-corporate foundations and social responsibility programs and lead to more effective grantmaking programs to address societal needs.

Example 2

A Multi-Sectoral Commission to Reform Middle School Education
Puerto Rico Community Foundation

Over its 14-year history, the Puerto Rico Community Foundation (PRCF) has brought together the corporate, government and civil society sectors a number of times to tackle social and economic problems facing Puerto Rico. One approach used successfully has been the creation of broad-based commissions that bring together representatives of different sectors of the community to focus their skills and resources on developing new strategies for addressing specific problems.

An example is the role PRCF played in promoting the Middle School Renewal Initiative through the work of the Commission on Adolescent Education, which it created in 1992. This Commission, made up of eleven experienced educators, was charged with developing recommendations on how to meet the education needs of young people between the ages of eleven and fifteen. As described in the tenth Annual Report of PRCF:

The in-depth analysis carried out by the Commission led to the conclusion that the task is much more complex than initially supposed and it encompassed a much broader range of community sectors than originally believed.

The concept of the New Middle School requires for its successful implementation the joining of efforts by official agencies, teachers, school administrators, students, parents, neighbors, the business community and many others. It also requires looking at all components of the learning process; curriculum, organization, methodology, environment and others. From these early conclusions, the Middle School Renewal Initiative, a program endowed with its own staff and resources, emerged in 1994.⁶⁸

Starting in 1994 the program initially focussed on raising the quality of education in eight pilot schools. The program has expanded since then to fifteen schools. It has also developed a radio program for youth and runs workshops in conflict resolution and self esteem.

Example 3

Fostering Partnerships for Sustainable Development
Foundation for the Philippine Environment

The Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE) was created as a result of a partnership between the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Philippine government, Philippine NGOs and NGOs from the United States. As the first chair of the Foundation, Fulgencio Factoran stated in the first progress report of the Foundation:

FPE was organized with the understanding that it will establish new partnerships—partnerships that stretch across all sectors of society.⁶⁹

The Foundation is guided by the principle that the most effective results are to be achieved by pooling resources and expertise with other non-governmental organizations, government agencies and academic institutions concerned with the same mission. In the words of Fr. Francis B. Lucas, the Chair of the Board:

FPE has been a key force in fostering partnerships for the environment which focus on enabling communities to be proactive and capable agents of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. FPE has:

- brought academic and technical experts to the grassroots
- provided leadership in the discussion of sustainable development, filled critical gaps in the implementation of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development
- built linkages with and among governmental, non-governmental, private and international institutions
- stands as the only funding mechanism that provides direct and simple access to NGOs and people's organizations (POs) to enable them to engage in micro-level projects for the environment⁷⁰

This commitment to building partnerships was incorporated as one of four institutional goals in the Foundation's strategic plan. The specific goal is:

To encourage international and local cooperation between and among communities, NGOs/POs, business groups, and governments toward the development of policies and effective programs for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.⁷¹

Two specific objectives were to support “national and regional mechanisms for GO/NGO/PO [governmental organizations/non-governmental organizations and people's organizations] partnership in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development effort” and “formal collaborative programs among NGOs, key government agencies and business organizations to influence the setting of policies related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.” One specific activity included in the strategic plan was to “fund or support working groups to join efforts with government agencies that would coordinate project initiatives and directions and support policy research and advocacy in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.”⁷²

An area where this policy is being implemented is in the Foundation's efforts to bring together NGOs, communities, the corporate sector and both federal and provincial governments to develop joint programs for environmental protected area

management. One example is the progress achieved in the Mount Matutung Protected Area in South Cotabato in the southern Philippines. FPE and partner NGOs helped to create a protected area management board that has been working to mobilize the support and resources of all stakeholders. This board has put together a management plan for the protection and development of a major watershed with the participation of indigenous community leaders, people's organizations, NGOs and local and central government representatives. The board also obtained the support of a multinational corporation managing fruit plantations to commit to reforesting part of a critical watershed.

As part of their role in the partnership, the local authority agreed to fund capacity building of their staff in the area of environmental management.

FPE's efforts to build cooperation are strengthened by a grantmaking program that supports projects at the community level that directly engage community members in sustainable resource management activities.

The experience of FPE shows the challenge of bringing all stakeholders around a common issue such as protected area management when there are inherent conflicts of interest. It has been easier to get agreement and support at the level of the national Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources than it has been to obtain agreement at the local level. FPE has found that building partnerships at the local level has to be promoted and facilitated by skilled local partners supported by the Foundation.

At the national level, Board members, senior staff members and former senior staff members promote greater awareness of environmental issues across sectors through their own personal networks. For example, a Catholic Bishop on the Board has access to religious and business leaders through the Bishop Businessmen's Conference, and another Board member is one of the owners of the largest television network in the country and provides links to the mass media. The latter has been able to increase the coverage of the environment on national television networks. The former executive director of FPE is now an advisor to the President and other former staff members hold senior roles in the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. This facilitates the bridging role FPE can play between civil society organizations and the government.

Example 4

Exercising A Leadership Role In Partnership Building
Children And Youth Foundation Of The Philippines

The Children and Youth Foundation of the Philippines (CYFP), in less than ten years, has played a leadership role at both the national level and in selected communities where it has partner NGOs.

Building Alliances at the National Level

At the national level, for example, CYFP has played a central role in the development of a new partnership initiative to tackle the problem of out-of school

youth. Because of its experience making grants to innovative programs with children and youth, CYFP was approached by the World Bank to spearhead a new multi-stakeholder initiative to develop programs for out-of school youth (a total of 11 million children between the ages of seven and 24 are not in school and not working).

A Technical Working Committee (TWC)⁷³ comprising CYFP, World Bank, government, business and NGOs, developed a program framework. Background research, including consultations with out-of-school youth and an inventory of relevant programs in eight geographic regions, has helped the TWC identify needs and sharpen program priorities and responsibilities.

The program focuses on skills training, employment creation and support for young entrepreneurs aged 15 through 24, and initiatives to keep children (from 7-14 years) in school. Support will be channeled through NGOs. The CYFP through the Chair of the Board, who is the Chair of one the largest corporations in the Philippines, is mobilizing support from the business community to support skills training and loans for microenterprises. The World Bank is committed to providing US\$1 million as seed money for the pilot stage of the program, to be followed by a \$5 million loan from the Learning and Innovation Fund.⁷⁴

This initiative illustrates how a foundation, such as CYFP, with a proven record in sound programming, efficient financial management and respected leadership can play a central role in designing and implementing a program to leverage resources from businesses, the government and a multilateral lending institution. It was able to play this role in large part because of its good links to the corporate sector and government through the Chair of its Board, Jaime Augusto Zobel.

Building Alliances at the Community Level

In implementing its grant program to prevent child abuse and exploitation, CYFP discovered that one major constraint was the lack of coordination between service providers and law enforcement agencies at the community level. CYFP staff realized the efforts of their partner NGOs could be more effective if all agencies worked in a concerted way towards the same goal. One approach CYFP has taken to achieve this has been to take the initiative in convening both private and governmental agencies to meet and discuss the needs of children and youth and identify ways of working more effectively together to respond to the needs of children and youth.

For example, as part of its program on the prevention of child abuse and exploitation, CYFP program specialists working in one province convened the Police Department, the Social Welfare and Development Department, the Jail Administration, the Prosecutor, NGOs (including CYFP partners) and community organizations (including religious groups) at the local authority level to design a concerted effort to prevent child abuse and respond promptly and effectively when cases of abuse arise. By facilitating this effort, the Foundation helped each organization see where it could be more effective and how, by working closely together, they could create a more supportive environment for children and youth.

This initiative resulted in the creation of a permanent coordination mechanism at the provincial level that meets on a regular basis to review progress.

This type of inter-sectoral partnership around a specific issue can be very effective in releasing new energy and ideas at the community level. It shows clearly the enormous value the Foundation can add by a judicious use of its bridging skills. The potential value of this type of technical assistance far and away exceeds the value of the CYFP's grants to organizations in the locality.

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- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ The TWC operated under the guidance of a steering committee comprising CYFP (Chair of the Board), the parent foundations (Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation and the IYF), the government (the Vice President) and the World Bank.
- ⁷⁴ Discussion with Fely Rixhon, Executive Director, CYFP, February 1999.