

Global Giving

The Traveling Giving Circle to Kenya



Photo credit: Erica Hintergardt and Aman Ramrakha

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Is there a role for small foundations in the realm of global philanthropy? I answer a resounding yes!

I'm proud to be among the growing number of ASF members involved in international grantmaking. Like many of my colleagues, my interest was inspired by overseas travel. On trips to Central America, India, and Africa, I witnessed conditions of extreme poverty that affected me deeply. I saw fellow human beings without access to basic nutrition, clean water, or sanitation. I saw children the same age as my daughter rummaging barefoot through garbage dumps and others gravely ill from preventable and treatable illnesses.

Yet despite the suffering, I saw reasons for hope. I met the leaders of small grassroots organizations who were powerful forces for change in their communities. Through my contact with these remarkable people, I came to understand the power of small grants and the crucial role of small foundations.

Small Grants, Significant Impact

Over the last decade, there has been tremendous growth in the number of community-based grassroots organizations worldwide. Their leaders are some of the most dedicated and entrepreneurial people you'll ever meet, with passion and creativity that enables them to take action in seemingly impossible circumstances. Their organizations may not yet have the capacity for larger grants, but they have strong ties with their communities and an intimate understanding of the problems and prospective solutions.

When small foundations connect with effective community-based projects, comparatively small grants can have immense impact. In fact, we have an extraordinarily important void to fill. Unlike larger institutions that tend to fund established organizations or broader initiatives, we have the flexibility to make targeted investments in small but innovative efforts.

The Traveling Giving Circle to Kenya

A group of small foundation leaders and donors from the United States and Germany recently took part in a Traveling Giving Circle to Kenya (TGCK), offered by The Clarence Foundation, International Child Resource Institute – Africa, and Falconer Group. Giving circles are part of a growing movement to pool funds and make grants together. TGCK was among the first giving circles to make grants on the ground in a developing country.

Several ASF members participated, including Weldon Mikulik and Francine Fleming of Journey Charitable Foundation, Libby Cornett of The DanPaul Foundation, Kate and Darell Schregardus of Schregardus Family Fund, and Jane Stamstad of I. A. O'Shaughnessy Foundation. Some of us brought our children, allowing them to learn about giving while forming bonds that transcended economic and cultural differences.

We traveled to the Kenyan capital of Nairobi where 60% of the population resides on 5% of the land – the slums. In the slum areas of Mathare

and Huruma, we visited six local grassroots organizations working with vulnerable children and families. We observed their work first-hand and talked with their leaders about the greatest needs and how to best support their work. We decided as a group how to give away our pooled funds, and in the end, made \$32,000 in grants to six grassroots organizations, ranging from \$2,500–\$10,500.

Our grants will educate children, help women start small enterprises through a revolving loan fund, provide in-home care to people with AIDS, and enable at-risk youth to replace arms and drug trafficking with soccer and school work. Hundreds of lives will be impacted from the grants, and we also built trust with visionary and entrepreneurial people who live and work in the slums. Our goal was not only to support great projects, but also to invest in local people who could become advocates for long-term change in their communities and their country.

We hoped that TGCK participants would be deeply touched by the experience. And we were. That's the

amazing thing about being involved in international grantmaking – it's highly addictive. Once you experience the impact of comparatively small grants, it's almost impossible to stop.

Getting Started

Getting started in international grantmaking is less complicated than you might think. Changes after September 11, 2001 have contributed to an unfortunate impression that international grantmaking is too complicated or time consuming for a small foundation. But this is not the case. You'll find strong support networks for cross-border philanthropy and many U.S.-based international grantmaking intermediaries (with a U.S. 501(c)(3) designation) that make global grantmaking convenient, while still allowing for personal connections to the outcomes of giving overseas.

Give international grantmaking a try. I assure you that "going global" will be one of your most inspiring and rewarding experiences as a grantmaker.

Marc Ross Manashil may be reached at 510-384-7188 or marc@theclarencelfoundation.org. Ask him about the next Traveling Giving Circle to Kenya in spring 2008 and other global giving opportunities nationwide.

Holli Rivera, ASF Director of Outreach, also participated in the Traveling Giving Circle to Kenya. We encourage you to contact her with questions at 202-580-6564, or to express interest in ASF exploring similar opportunities for our members and their next generations.

Using U.S.-Based Intermediaries to Make Grants Overseas

Intermediaries are U.S.-based nonprofits that specialize in international philanthropy. They can make funding overseas as simple as making a grant here at home, and although there may be additional programmatic or administrative costs, ASF members find the knowledge base, experience, and services to be well worth it.

In general, intermediaries offer these services to donors:

- Advice about options for having an impact abroad
- Knowledge and expertise on geographical and/or program areas
- Networks of vetted grantees abroad
- Re-granting services which allow donors to make tax deductible grants without the research, due diligence, and paperwork involved in granting directly abroad
- Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of work funded

ASF's online Professional Directory (www.smallfoundations.org) features a sampling of international intermediaries; more can be found on the United States International Grantmaking site (www.usig.org).

Additional Resources

Colleague to Colleague Guide, Association of Small Foundations. Find fellow members who are knowledgeable about international grantmaking and ready to share their insights with you. www.smallfoundations.org.

International Grantmaking: Opportunities for Small Foundations, Association of Small Foundations. In this ASF Primer, learn about the options and basic rules for giving abroad. www.smallfoundations.org.

Grantmakers Without Borders, a unique funders network committed to increasing strategic and compassionate funding for international social change. Find tools, resources, and opportunities to learn with fellow funders. www.gwob.net.