

BACKGROUND

On October 27-28, 2014 a convening of 22 people was held at Pocantico, Rockefeller Brothers Fund's retreat center in New York. The purpose of the meeting was to bring a diverse group of experts and leaders with a strong track record of support and knowledge of Palestinian civil society together to explore the broader needs of the Palestinian NGO sector in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Gaza, and Israel, and to help shape a vision for the creation of a new independent US-based international fund that would support Palestinian community based organizations.¹

Shepherded by Terry Greenblatt and Moukhtar Kocache, who helped conceptualize the initiative and led dozens of conversations with experts in preparation for it,² the meeting received support from Rockefeller Brothers Fund, The Open Society Foundations, Middle East Children's Alliance and the Global Fund for Community Foundations. Barry Knight facilitated the meeting.

The organisers of the convening distributed a framing paper to meeting invitees. This described what a fund for Palestine might do and how it might be organised. Participants were surveyed on the paper's two main assumptions. All respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that "there is a critical need to mobilise resources in support of Palestinian small- to mid-sized organisations and initiatives working at the community level." There was evident broad but more conditional support for the second assumption — that the creation of a temporary "basket" fund could serve as an effective means of mobilising additional international funding to support the above, and that these funds could be effectively used for both direct grant-making and in strengthening Palestinian/regional grant-makers and infrastructure. Participants were individually and collectively thirsty for a safe and generative environment among caring colleagues to explore the possibility of a new and very different kind of fund.

PURPOSES, PRINCIPLES & VALUES

An important dimension of the convening was to bring forth a diversity of ideas and perspectives on the essential vision and values that would help define the scope and work of a new fund. A recurring theme during the conversations was that ideally, philosophy, mission and mechanism should be consistent and indivisible in the creation of a new support structure for Palestinian communities; one that would stand out from existing international aid structures and would help set precedence in terms of community participation and decision making processes. What follows is a brief summary of the philosophical and political conversations that emerged at the retreat and that participants hoped might help to position the Fund.

1. Annex: List of Attendees

2. Annex: Summary of Testimonies and Conversations with Key Experts and Leaders.

Communities:

- Knowledge about the needs of communities resides within the communities themselves.
- It is important to consider that communities may not just be geographically or territorially determined but may also coalesce around particular issues, values and concerns. They can consist of communities of practice, and may also be transitional and temporary in character.
- The geographically-rooted nature of community is at the core of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination in the face of historic and ongoing systematic displacement and dispossession, division and fragmentation of the Palestinian community.
- Communities tend to be sources of social cohesion, protection, safety and wellness. They tend to also be generative spaces for the formation of values, norms and world-views.
- Communities, however, are not always an anchor of safety and identity, but can also be limiting and coercive in nature to innovation, difference and alternative ideas, as well as a source of oppression and violence.

Philosophy:

- The Fund should aspire to a spirit of radical inclusivity and openness.
- Commit to engage with communities in a consultative process that would also help develop a bottom up multi-stakeholder model of participation and contribution.
- Attempt to model an alternative way of working that challenges and transforms power dynamics, exclusivity and inequities.
- Trust should be at the heart of the Fund's relationships with donors and communities.
- Cull knowledge from communities, local NGOs and Palestinian service infrastructure.
- Address the disconnect between decision makers and communities.
- Aim to connect Palestinian communities together to counter fragmentation and isolation.
- The Fund should exist to serve.
- Strive to build community assets including through volunteerism, co-investment and local philanthropic giving.

Mission:

- To strengthen the resilience of Palestinian communities to achieve human, social and political participation, transformation and self-determination.
- To catalyze use of Palestinian expertise and creativity in terms of human and financial resources for the safeguarding and advancement of communities' social fabric, assets and capital.
- Strive for mobilized and dignified communities that are empowered to resist hegemonic power and are actively engaged in defining, managing and owning their issues and priorities.
- To foster stronger Palestinian communities, especially those marginalized and overlooked, to lead their own development efforts and determine their own models of responsibility, accountability and transparency.
- Help mobilize and access untapped liberal international philanthropic resources that enable Palestinian communities to unlock and activate knowledge, grassroots power and communication in ways which help transform, rather than reinforce, inequitable power relations within and between communities.

THE FUND'S VALUE ADDED

- There is a significant vacuum in a liberal and progressive effort for resource mobilisation to Palestinian community based organisations especially in the US, and secondly in Europe and BRIC countries.
- These are timely and fertile conditions to experiment with new models of resource mobilisation and community engaged funding, as well as collective participation among international funders, Diaspora philanthropists, local NGOs, philanthropies and communities.
- The fund can inspire an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to participate in an unprecedented shared action.
- The Fund offers US and international donors a mechanism to safely participate and give to Palestinian communities.
- It can offer a mechanism of giving that does not require multi-year commitment.
- Can take programmatic mediated risks at a local level that individual funders and foundations may be unable to take.
- Can help inspire a new type of engagement by donors and community-groups alike who are demoralised by post-Oslo policies, infrastructure and current reality.
- Help generate new knowledge and practices for both local communities and the international philanthropic sector. It can serve as an outlet for the sharing of new knowledge and unusual but critical conversations between diverse stakeholders.

POSSIBLE MECHANISMS

Participants at the convening generated an exciting set of ideas for the type of mechanisms (support/grant-making/investments) the Fund should consider. It was however clear that the mechanisms of intervention will need to be in fact generated in great part from the community members and groups that are working on the ground and whom the Fund is meant to serve. As much as possible, the Fund seeks to advance mechanisms that allow communities to identify, prioritise and determine their areas of work and agenda. In most instances, participants were advocating that the Fund allow for two or three mechanisms to be simultaneously available. Themes or areas of work would also be formulated with community actors on the ground. What follows is a summary of key mechanisms that were discussed as potentially appropriate for the Fund and worthy of further exploration.

- 1. Small to Medium Size Grants:** Traditional project and capacity building/technical assistance grants ranging from \$15K to \$50K
- 2. Urgent / Quick Response Support:** Support to organisations that can be processed quickly and nimbly to respond to an urgent or exceptional opportunity or need. Ranging from \$1K to \$5K
- 3. Community Grant Making:** Funds made available to communities for grant funds that are decided upon by the community according to established and clear guidelines, procedures and oversight.
- 4. Collaborative Grant Making:** The Fund raises capital and partners with a consortium of existing local infrastructure/local Palestinian philanthropic institutions to expand and advance a more community-oriented type of support.
- 5. Clearinghouse / Matchmaking:** The Fund could establish with various community groups clear, transparent and open processes to serve as a clearinghouse for their projects, and help match funders/donors according to their interests and best fit with community's ideas.
- 6. Crowdsourcing:** The Fund could explore adding a dimension of crowd-funding to some of its activities (themes, projects, CBOs, grantees...) to allow for a diverse, wider and democratic participation by a broader constituency.

POSSIBLE RESOURCES

Participants at the convening explored possible sources of both financial and non-financial support for the Fund. Below is a summary of the key results of their collective brainstorming.

CATEGORIES	FINANCIAL	KNOWLEDGE / NETWORKING
International Private Foundations	X	
International NGOs	X	X
Family Foundations	X	
Individual Donors (Palestinian Diaspora, Liberal Jewish, ...)	X	
Bi-Lateral Donors	X	X
Funder Affinity Groups (International Human Rights Funders, Peace & Security Funding Group, Community Funding Groups,...)	X	X
Crowdsourcing / Social Media	X	X
Philanthropy Service Networks (Foundation Center, European Foundation Center, WINGS, ...)		X
Private Sector-Corporate Giving	X	
Progressive Religious Giving	X	
Think Tanks — Policy Networks		X
Academic/Educational	X	X
Friends of/Champions/ Public Intellectuals	X	X
Community-based Businesses & Assets (volunteers, organizations, committees...)	X	X

CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

How can we intentionally, transparently and responsibly build knowledge through a participatory process with community leaders, Palestinian service organisations and philanthropic infrastructure and international partners?

How do we balance fast, simple and edgy funding mechanisms with a community-driven and determined funding process that may be slower, energy consuming and not easily explainable to funders and donors? This is also an opportunity to strive for an optimal new model that tries to fulfil both requirements as much as possible.

How do we streamline, reconcile and finalise the Fund's mission and mechanisms?

How can we develop a coherent and distilled theory of change that does not reinforce the status quo and advance communication and dialogue between Donors, NGOs and CBOs on an equal footing?

Can we imagine a creative donor partnership between those who are on the ground and new international supporters of the Fund to advance new shared and layered mechanisms to support Palestinian community work?

Will the Fund be open at some point to Palestinian communities in the Middle East who are settled outside of Palestine and Israel?

NEXT STEPS

Participants at the convening discussed and agreed on a set of next steps that would help advance the process forward.

1. There was unanimous desire by all participants to provide support for the identified next steps.
2. All four funders of the convening agreed to consider further support to help advance the initiative's next steps.
3. A working group was created to help review the convening report and help advance next steps.³
4. The following organisations agreed to share relevant information related to community-based grant making efforts and programs, case studies, as well as profiles of important and successful community-based organisations and structures: NGO Development Centre (NDC), Shatil, Welfare Association, Dalia Foundation, Middle East Children's Alliance, Naseej and Qattan Foundation.

3. The working group consists of: Ziad Abbas, Hania Aswad, Rula Dajani, Barbara Ibrahim, Ghassan Kasabreh, Sharry Lapp, Ariadne Papagapitos and the two organizers Terry Greenblatt and Moukhtar Kocache

Discussed activities in the coming six months to help advance the CPCF included:

1. Explore appropriate opportunities to write opinion pieces, blog articles and make presentations about the Fund at specialised fora and professional circles.
2. Carry out a series of consultations and brainstorming sessions with Palestinian community leaders and experts in Palestine and Israel.
3. Make a presentation and/or a round-table conversation in Europe to European foundations and agencies that might help support the Fund.
4. Develop and activate the Fund's "friends of" group.
5. Research and document details related to legal, security and fiduciary matters for the Fund.

As is the case with all materials resulting from meetings held at The Pocantico Center, the views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, its trustees, or its staff.

ANNEX I: List of Pocantico Convening Attendees

**ANNEX II: CPC FUND: Summary of Testimonies and Conversations
with Key Experts and Leaders**

Haki Abazi, Director Balkans Program, Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Ziad Abbas, Deputy Director, Middle East Children's Alliance

Anan Ameri, Founder and former Director, ACCESS/Arab American National Museum;
Independent Advisor

Hania Aswad, Director, Naseej Foundation

Nadia Ben-Youssef, US Representative, Adalah Legal Center for Minority Arab
Rights in Israel

Joel Campagna, Senior Program Officer, Open Society Foundations Arab Regional
Office Amman

Terry Greenblatt, Independent Advisor; former Executive Director, Urgent Action Fund
for Women's Human Rights

Rula Dajani, US/EU Advisor, Welfare Association

Christopher Harris, Philanthropy Advisor; former Senior Program Officer for Global
Philanthropy, Ford Foundation

Nadia Hijab, Trustee, Qattan Foundation; Co-Founder and former Executive Director,
Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network

Jenny Hodgson, Executive Director, Global Fund for Community Foundations

Barbara Ibrahim, Founding Director, Gerhart Center for Philanthropy & Civic
Engagement, American University in Cairo

Ghassan Kasabreh, Director, NGO Development Center

Barry Knight, Facilitator

Moukhtar Kocache, Independent Philanthropy & Civil Society Advisor

Atallah Kuttab, Founder, SAANED Growing Arab Philanthropy; former Executive
Director, Welfare Association; Board Member, Arab Human Rights Fund

Sharry Lapp, Community development expert

Barbara Lubin, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Middle East Children's Alliance

Fathi Marshood, Director, Shatil Haifa

Nora Lester Murad, Independent Consultant

Ariadne Papagapitos, Director of Peace-Building Program, Rockefeller Brothers
Foundation

Nadia Saah, Director of Strategic Engagement, Institute for Middle East Understanding

INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the convening on October 27-28 to discuss and plan for the creation of the CPC Fund, we were keenly aware that many of those who could contribute to our discussions would not be able to attend the meeting. We thus reached out to a diverse, albeit small, group of people with a long history of working in Palestinian communities, for their wisdom and insight in the form of informal “testimonies” or reflections. These testimonies were meant to be a brief response (no more than 2 to 3 pages) to the CPC Fund draft concept note for the initiative. In addition to the draft concept note, which provided a sense of the basic assumptions and arguments informing the initiative, a short set of questions was developed to help guide and structure testimonies. Contributors were also encouraged to address any other issues and raise additional questions that they felt were important for the success of the initiative. Of the 17 individuals invited to provide testimonials, we received 10 responses.¹ A similar set of questions was given to participants to the convening in the form of an on-line survey. Those responses informed the development of the meeting agenda and are referred to in the convening summary.

In addition, we held a series of informal discussions in person, over Skype/phone and via email with others active in the field to test our assumptions and glean their advice. Their feedback has also been incorporated into this document as appropriate.²

We would like to thank all those who contributed. We have done our best to accurately reflect the contributions of all those who have been part of the conversation. Commentary from testimonials is presented as received; only very minor grammatical, typographical and formatting revisions have been made to ensure ease of reading. Every attempt has been made to preserve intended meaning. Having said this, we take full responsibility for any shortcomings in this regard and welcome any comments from contributors should they feel that their contributions have not been clearly presented. This summary is a working document intended to enrich discussions during and beyond the convening.

As such it is designed to encourage questions rather than provide answers; to open conversations rather than close them.

1. Testimonials were received from: Omar Al-Qattan, Ziad Khalaf, Emma Playfair, Rema Hammami, Majeda al-Saqqah, Nora Lester Murad, Serene Huleileh, Rina Rosenberg Jabareen, Aaron Back, and Tafeeda Jarbawi.

2. Informal discussions/consultations with the following individuals are incorporated into this document: Sam Bahour, Judy Blanc, Shadia Sbeit, Jabir Asaqla, Areen Hawari, Rauda Morcos, Aida Touma, and Brad Smith.

OVERVIEW OF CONTRIBUTOR BACKGROUNDS

Contributors come from a wide range of professions (including lawyers, artists and cultural managers, directors and founders of civil society organisations, grantmakers, teachers, researchers, academics, and business persons) and are active or were formerly active in a diversity of sectors (including human rights, women's rights, arts and culture, community organizing, youth, community development, community and social justice philanthropy, education and more). They have focused their work on a broad set of actions including resource mobilization, organizational development, human resource development, cultural management, research, education, grantmaking, advocacy, amongst others). All contributors have been actively involved in working with Palestinian organizations and communities in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip and/or inside Israel, and a number have also been active regionally and internationally.

The feedback presented below is organized in line with four guiding questions.³ While we have occasionally done some organization of commentary by theme in hopes of capturing emerging areas of concern and making the document easier to read, we have not "weeded out" feedback; nor have we combined or synthesized feedback from different individuals. Each contributor's words/ideas are presented on their own and as given to us.

3. In general, specific names of individuals or organizations have not been included in this summary unless they are accompanied by an explanation or description which provides an example or model that contributors seek to elucidate. This is to avoid any unintentional "shortlisting." Similarly, we have not included a list of the names community organizations or initiatives named under Question 4 as providing examples of mission and work that is "valuable and inspirational" unless contributors provide description and analysis which demonstrates the characteristics which are their source of value and inspiration. Most contributors suggested specific organizations in response to this question.

QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

Question 1

Do you agree or disagree with the assumption that there is a critical need to mobilize resources in support of Palestinian small to mid-sized organizations and initiatives working at the community level? If you agree, are there specific conditions which would need to be met for your agreement to hold? If you disagree, could you formulate a modified/alternative assumption to which you would agree?

Are there any other assumptions implicit or explicit in this document about which you would like to comment?

RESPONSES

All contributors (testimonials and discussions) agreed with this assumption. A few respondents included elaborations, reservations or conditions to their agreement:

“There is dire need to create this fund to support the civil society, which under the current political and socioeconomic volatility has a major role to play in alleviating the suffering of people, supporting their steadfastness while preserving their dignity and culture.”

“I think that there is no need to limit it to small and mid-sized organizations.”

“I agree, but it’s important to understand that there are two sides to the lack of access to resources for small NGOs:

A. Funding structures: most funders are increasingly geared to large grants and institutions; funding requirements include things like history; size of institution, outreach, and impact; complex application and/or reporting mechanisms. Many INGOs expect local NGOs to cut and paste from their RFPs when they develop proposals.

B. Smaller NGOs’ often limited capacities to raise/access funds: issues of fear of funders; lack of awareness/confidence in possibilities for donor flexibility, negotiating terms of funding and influencing funders’ agendas; absence of transparency; absence of experience in developing proposals and sense they need to mold their activities to funders’ agendas rather than the reverse; language (both literal and figurative) challenges.”

“..Insufficiency of resources is not our main problem, it is the way they are made available and utilized. That said, there is an insufficiency of resources being made available in a constructive way.”

“I agree with the overall basic assumptions in the documents, small and mid-sized organizations and initiatives are definitely in need of types of support that can give them a leg-up or provide them with some level of stability and autonomy. The current highly technical, top-down nature of donor funding architecture for Palestine marginalizes CBO’s and local initiatives altogether or tends to set up parasitic relationships — larger NGOs that speak donor language (and can deal with their ever-increasing reporting requirements) funnel money (or more exactly programming) to smaller local organizations. It’s a very unhealthy relationship in which larger NGOs are the conduits and having to meet donor agendas (or keep themselves going) tend to simply use smaller local organizations to give their programs a “grassroots edge”. In the process, there is little ability of the local organizations to set their own agendas or priorities, not much is built locally as they become dependent on whatever is on offer to them. I just did a survey on youth across the oPt — and for instance in terms of local youth and cultural centers at the community level — it became clear that although physical infrastructure existed (though of poor quality) there was little programming or content happening. Other surveys (by Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, for instance) have shown that there are simply no ongoing budgets and thus no staff to run these centers.

Question 2

Could the creation of a temporary “basket” fund serve as an effective means of mobilizing additional international funders/funding in support of the above; these funds could effectively be used for both direct grant-making and for strengthening existing and emerging Palestinian and regional grant-making organizations and infrastructure? If you agree, are there specific conditions which would need to be met for your agreement to hold? If you disagree, could you formulate a modified/alternative assumption to which you would agree?

RESPONSES

While most respondents agreed, at least in part, responses to the second assumption elicited more commentary and included several questions.

“I also agree that the creation of a ‘basket’ fund could serve as an effective means of mobilizing additional international funders/funding in support of the above. A ‘basket’ fund has two special advantages at this time. Firstly, in a complex situation like that in the West Bank and Gaza and for Palestinian communities in Israel, donors find it difficult to be well-informed about individual initiatives, both to inform their grant making and to monitor the grants they make, unless they have representatives frequently on the ground.

Secondly, criticism of US foundations who support Palestinian organizations has, and in the future will, deter funders who may have wished to do so. I am acutely aware that support for Palestinians has fallen sharply in recent years while being more needed than ever. A number of donors have reduced or ceased support to initiatives in Palestine. This affects the smaller organisations more adversely than the larger ones.

I further agree that these funds could be used for both direct grant-making and for strengthening existing and emerging Palestinian and regional grant-making organizations and infrastructure. I believe that support for Arab philanthropy for social justice is especially important, and that the 'basket' fund can provide a vehicle for such individual philanthropists to channel their giving in well-informed ways."

"I also agree that the proposed Fund could strengthen existing and emerging Palestinian and regional grant-making organizations and infrastructure, as well as mobilizing additional international funders. Given the tragic situation sweeping the region, a concerted effort to mobilize additional international funders (individual and institutional) and reverse the shifting of funding is prudent."

The term "basket fund" was not understood by at least one respondent.

"Not clear enough to me what is meant by a "basket" fund or how it would be used to mobilize other funders."

Several raised questions about limited duration proposed for the Fund:

"I also agree but why limit it to a temporary basket. As I understand the term, a basket fund is pooled funds of several donors, the grants of which will be managed by one organization. I think that there is no need to conceive of the fund as a temporary bridge. This is a unique US-based initiative, which is very important in the short and the long-term. The only other comparable initiative that I know of is the HR & IHL [Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law] Secretariat, which is a pooled funds secretariat of 5 or 6 governmental donors. This mechanism is very document heavy and bureaucratic. It replaces the few larger Palestinian grantmaking organisations."

"I do not automatically see anything good about anything temporary, so this would need to be explained to me."

A number of fundamental conditions for the proposed Fund's value/success were raised, which were relevant to both assumptions:

"I agree with both these statements but would stress that consultation with local, grassroots organizations is essential for the fund's success, as well as the involvement of representative or official bodies such as ministries, municipalities, education inspectorates, unions and so on, while stressing the need for a democratic, egalitarian and non-party political framework as a prerequisite for involvement in this initiative. I also believe that these funds should be used to create autonomous professional and community networks to help share know-how, resources and funding."

"If not done carefully and with clear, transparent engagement of three parties (funder, organization and community itself) from A to Z, including development and management of budget and clear ongoing monitoring mechanisms jointly developed and agreed, and ongoing space for flexibility to respond to changing situations on the ground, there's a real danger of encouraging corruption and causing more damage than good. If basic principles are followed, a lot can be done with very little money."

"[The Fund needs a] clear mechanism in place for selection of beneficiaries and for the grant cycle management including its impact (KPIs articulation); agreeing on regulations to ensure impartiality, transparency, independence and accountability."

"CPCF should avoid sources of funding with strings attached, especially governmental funding. US sources, both individual and institutional, should be the main targets to garner funding for CPCF. It is high time that the American Arab community, specifically the Palestinian community, in the US play a leading role in supporting the establishment of CPCF."

"As for what conditions would need to be met to make this a good proposition, I would say: The process of decision-making over funding and the implementation of the funding would need to support Palestinian self-determination, promote accountability to the Palestinian community, and challenge traditional funding modalities in many ways, including by mobilizing Palestinian resources — not undermining them. If those conditions are met (or actively aspired to), this could be great."

I think it's critical that any new funds advance the philanthropic landscape, which is already tenuous, rather than harming it. By that I mean that existing philanthropic organizations should not be made to fight over money, and that new funds should be received in trust for the Palestinian people."

“I think the issue of capacity building is critical — this is one of the reasons these initiatives and organizations are marginalized. However, dominant capacity building frameworks are part of the problem rather than the solution. Capacity building that simply leads to the type of skills that fit the current professional NGO frameworks (that garner donor support) is like spreading a disease. Or capacity building in the context of the parasitical relationship — between larger NGOs and local organizations — is usually empty of useful content for the local organization – but links more to the needs of the former. So capacity building has to be rethought as a concept for carefully addressing the question – what context specific skills and personnel do local initiatives/ organizations need to really develop their own agendas and be effective in their communities?”

Question 3

What would you propose as a useful working definition of a community-based organization for the CPC Fund? (Or an alternative term or set of terms that would make more sense for the CPC Fund to use?)

RESPONSES

This question drew a diversity of thoughtful responses, suggesting that the term community-based organization is used and understood in multiple ways. Some contributors felt it critical to adopt a particular understanding of the term “community-based organization,” others raised questions about the utility of confining the fund to a particular type of organization rather than focusing on how the organization works and/or what it does. Responses reflected a complex funding scene in Palestine and the multiple ways this has affected working in/with community(s).

“A Palestinian organization based in Israel, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza that is working with and on behalf of Palestinian communities.

I understand ‘a community-based organization’ to be a non-profit civil society entity operating within a community, predominantly driven by members of that community, whose activities serve the human needs of that community in a range of areas, including health, education, development, human rights and so forth.”

“Why do you need to define type of organization that will be funded beyond small and medium-sized? Why CBOs? Why grassroots? Why not just support good, collective ideas, rooted in and coming from the community? Focus on the nature of the actors/action to be supported: work in community by those from/close to community.”

“It is self-defined. However, you may wish to specify the size of the targeted CBOs (budget and staff number). To do that you need to strategize the percentage of CBOs you wish to support which requires setting a base line in the current list along with their current sizes. It goes without saying that the CBOs should have a proven track record to be eligible for support. Sector of support needs to be agreed upon as well.”

“A non-profit entity that is representative of a community, or a significant portion of it, that works to meet the needs of the community.”

“CBOs could be either public or private. Within the Palestinian context, public CBOs are those attached to political parties/movements.”

“A formal or informal structure or group created by a group of individuals within a geographic, professional or ‘ideological’ community to achieve a goal through a specific project, preferably with a beginning and an end. By ‘ideological community’ I mean people who just happen to share the same ideas and view points and get together to achieve a specific social, economic, legal or cultural goal.”

“Definition of a community based organization: Groups that are making the community stronger from the inside — more fully human, more democratic, more educated and aware, and less fragmented.”

“There are too many distortions in Palestine to answer this question easily. One issue is around building on existing initiatives rather than causing new ones to be created (money chasers) and ensuring that all funded initiatives are accountable to the local community. Another issue is around the way “capacity” is too often defined to exclude grassroots groups who may have great capacity to reach communities, but not to produce financial reports and narratives in English. Another issue is around anti-terrorism policies and the importance of not allowing them to divide Palestinians, foment conflict, and not allowing foreign policy agendas to dictate Palestinian relationships. This is HUGE!”

“I have been involved in different forms of “community-based” initiatives in Palestine and Jordan, and have cooperated with many others in Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia in particular. It is difficult to really define what it is, and it is also important to differentiate between those initiatives with a “community and social development” perspective and those with an “artistic” perspective, in addition to those that try to combine both. In my experience, the main aspect of community-based initiatives that make them both averse to and avoided by funders is the fact that they are informal, volunteer based, and

often do not — and cannot — comply with the “standard” management practices required of NGOs to receive funding. In Palestine in particular, and due to the unlimited amount of funds that is being poured on the big NGOs as well as the private sector, the civil society has gained a bad reputation of being “too well fed” or “greedy” or “opportunistic”. Many new youth initiatives are starting with the premise and insistence that they do not want to receive any funding because they strongly believe money is dirty. It is difficult in this context to clarify that there are different kinds of “money” and that it is not necessarily dirty per se. Having said that, I have not been able to find any positive example to convince them otherwise!

In the past 24 years I have raised funds and managed different types of funders, and I have never had to adapt my agenda to suit any funder: in general, we never apply for funding before we have tried the idea/project that we would like funded. We start with no money, or very limited resources, with collaborations, and once we have tried and tested the approach and find agreement amongst the partners that this is the way forward, we apply for funding. I feel that this is the best way to really maintain independence and connection to the community (nothing is designed from the top, and we don’t need to please any funder, and when we have administrative requirements from the funder we take care of it on the management side without involving the people we work with.) However, there is always the pressure of administrative and financial requirements that are never fully covered by the funding. For example, I have been working on a voluntary basis with an organization since 2006, and even though we include staff and administrative costs in our budgets, they cannot exceed a certain percentage, and I always have to dedicate a lot of time to reporting and managing the grant(s), time that would have been better spent working on the ground or writing/documenting/reflecting on our work. I am sure other organizations face the same problem, but the way they might deal with it is to get more funding for projects that they may not necessarily want to implement but that can cover the additional salary costs. We haven’t done that and it puts a strain on the volunteers from the board.”

“I don’t have a definition, but I think one needs to make sure that one includes village, camp or urban community level organizations — i.e. ones that have developed locally and tend to have only a local constituency — they may be networked nationally but they are primarily rooted in their local context. So this would include local youth, culture, women’s or charitable society centers. But along with this one needs to keep in mind what you’re calling “initiatives” — organizing forms that are more fluid, voluntary or semi-voluntary and that can often have an identity that is more politically activist — or where the boundary between social and political blur. Here I would be talking about something like

the popular committees in area C — whose activities encompass active non-violent resistance to the occupation, human rights and relief work, development, women’s empowerment and cultural initiatives all rolled into one — since all of these become necessities in order to resist the occupation as a community.”

Question 4

- A. In your opinion, what are the most salient challenges and opportunities in funding Palestinian community-based organizations in Palestine and Israel?
- B. What do you know about how community-based organizations are currently funded that we should know in order to ensure successful development of this initiative?
- C. What do you think are the 3-5 areas or themes of community level work, which most urgently need funding?
- D. Can you give examples of 3-5 community organizations or initiatives whose mission and work you find valuable and inspirational?

RESPONSES

4A. CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges and opportunities noted loosely responded to three areas of concern:

CONTEXTS

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION, FUNDERS, AND FUNDING

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES AND CAPACITIES

CONTEXTS

Military occupation, “with all its manifestations! Oppression, subjugation, siege, fragmentation, immobility, death, trauma” was noted by contributors, sometimes explicitly but more often implicitly (embedded in feedback throughout their responses) as a fundamental and framing challenge. Other contextual challenges related to national, regional and international politics, including:

“Cynicism, fragmentation, political disenchantment, a growing individualism that is limited to short-term economic gain rather than inspired by a collective drive to emancipation, increasing dependence on tribal or family connections for survival...these could be seen as opportunities as well.”

“A culture of dependency. Depression. Economic distortion caused by international aid. Corruption by/of the Palestinian Authority. Poor coordination/cooperation within civil society.”

“Civil society organizations currently face a lot of challenges and they play a critical role in empowering Palestinian society to stay steadfast.”

“A dysfunctional political system that is financed, to an extent, by parties that are not in concert with the aspirations of the Palestinian society. Regional turmoil that has put the Palestinian issue on the back burner and shifted funding to more “critical” areas.”

“One specific challenge you need to anticipate will be to deal with external criticism of grantee organisations and their funders. At the extreme, this can lead to questions about whether groups are supporting activities seen as anti-Israel or condoning ‘terrorism’. This can be a strong deterrent to investors in the fund. Since criticism of grantees is frequently based on statements or activities described on their websites, donors and the Fund itself will need to include the review of grantee websites and their editorial policies as part of the up-front due diligence and monitoring process. This is increasingly true of all of philanthropy in the digital age, but especially in a region where there are sharp divisions and conflict.”

“Political and social changes in the US make constituencies more receptive to Palestinian human rights.”

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION, FUNDERS & FUNDING

“Finding ways for those who do not currently fund in this arena to care enough about the issue or feel that their support can make a difference. Exposing the potential funders to the community leaders is one important asset in moving forward. So, too, would be a vision that showed a blueprint for how the new donors would be used, in part, to help initiate a process to mobilize sustainable long term funding from within the community.”

“The pull-out of several donors from the region, especially for Palestinian organizations in Israel; Israel is an OECD country & thus should not receive development funds; due to the European financial crisis, a huge decrease in available funds; very targeted, directed donor funding, mostly for very narrowly-defined projects threatens the ability of organizations to respond creatively & urgently to emergencies.”

“Salient challenges include giving in a way that strengthens capacity, avoids dependence, strengthens cooperation and avoids duplication.”

“Opportunities are to strengthen civil society at a critical time, building resources that can enable all parts of the community to play a role in their society’s future.”

“Another challenge you will face is to have the means on the ground to identify and monitor grantees, and follow their interactions with their local communities, in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip and inside Israel. With the constraints in moving around I do not believe that this can be done at a distance, however well informed you are.”

“From a donor perspective the challenges have always been about the ability of local level organizations and initiatives to meet the reporting, admin and other requirements that ensure transparency and financial oversight. The systems that currently exist to do this are beyond the capacity of local organizations (and increasingly take up immense amounts of time and personnel among organizations that do have that infrastructure). Those types of requirements have over time radically re-structured the way that NGOs in Palestine work (or are now forced to work). The challenge is to find an oversight framework that meets basic needs of transparency on both sides without it becoming a logic of work and activities in and of itself --- which sad to say is the overall tendency that has happened in the NGO sector in Palestine.”

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CAPACITY

“Availability and sustainability of funds, capacity (staff competencies), good governance, and culture of working alone (need to change into appreciating partnerships).”

“Loss of professional and high potential staff usually due to irregular funding/ sustained long-term programs, interruptions in cumulative experience.”

“Long history of work of CBOs in community building, readiness to learn, dire need, availability of credible NGOs to build the capacity of the CBOs, documented impact and success stories, and availability of research literature on the subject.”

“Palestinian organizations have more experience with donor/donor-requirements so that they can better conceptualize programs and projects; younger generations have more computer/social network skills and can better articulate new agendas.”

RESPONSES

4B. CRITICAL INFORMATION ON COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Contributors provided a range of information on community organizations, often specific to their geographic area of operations (WB, GS, inside Israel). These are again presented in the loosely emerging areas of concern related to context, resource mobilization and funders, and organizational capacities and cultures.

CONTEXTS

In Gaza: “In 2007, most of the smaller NGOs in Gaza were shut down. In the past two years, many of them are reactivating — especially those that were licensed. After the latest aggression, some are reactivating as volunteers and so far they are not being stopped. There is a possibility for smaller NGOs in Gaza to make a comeback in the current conditions.

Of course, we should also be very aware that the latest war also rescued INGOs working in Gaza who had been facing significant cuts in funding. In a situation of chronic emergency, like Gaza, priority needs are changing all the time and must be constantly (weekly) reviewed with community. It’s important to remember that most organizational leaders working at the community level are not themselves regularly “on the ground” because of organizational demands, so it’s always critical to ask the people in the community.”

“The situation on the streets for Palestinians is scary and disgusting. Racism is condoned and goes unchallenged. My neighbors don’t speak Arabic in the streets of Haifa and Tel Aviv. My kids (12 and 16) won’t speak Hebrew anymore.”

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION, FUNDERS & FUNDING

“As I know, many organizations receive most of their funds from European organizations, and these funds are project-oriented. Organizations need to diversify their donors to include US supporters & grants should be mostly for general support.”

“All of the funding comes from abroad — the largest percentage from Europe. This reality is unsustainable, does not build the requisite and desirable links between the NGOs and the communities, and leaves the NGOs at the mercy of funding shifts or political exigencies from abroad. I think, increasingly, attention must be paid, and support provided, to help the organizations develop strategies to raise local funds.”

“In general, funding to CBOs is irregular. Hence, sustainability is a major challenge. Accurate data is not readily available, but there exists a multitude of funding sources. Some CBOs receive support from public institutions

(ministries). Such support is usually very limited and is directed at one-off short-term projects or activities. A good number of CBOs depend on funding from international governmental bodies and INGOs. Arab funding sources are also available. However, most are not strategic and focus on infrastructure. Although limited in numbers and resources, Palestinian funding sources have been fairly effective. It is also important to note that some private sector enterprises have instituted CSR programs. Much more is needed on this front. A tax exemption scheme will induce further private sector and individual donations to CBOs.

Given the civil society regulatory framework in Palestine (there are indications that the regulatory framework is about to become more restrictive), it is advisable to work with legally registered CBOs.”

“The international aid system has devastated civil society. Any initiative that doesn’t actively challenge this and its affects will cause further harm. This includes the traditional call for proposals process, traditional M&E reporting, and so much more.”

“[Funding for community-based organizations is] usually funneled through larger professional NGOs. They lose agency, cannot do consistent activities that meet their own community needs but simply grab what comes to them.”

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CAPACITY

“They apply for funds from governmental, NGO and private sectors; high competition over very limited resources; fragmented in efforts and work; they are huge in number; many collapse within few years after initiation; most follow the agenda of the donor; no appreciation for coordination/cooperation and partnership; insecure; and low capacity (poor practices, poor governance, poor fundraising and management skills.”)

“Gaza has a relatively good regulatory framework to ensure NGO accountability, if followed.”

RESPONSES

4C. THEMES/AREA FOR COMMUNITY LEVEL WORK MOST URGENTLY NEEDING FUNDING

Contributors suggested a wide range of themes or areas most urgently needing funding. Urgent sectoral priorities identified included:

arts and culture; education, environment; food security; health; human rights; legal support; media/social media & technology; services, rights and empowerment

of persons with disabilities; women's economic rights and empowerment, gender equality; youth, youth development, youth leadership, youth empowerment, sports;

Contributors also noted certain strategies or issues as requiring urgent funding:

fighting the rising racism and institutional discrimination

fostering political and institutional power and influence

mobilising schools, colleges, libraries, and clubs, etc.

religious/secular divide

any popular and peaceful resistance to the occupation and structural discrimination

social change strategy

local/diaspora/corporate resource mobilization

cooperative work among civil society groups

accountability to communities

Several contributors elaborated on the areas they prioritized.

"Arts and culture are particularly important where identity is constantly in question and as a means of communication in all these areas."

"I think we need to look at society's most vulnerable groups — groups that have become forgotten in the last decade or so as society and the political situation have evolved in generally negative directions. I am thinking particularly of isolated communities, including the maimed and bereaved, as well as refugees, the handicapped, children, women, youth, farmers and Bedouin communities in the Naqab/Negev. We should also be careful to look for groups that have not only suffered from the blatant and obvious Israeli oppression, but those who may have been crushed within their own communities by political and/or social leadership(s)."

"The south of Gaza needs attention — despite all the funders and resources, no one gets to the south."

"What to fund now: groups challenging and resisting the militarization of the society, the culture, the language, the street, education, etc.; groups raising consciousness and educating society and children about the real history of this land. How can we end conflict if the majority of Jews think that I and my village are fiction? Bedouin women."

"Definitely youth initiatives and youth centers. In the survey I mentioned the main initiatives that somewhat functioned were sports — predominantly for male youth. There was little or nothing for females, and little or nothing outside of sports — which youth also said were poorly run and equipped."

"Area C popular committees work — (south Hebron hills, Jordan Valley, Bi'ilin, Ni'ilin etc.). Hugely important models of community activism — with very

patchy funding. Some individual activists get support from the PA, and while community voluntarism is at the heart of these, its actually mostly Israeli human rights organizations that are supporting the communities (through legal help primarily). But few if any have received the kind of support this initiative could give them — instead they rely on personal donations or Israeli human rights organizations and to a lesser extent services provided by Palestinian NGOs (for instance Medical Relief mobile clinics).”

A few questions were raised about adopting a pre-determined sectoral or thematic focus or what areas of work that were perceived as excluded in the current articulation of the concept note.

“There’s lots of funding out there for emergency and psychosocial and such. Why limit to one sector or another — create processes to let communities tell you. When we support youth initiatives, for example, we don’t choose how to support community initiatives — we remain flexible to respond to ideas that come, while at same time ensuring that critical discussions are had about what makes sense, what would work, and what to prioritize.”

“Is CPC funding civil rights but not human rights? If so, why?”

“Human rights and legal centers are noticeably absent from the list of organizations that will be funded, as are political rights.”

“What does it mean that the fund would support “communities which are creative” (my emphasis) in their approach to social change?”

Question 5

A. What would this initiative need to do (or how would it need to be shaped) in order for you to passionately throw your energies into supporting it and making it happen?

B. What major challenges, risks or pitfalls do you foresee for this initiative and what advice would you offer to ensure we avoid them?

RESPONSES

5A. “BOTTOM LINES” FOR PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

“Bottom lines” or fundamental principles or features that contributors’ viewed as essential to their engagement with the initiative and/or its success emerged throughout testimonies and discussions. Those listed here are only those raised in relation to this question; a broader understanding of the answer to this question should include a full look at responses to other questions.

“A committed fund leadership that is also dedicated to promoting human rights.”

“A serious consultation process with experienced NGOs.”

“Commitment to follow-up and accountability in support of shared goals for community, based on full participation and mutual responsibility of three parties as described elsewhere. Diligent and rigorous commitment to developing relevant, simple yet effective mechanisms for joint monitoring.”

“Register ASAP and get 501c status and tap US funding sources including the Arab American community.”

“It needs to marshal serious resources in the USA. The model you are proposing is great but without major US donor support it will not fly.”

“Respect Palestinians’ right to control their own development resources; do social change work on transactional grants for projects.”

“Those who represent the fund should be informed by a deep understanding of community work (not just financial background), mentally clever and flexible, able to develop and support creative solutions and positive in their approach and outlook.”

“An important lesson that comes from the past and the contemporary popular committee experience is to provide support for voluntarism or semi-voluntary activism and activities. NGO work has increasingly become a professional career in Palestine (not due to people’s choice but to the whole political economy of the country and the architecture of donor funding within it). And while it may seem like a contradiction in terms — volunteerism does depend to some degree on financial resources (to organize it in ways that it can be most effective). I would be happy to support any initiative that feeds into promoting and supporting a practice and ethic of volunteerism in Palestine.”

RESPONSES

5B. CRITICAL CHALLENGES & ADVICE

Contributors listed a number of additional challenges and recommendations to those noted in response to previous questions. They fell predominantly into issues related to resource mobilization and explorations of funding principles, processes, models and modalities and are grouped as such below.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

“Challenges: I think that in order to succeed the fund needs high-profile, experienced fundraising leadership who can appeal to US donors in general

& Palestinian/Arab donors in particular. I think that is it very important to learn from the experience of the Arab Human Rights Fund.”

“A major challenge is to find new funders who care enough about the issues. I think that European foundations are already largely committed. Progressive Jewish donors are already mobilized in large measure by fundraising efforts by US Jewish funds. And non-Jewish US donors do not have this community as their priority.”

“Avoid funding sources with strings attached. A president of a US foundation that is active in Palestine recently told me that many individual and institutional funders refrain from donating to Palestine due to the ‘high risk’ and ‘headaches’ that may come with it. This is probably due to the political environment and the regulatory frameworks in the US. Expert opinion on how to alleviate such concerns should be sought.”

“You will need to persuade Palestinians that an American initiative like this has nothing to do with the Embassy or with USAID; that you do not expect anyone to jump into bed with an Israeli group in order to qualify for funding; and that you will not contractually impose the Patriot Act on anyone. So how you present the fund will be critical. I cannot over-emphasize this point. Perhaps a very salient involvement of Arab-Americans or Palestinian-Americans is the answer?”

“If you are based in the US, you will have to deal with the Patriot Act, OFAC regulations and nonprofit equivalency. There is no way around them and organizations and people can risk a lot if they fail to abide by these laws and regulations. For US-based organizations to give money to nonprofit organizations abroad, they need to establish 501-(c)(3) equivalency to make sure that the nonprofit law in the US can be applied to any organizations receiving funds. Otherwise giving them tax deductible, US raised funds can be a problem. Big foundations do this internally. Many foundations use law firms to produce these equivalencies which charge exorbitant amounts or try and do them in bulk and with other foundations. There are new service organizations in the US that are beginning to provide equivalency services at a reasonable cost.”

“Having a complicated and time consuming community involvement and management process could be a deal breaker for many funders because they like to know what they are giving to in advance. It will also be a lot of work and energy in terms of operation. Try to find ways to streamline the operation and use an advisory board of community leaders that vet and follow the process and grants. “Do not complicate things for funders and avoid creating a mammoth process.”

The way the fund and its mechanisms is designed will be directly related to the level of risk involved.

Be squeaky clean on procedures and administration of finances. The fund will be vulnerable at those levels. Some funders risk being targeted for giving funds to grassroots organizations without proper oversight.”

PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES; MODELS AND MODALITIES

“Risks: Heavy bureaucratic paper process, too many conditions, requirements for a small amount of money.

Pitfalls: Why is the fund NOT supporting Israeli organizations that work on behalf of Palestinian communities, some with Palestinian staff?”

“One possibility is for the CPC fund to be a “matching fund”: i.e. provide the equivalent of what the group can raise through community contributions as well as in-kind support. This will mean that the group is either sustainable to begin with, or will be encouraged to develop sustainability from the outset by using local resources. What’s more, the funding will hinge on “community support” for the initiative which can be proven through the in-kind and financial support that the community provides.

One clarification regarding management modalities: most community-based initiatives are built around informal management structures that often revolve around an individual or a group of individuals. They cannot be asked to “institutionalize” early on and create an “organization” that is detached from the people who founded it. This process takes time and purposeful commitment, and cannot be expedited. There is no doubt also that management structures and methods are closely connected to the “personalities” who are in charge. This is not a negative characteristic in my opinion, what makes it negative is when a management style that is contradictory to the character of the manager and/or organization and/or age of the organization is imposed. Giving community-based initiatives the opportunity and the possibility to derive from their experience (and learn from other relevant experiences) how to best structure their work to be democratic, inclusive, and transparent (without using ready-made structures) would be a great contribution that the CPC can give to those initiatives.”

“I would like to suggest one alternative model of intervention to consider. Instead of approaching this as a new fund, why not create a stateside “marketing and fundraising clearinghouse” for existing funds’ projects? This would require defining this thrust’s interest (i.e. community and/or creative (albeit I’m not sure what that word means in this context other than focus on culture and arts) and using the links and resources available to you all to

fundraise for other fund's projects. This would require very little if any infrastructure, per se, assuming the existing local funds are already embedded in the community and projects would arrive pre-vetted. The match making between donors and existing fund's projects would be its goal. For this to work, a clear criteria of what's fundable becomes crucial, but the upside is that such a direct connection has a lot of added value for the local efforts moving forward, assuming they have the capacity to nurture such relationships.

The sensitivity that motivates me to think out of the box here is that creating something "new" seems so burdensome today given the plethora of activities already on the ground with established infrastructure, staff, credibility, etc."

"Flexibility is crucial. Applications and report templates should be simple and feel respectful.

Funders' questions are usually grounded in a lack of trust of the groups they are funding. Since they can't come right out and say that, they search for the "perfect" questions that will allay their fears and decrease their "risk". Grantees perceive and resent that the funder/grantee relationship does not start from a neutral place of mutual trust.

If you can't trust, you aren't ready to fund. Michael Jordan quote: "Keep throwing the ball". He has thrown over 3 million balls in his career and only less than 1% made the basket. But that less than 1% was enough to make him a champion. Funders have to just keep funding and be satisfied with the less than 1% success — if that. We are not asking for charity. We're asking for a mutually respectful relationship: civil society has the responsibility to do their work well and with integrity, and funders have the responsibility to fund well and with integrity. The limitations imposed by profound mistrust means that funders will miss the successful baskets.

Money is not a solution for everything; but in many situations it is really the only piece that is missing. If a group needs \$40,000 and you give them \$10,000 and tell them to raise the other \$30,000, they will use the \$10 to raise the same \$40 they needed at the beginning. Funders have to increase their "risk" factor.

Funders should ask themselves and be ready to test 2 important questions: Can we increase the impact by increasing the "up front" investment? How are we as funds served by keeping groups dependent upon us?

Off-putting, naïve and unrealistic language to use: self-sustainable / self-generating.

Foundations are there to "build foundations" — of organizations, groups, networks, businesses, schools — filling the gaps where there is no state. Do not

forget that Gaza is different. Do not think that you can apply the same guidelines to Gaza as the rest. NO Israeli organization should get money to send to WB/Gaza; it must go directly so that they benefit from capacity building/overhead percentage of funds.

Corruption is everywhere/not only here. It is a given.”

“Making funds quick, flexible and accessible does not mean they should be EASY to access. Absence of follow-up and clear ways to maintain accountability lead to corruption. So does depending on personal networks and relationships. Some well-meaning funders who want to overcome the traditional barriers to funding for small organizations by making funding simple to access, are unintentionally encouraging corruption due to the absence of monitoring. ...even though their intentions are really good, funders who don't follow up get a reputation as easy to get money from without any responsibility or accountability; i.e., you can do whatever you want with the money. You really need to proactively avoid this. I'm not saying we should punish those who do good work by restrictive demands or treating people with suspicion or patronizingly or as if they are inherently corrupt. Rather, it's about building accountability through engaging community instead of relying solely on personal or political ties; it's about building responsibility for effective use of community money for community. Focusing on building accountability to community rather than funders is foundational and more effective in ensuring accountability/responsibility in all directions.

There are easy ways to maintain monitoring and this kind of accountability/responsibility effectively without taking too much time or getting unnecessarily complex or reinforcing unequal power relations – open budgeting processes, jointly developing budgets and work plans, and monitoring and reporting for both finances and activities which make sense, using videos and photographing strategically while maintaining individuals' dignity. Participation from A-Z with FULL information (transparency) builds ownership and accountability. Regular monitoring can be simple, straightforward and less time consuming than one-off efforts and also ensure that actions/activities are responsive to changes on the ground and the always volatile situation. It's easy once you get over the first step and the resistance that comes from people not being used to working in this way. Once youth or other community groups are used to working this way, they will demand full involvement from organizations and their funders.

Donor meetings where all of our key funders come together and learn about our work directly from community groups we work with have served as an incredibly powerful mechanism for us in this regard.

Another important thing to remember — the absence of monitoring and transparency also runs a high risk of creating or consolidating hierarchical power relations in communities.”

“There is a positive example of a funder -- in spirit, rather than in the specific and sometimes complex monitoring procedures. All processes for implementation and monitoring are agreed and developed jointly in advance and in relation to each particular grant. Based on discussions, the fund develops simple forms to be filled for a simple action plan — a short half page matrix; and monitoring and reporting forms based on agreed mechanisms like dated photographs used to document progress; meeting minutes as documentation of discussion and agreement of major changes; etc. and any changes in implementation are then reported as you go along. These processes make it easy to ensure the essential ‘triangle of actors’ (funder, association and people of a given community) are all involved in process from start to finish.”

“I find that many groups, sometimes without even being aware of it, have internalized the funders’ lexicon and agenda. That then distances them from the community, and forces the community to self-censor itself. You can read funders’ websites about Pal/Jewish projects or groups that don’t mention the occupation, discrimination, second-class citizenship or racism — but talk about a democratic Israel.

No funders want to fund 2 Executive Directors (Jewish and Palestinian). But the strength of the joint organizations is co-leadership at the top where the power is.

Since high school I have been an activist. I have worked at the institutional, local and regional levels and can say that we have made some important gains. But at the state/national level we still don’t have a foot in any door. There are no partners who are willing to support the position that the country can’t be democratic and Jewish at the same time.”

“Funders have been pushing the large and the small organizations to work in coalitions. They tell us that it is administratively and financially cost-effective to fund this way. But civil society coalitions are not built around a pot of money, rather built on shared goals and visions. So everyone comes to the table to be able to draw from the pot of money and then fail. This model of funding also locks out the small grassroots organizations and the next generation groups with their fresh ideas and passions.

They are also always pushing us to “professionalize” our work. TA assistance is about managing budgets, writing better reports, working within a SMART framework. So we now have some organizations that have professional staff that are not really connected to the issues the organization is working on, who write great reports, but are no better at organizing in the community. The activism is lost.

Be careful of how you define “capacity building”. Yes, of course, we need overhead and salary funding as well as project money. But the largest investment should be in human capacity.”

“[Inside Israel] the Fund should consider only organizations recognized by the Rasham Ha’amutot (non-profit state authority inside Israel). It is important to our organization that we maintain our good standing with the government authorities. It keeps us (and others) clean and honest.

Some funders are pushing us to be like a pretzel to fit into their agenda, and the decision becomes to take the money and do a project somehow related to what we really wanted to do but can’t find funding for, or to say no and not have resources to do anything.”

“Page 3 of the concept note identifies 3 types of grants. I think that the designated amounts are too low. I would suggest:

- small grants should be \$10,000-\$15,000 for immediate needs and strategic interventions;
 - project grants should be \$30,000-\$50,000 to initiate or support projects; and
 - program & development grants should be \$50,000-\$75,000 to sustain and advance innovative programs and community-based initiatives.”
-

“If Palestinian communities in Israel are a constituency to be served we have to clearly delineate between those in WB/EJ/Gaza working towards building a state and those in Israel working to ensure that there is a state for all its people = equality (in non-explosive language of course).”

“There might be one main constraint: such initiatives in Palestine are usually led by politically conscious young people who feel strongly against any kind of “normalization” with Israel or the Israelis, and against any kind of American government funding. The fact that the CPC Fund is based in the US and is an American initiative might be the first drawback. The second is that this fund is targeting Palestinians and Israelis, unless the latter are clearly the Palestinians living inside Israel. [Editor’s note: This is, indeed the case: The Fund is targeting its support for Palestinians and Palestinian communities only.]”

“In addition to the issue of “normalization” I think there are certain conditions for this support to succeed:

It should be open and based on trust in the initiative itself and the young people managing it.

The reporting requirements need to be simple and straightforward.

The sources of funding for the CPC Fund need to be transparent and not involved in any “normalization” activities.

The fund needs to differentiate between “artistic” organizations and “community-development” organizations because their methods and modalities differ.

The fund also needs to be clearly focused on small-scale initiatives and not put them in competition with the bigger NGOs (it would be unfair competition).

The Arabic language is extremely important in such an initiative, and it needs to be the main language used for proposals, reporting, and communication. Most small community-based initiatives are led by people who are not fluent in English, and even if they are, they cannot write well enough for reports and proposals. This has meant a monopoly of organizations that have on their staff or board someone who speaks and writes English well enough to submit proposals and it also means that those people (the ones who can speak and write good English) can monopolize project development and funder relations. I believe this is a trap the CPC needs to avoid.”

“If there is money, the initiative will go, but the short- and long-term impact on Palestinian civil society may be negative. How to avoid this? Don’t compromise on basic commitments to Palestinian rights. It’s not about representation but accountability (in other words, having Palestinians involved doesn’t make everything they do okay.)”

6. Any other comments, suggestions or issues you’d like to share with us?

SUMMARY

Expressions of support and appreciation for the initiative were widespread and many contributors also expressed explicit willingness to lend their support to its development and implementation. Two specific comments in this regard included:

“I was excited to hear about this proposed ‘basket’ fund and am happy to write a testimony in its support. The initiative is very timely and could be invaluable. Nearly seventy years after many Palestinians were displaced from their lands on the creation of Israel, and after 47 years of occupation a permanent resolution is still elusive. The recent formation of a unified Palestinian government gives some hope for continued peace talks. In the meantime, non-governmental initiatives play an immensely important role in fulfilling the needs of the Palestinian community.”

“The Palestine wide scope of the initiative is welcome. It’s a great idea BUT be careful!”

Other comments from this section were included in relevant sections above.