

Modelling progressive funding

Online, 18 January 2023

Introduction

In the civil society sector, progressive funding is becoming an increasingly prominent topic. But what does it mean to fund civil society programmes and organisations in a "progressive" way? What are the challenges that face funders working to pursue progressive models of civil society support? And what models would we like new funders, including those based in the global South, to emulate and build upon?

To discuss these questions, INTRAC brought together four experienced funders and practitioners on 18 January 2023. Our online event on modelling progressive funding attracted over 170 participants from around the world. They listened to short talks from our speakers, submitted questions for a Q&A, and joined breakout groups to discuss the issues themselves. This event summary captures some key points from these activities, and contains links to the full event recording and a playlist of highlight videos.

Event agenda

- Welcome and opening remarks from Charles Kojo Vandyck, member of INTRAC's board of trustees
- Four brief talks from:
 - Esther Meester
 - Luizde Guinmaraes
 - Sarah Rose
 - Janet Mawiyoo
- Q&A session with questions from attendees for the panel
- Breakout for discussion in groups
- Summary and closing remarks from Kate Newman, INTRAC Chief Executive

Speakers and hosts



Esther Meester
(Wilde Ganzen)



Luize Guimaraes
(MUVA)



Sarah Rose (USAID)



Janet Mawiyoo
(Galvanize Africa
Consult Ltd.)



Charles Kojo Vandyck
(WACSI / INTRAC)
Host and introduction



Kate Newman
(INTRAC)
Closing statements



[Click to watch the full event recording](#)

[Click for a playlist of highlight videos](#)

Welcome and opening remarks

Charles Kojo Vandyck welcomed everyone to the session, and introduced its goals:

- To explore the types of funding that are already emerging in different contexts and which which are changing the financing environment;
- To identify existing practices that enable locally led development and which other funders could adapt, adopt and expand upon;
- To determine how the best and most equitable forms of funding can be supported;
- To identify what is the role of funders in supporting and enabling shifts in power.



"We believe that strong CSOs with secure and diverse financial resources are essential to fending off threats to civic space [...] the changes we need cannot be delivered by a community of weak CSOs, reliant on sub grants and contracts."

Short talk 1 of 4: the changing focus of Wilde Ganzen funding

Wilde Ganzen is a Dutch Foundation. We were established 65 years ago to raise funds among Dutch citizens for global solidarity. Over the past decades, we've used these funds to support small scale community based initiatives - tangible projects. But many years ago, we started to ask ourselves difficult questions. Are we actually supporting our partners to become strong, independent organisations by only providing project-based funding? How do we move to a more transformational approach?

First, we moved our focus from projects to organisations; or projects to partners. Projects are now part of a multi-year collaboration with partners. We provide more flexibility to include investments in organisational strengthening and to include political work. we do continue to fund projects because of our fundraising model here in the Netherlands. But we see the value of those projects, not just in the direct outputs and outcomes, but also in the learning process, in the engagement of communities engagement of people. So that's very key to our grant making work.

Secondly, we focus especially on investing in our grantee partners capacity to raise resources within their own context. As fundraising is in our DNA as an organisation, we saw an opportunity to get it with partners in in different parts of the world to start encourage domestic resource mobilisation amongst citizens among ordinary people in in different countries.

Charles Kojo Vandyck
(WACSI / INTRAC)

Host and introduction



Charles is Head of the Capacity Development Unit at the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI). He is a social justice activist and thought leader with experience in strengthening civil society resilience, sustainability, and civic leadership. He joined the INTRAC board of trustees in 2021.

Esther Meester
Wilde Ganzen



Esther is Programme Manager and Policy Advisor at Wilde Ganzen Foundation (Netherlands). She has a legal background and has been working in the sector of international cooperation for the past decade, involved in issues around civic space, community philanthropy, and decolonization of international cooperation.



We believe external funders also have a role to play, to provide funding to partners to invest in building that local support base for their work. So at our end, this is work in progress. We don't get it all right. We're on a journey as well.

Short talk 2 of 4: MUVA - from the princess to the pauper

MUVA was built as DFID programme for female economic empowerment. For seven years, it was funded and managed by a UK based consultancy, Oxford Policy Management (OPM), whom I worked for - I designed the programme. In 2020, we decided jointly with FCDO, to actually to transform the programme into a Southern-based not-for-profit, which we call a social incubator. We were lucky enough to be able to have support from the funder to do this transition, and to build the systems for it.

While before, we were the darling under DFID's umbrella, now we are just a Southern NGO that no-one wants to speak to. The quality of partnerships that we can have has changed 180 degrees. I often use this example: when you build a house, either you do it yourself and you buy all the bricks and all the pipes and everything, or you hire a contractor. And I often feel in a relationship with donors. They want a contractor, so they want to hire the CSO, but they want you to tell you exactly how to do everything. Instead, funders should let the contractor do the job, and focus instead on making sure that necessary systems are in place.

Short talk 3 of 4: USAID's localisation journey

Around a year ago the head of USAID, Administrator Samantha Power, made a commitment to change how USAID works in order to ensure that local actors are at the centre of what we do. This commitment really recognises that local leadership and ownership are of course essential for achieving these longer term and sustainable results. And it also acknowledges that the business of aid needs to become more equitable and more inclusive.

First, we're adapting our policies and our programmes, to think about how they can foster locally led development in a way that is tied very specifically to each country or localities unique conditions. Second, we're channelling more of our funding directly to local partners. Administrator Power has announced that USAID will endeavour to provide at least a quarter of our programme funds directly to local partners by the end of 2025.

Third, expanding beyond the lens of who we fund to focus on shifting power to local actors, by creating space for them to influence and exercise leadership over what our partnerships look like. Administrator Power has set a goal for us that by 2030, at least half of our programming will place local communities in the lead to set priorities, co-design projects, drive implementation, or measure and evaluate the results of our programmes.

Luize Guimaraes
MUVA



Luize is the director of MUVA, a social incubator, working for the economic empowerment young people and in particular women. She is based in Mozambique where she made a second home. Luize worked previously for the private sector and for a donor. She has a Masters degree in public health for Harvard School of Public Health and in economics and development from Sciences-Po in Paris.

Sarah Rose
USAID



Sarah Rose is a Senior Advisor for Localization in the Office of the USAID Administrator. Prior to coming to USAID, she was a policy fellow at the Center for Global Development, where her research focused on US development policy and aid effectiveness, including localization. Previously, Sarah was a monitoring and evaluation specialist in the health office of the USAID Mission in Mozambique. She also worked at the Millennium Challenge Corporation.



USAID's capacity strengthening policy commits the agency to strengthening capacity in ways that respond to local actor priorities, and are done in service of the growth and development of sustainable organisations, networks and individuals.

Short talk 4 of 4: Common pitfalls by funders

I'm going to be talking about common pitfalls that we often observe, when we are in this part of the world. It's not to point out any mistakes or to point fingers at anyone. It's really to provoke some reflection and more thinking about what sometimes good intentions end up achieving.

The first area I want to talk about is what I'm calling proximity, and its relevance. Many of us are familiar with the fact that, in trying to understand new contexts, many funders have opened offices in the global South. The number of expatriates has fallen and many country offices are headed by people from the South. But as we often observe, you will find the structures and systems are really focused on meeting the needs of whoever the funder is.

Because of what has happened over the years, the mindset of many communities has been set to expect resources to come from somewhere else. Very often, the dynamics, the ways of working, ends up contributing to enhancing that mindset - as opposed to creating ways of actually building the confidence that is needed.

There's been a lot of initiatives that talk about localisation, it's the buzzword - shifting the power. But the question is what actually is localization? I just want to say from what we have observed in this part, language, changing the documents, adopting the kind of language which makes one look like they're progressive in itself does not really change much. We really have to invest in both the hardware and the software to make the kind of changes that would really reflect being a progressive funder.

Summing up and closing remarks

When INTRAC decided to put on this event, we were thinking about some of the challenges and conversations that we have with civil society organisations, and how funding can both enable and constrain organisations. In an idealised case, funding obviously supports those organisations to be strong, legitimate, impactful, and financially resilient. But we also know that in many cases, that doesn't happen. We also thought that, in reality, when you talk to most people in the sector, they want progressive funding but might mean different things by it.

We have to remember the historic context that those funding relationships exist within - a history of colonialism and unequal power relations. That's really difficult to break free from - it determines people's expectations, the way they interact, how they relate to each other. Janet reminded us that years of oppression can also limit people's sense of possibilities, their ability to dream and define what they want to do.

I hope that we can all work together to make progressive funding a reality in all its different ways.

Janet Mawiyoo
Galvanize Africa
Consult Ltd.



Janet Mawiyoo is a Certified Executive Leadership Coach with over 30-years' of experience in the global non-profit sector. A specialist in building development and philanthropic institutions, she has honed her skills in Non-profit Leadership, Governance and Management matters, Organizational Development and Change Management processes, Local resource mobilization and asset development for non-profits.



I want to suggest [that organisational culture] is something that requires attention and also to recognise that these are not easy changes for big organisations, big funders, big institutions, and that for these kind of changes to happen. It has to be intentional, it has to be supported.

Kate Newman
INTRAC Chief
Executive



Kate became INTRAC's Chief Executive in 2022. She has over 25 years' experience in international development, including senior roles with ActionAid and Christian Aid - most recently heading up Christian Aid's Programme Policy, Research and Learning Division.



If we work with [funders and CSOs] too separately, then it's very hard to go through that process of negotiating and building learning together and more progressive relationships into the future.

