



Review by Mark Blumberg of the book “Making a Difference in Africa: Advice from Experienced Grantmakers” which was written by Rob Buchanan and Jayne Booker

Making a Difference in Africa was published in 2004 and in 10 chapters covers various aspects of grantmaking for US foundations in Africa. There is a lot that Canadian charities and foundations can learn from this book even though some of the rules for Canadian charities and foundations operating outside of Canada are quite different than those applying to US foundations.

Making a Difference in Africa has some interesting facts on the importance of Africa and points out that Africa is the world’s second largest continent with 13% of the world’s population, it also supplies 14% of US oil consumption and that Africa contributes significantly to world culture. It also points out that grantmaking to Africa is not a one way street but that lessons learned from Africa can help grantmakers with domestic grantmaking. The book also emphasizes that Africa with its 185,000,000 and 54 countries is very diverse and different regions are very different from other regions. The first few chapters provide good background on grantmaking in Africa reasons for funding in Africa and how to develop a strategy for making grants in Africa with the later chapters providing very practical advice for those considering doing projects in Africa.

Here are my take on a few of the ideas presented in the book with some commentary on the differences between funding projects in the US and Canadian context:

1. It is easy to be overwhelmed in thinking about grantmaking in Africa but it may be best and easiest to start with the types of mission that one is domestically dealing with in grantmaking Africa.
2. Conduct research especially into what other foundations are doing and also what are the priorities of the government of the countries that you wish to be involved with.

3. Make use of consultants to assist in grantmaking but be careful.
4. Become involved with networks such as the Africa Grantmakers Affinity Group (AGAG), Grantmakers without Borders, and Funders Concerned About Aids (FCAA).
5. Consider attending conferences including those of the council on foundations, Grantmakers Without Borders and Google's Global Philanthropy Forum. By the way on Youtube you can listen to some or all of Google's Philanthropy Forum – it is free and very informative.
6. Make site visits to the countries and projects you are interested in being involved with.
7. Keep an open mind and instead of bringing your own ideas to Africa it will be more effective to rather support leaders of NGO's in Africa and their ideas.
8. Focus funding in terms of region and area.
9. The book suggests that “grantmakers should ask themselves several questions:
 - What are the issues that reflect our mission and values?
 - Where in Africa are needs around those especially acute?
 - What is a general environment for making grants in those countries or localities?
 - Where is success or the biggest impact likely to occur?
 - Which funders are working there already (to compliment their activities) and where are gaps that we could fill?
10. In terms of working with partners there are many options and they suggest that a good source of information's is the American Council for Voluntary International Action (InterAction). The Canadian equivalent would probably be the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC). (www.ccic.ca)
11. They suggest that especially for new funders that funding through an established charity that has experience on the ground in Africa is advantageous because you would be taking advantage of their proven track record, their staff and the programs. You would also benefit from their accounting and reporting systems. The disadvantage of using established charities for the grantmaking include that those charities may be more interested in funding their own activities rather than carrying out the activity that you are interested in funding and also that you would not have

necessarily a close relationship with the African NGO on the ground. This is equally true in Canada and many Canadian foundations either initially or always will rather fund Canadian qualified donees (ie. registered charities) rather than carry out the program themselves.

12. The book sets out for broad categories of grantmaking that a US foundation could conduct in Africa

- the first being that the foundation use US non-profit charity (a 501(c)3) organization. In Canada this would be the equivalent of a foundation funding a qualified donee such as Doctors Without Borders Canada, Care Canada, Save the Children Canada, etc that conducts activities in Africa.
- With the second category being using a US Intermediary Organization whether it's the Charities Aid Foundation or the Tides Foundation or a friend's of organization. In Canada we have the Tides Canada Foundation although "intermediary" organizations are more limited in scope in Canada than in the US.
- The third category is working with US Government. Many of the programs of US government are outsourced to other groups or charities to implement and by working with government you can leverage your funds. The Canadian government, CIDA and others, also provide substantial funding to projects in Africa. Keep in mind the point that because the Canadian government or CIDA is funding a project does not necessarily mean that the project is an acceptable project under the Canada Revenue Agency's publication RC4106 Registered Charities: Operating Outside of Canada
- The fourth category is working with multilateral organizations such as the World Health Organization or the United Nations Development Program. Although the multilateral organizations may have the staff and infrastructure in Africa *Making a Difference in Africa* points out that they may suffer from being too bureaucratic and may not be interested in more risky grantmaking.

13. In chapter 6 there is a discussion of helping community-based organizations (CBOs) which are small organizations in many cases that have no legal identity or a bank account and may not even be accessible by telephone. This is compared to African non-governmental organizations which are larger and have official status with their government.

14. They mention that funding projects can be more effective if a number of grantmakers support a single NGO and each one supports a different program that reinforces the other programs. There was frequent mention of the significant deficit that African

- NGO's have in terms of capacity and how they are often lack basic equipment and that grantmakers should not only fund projects but instead should fund programs with some of the funds and equipment being used to support the organization not just the particular project.
15. The book cautions that with the various funding agencies involved with funding NGO's it has "triggered the emergence of opportunistic NGO's lacking a clear mission or popular base." Do your due diligence and monitoring.
 16. Multiyear commitments from foundations can be more effective than one off grants.
 17. Support African grantmaking foundations and community foundations so that there will be sustainable support for the philanthropic sector in Africa. Consider working with African governments and public agencies as they can identify where the needs are.
 18. The book cautions against waiting for the perfect granting opportunity and encourages entities to try grantmaking and learn from ones own mistakes.
 19. Which funding option will be right for a particular foundation will depend on many factors such as the size of the grant, whether the grantmaker has staff in Africa, their philosophy and the program that they are focusing on. *Making a Difference in Africa* suggests various advice with respect to effectively dealing with African NGO's. including the being aware of the unequal power dynamics, the importance of personal connection and trust. In grantmaking in Africa, one needs to think long term i.e. 15 to 20 years. From a Canadian perspective the CCIC has interesting material on partnerships between Northern and Southern organizations including the CCIC "Principles of Development" and "Principles of Partnership". (http://www.ccic.ca/e/007/pubs_ethics.shtml)
 20. The book suggests reviewing the Guidelines for Good Practice for Northern Non-Governmental Organizations Working in South Africa.
 21. The book discusses the importance of due diligence especially in terms of the grantees organizational documents and the importance of making site visits. If site visits are not practical then they suggest having an advisory board made up of a large number of experts who are familiar with African NGO's.
 22. The book discusses the importance of complying with legal requirements and suggests for US grantmakers some resources on funding foreign organizations. In the Canadian context one can review my article entitled "Canadian Charities and Foreign Activities" at www.globalphilanthropy.ca

23. It is also important to understand the legal environment that your operating in as some countries regulate non-governmental organizations including requiring them to register. The book also discusses the difficulty in some cases of transferring funds to the CBO's and NGO's in Africa and issues in terms of currency rules and foreign exchange regulations. They caution that if there are extreme fluctuations in currency that the grantee should be sensitive to this and if necessary adjust the amount of the grant if the expectation is that the grantee will do the same amount of the project.
24. The book emphasizes the importance of monitoring grants and that written reports are only a small part of the picture. Grantees must be made comfortable to report on problems and mistakes and not just on the success of the project. The most effective means of monitoring is to have trusted partners and to conduct site visits of their activities.
25. The book discusses issues of staffing and how large US grantmakers have established offices in Africa and how for many others who are smaller or Africa is only a small part of their grantmaking cannot afford to maintain some offices.
26. In terms of bridging cultural differences the book suggests that although there are obvious differences between Africa and the states that there are also important subtle differences and that it is important to be sensitive, open-minded and have a sense of humour. And that one can expect that the culture shock will be a two way street.
27. It may be easier to start funding projects in an English speaking country if the grantmaking organization is English speaking. In the Canadian context an English speaking organization may focus on English speaking countries in Africa but a bilingual French/English organization may be able to operate in English and French countries.
28. Be open with the grantees as to how your foundation operates and why you are asking the questions that you are asking.
29. The book discusses the importance of sustainability and the risk that grantees will become dependant on foreign funding. The grantmakers should consider exit strategies before they begin the grantmaking process.
30. There should be a discussion of how progress will be evaluated and how impact will be measured and these should be clearly articulated prior to funding. A small portion of the grant should be set aside for measuring the impact or evaluate.

In summary *Making a Difference in Africa* is a very useful book that any Canadian foundation interested in operating in Africa should read. It can be obtained from the Council of Foundations at www.cof.org.

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