

An Introductory Note to the Cultures of Giving Country Profiles

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About WINGS

WINGS is a network of more than 180 philanthropy associations, networks, academic institutions, support organisations, and funders in 58 countries around the world whose purpose is to strengthen, promote and provide leadership on the development of philanthropy and social investment.

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Section I: Introduction

This working group started in January 2018. It's work is a continuation of a series of efforts underway since 2010 when WINGS published its report on global philanthropy. The main conclusion of that report was that global philanthropy is not the model that existed in some of the industrial countries and propagated through grantmaking to the rest of the world, but a tapestry of practices from around the world that are diverse, with similarities and differences, and yet forms a rich mosaic of the practices reflecting local cultures and practices. This was followed by a global meeting in Berlin in June 2015 that Atallah Kuttub, one of the authors, convened and was supported by Bosch Foundation to understand better how local traditions of giving and local discourses are building on global best practices and the evolving patterns of philanthropy. The outcomes of the June 2015 meeting were covered comprehensively in the September 2015 issue of Alliance Magazine, and can be summarised in the following key themes that emerged throughout the meeting.

Global philanthropy and cultures of giving– similarities or differences?

Philanthropy is practiced differently across the world, and these differences are sometimes more evident than any similarities, however, this does not undermine the idea of 'global philanthropy' or the idea of a common enterprise. The diversity of practice and approach is a source of strength; it enables borrowings and adaptations as well as a sense of solidarity and mutual support. This does not, however, undermine the idea of 'global philanthropy' or the idea of a common enterprise. The diversity of

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The contested language of philanthropy

One thing that makes the discussion of global philanthropy – and the borrowings and adaptations among different countries – more difficult is the lack of a common language. Many of the terms commonly in use among foundations and philanthropy professionals have originated in the US, or at the very least in the Global North, and they do not always translate very satisfactorily into other traditions. If this is obviously true of places with quite different customs and institutions, it can also be true of those where customs are apparently more similar. The word ‘philanthropy’, the basic term of our endeavour, creates difficulty for some. There is a preference for the use of the term ‘private social investment’ in Latin America. This describes more accurately what donors in the region are doing than ‘philanthropy’, which has connotations of ‘charity’, non-strategic giving.

Individual giving is not the same all around the world. In some contexts, people are more community-minded and there is a strong tradition of advice and support to members of the extended family. Where do you draw the line between helping family and philanthropy?

Assessing philanthropy’s contribution

Assessing the effectiveness of philanthropy remains problematic. Two things seem clear: first, money spent is a poor indicator of impact. Nor is money the only thing philanthropy brings to the solution of social problems. Second, however rich a foundation or an individual philanthropist, the part they can play in service provision is a minor one in comparison to that of states. It is worth considering if philanthropy’s

most significant role may not be in providing money for this or that initiative, but in building on the assets of a community and creating solidarity.

In any event, if we are to give a truer account of philanthropy's contribution, we need to find better ways to assess its impact, and to take into consideration the voluntary work and horizontal giving that are prevalent in many parts of the world.

Inherent tensions

Foundations are part of the society in which they operate; in fact, they are institutions of the establishment par excellence, arising directly from the accumulation of wealth in societies. When their mission is to create change, this sets up a tension. How far is this acknowledged and how far is it resolved by individual foundations? How far are they prepared to go in pursuing changes which, if taken to their logical extreme, could undermine both their rationale and their existence? Does an underlying awareness of this possibility unconsciously limit their work?

Friends or foes?

Another aspect of this tension is sometimes apparent in the relations of foundations with governments. Foundations can be seen by governments as auxiliaries, both morally (they are in some senses both representatives and guarantors of the existing order) and materially (they can supplement state welfare provision). If foundations stick to straightforward service provision, they are likely to have the government's approval. However, if they involve themselves in more contentious 'political' issues like human rights, they are likely to incur government hostility.

Falling through the gaps

This approach, combined with the growing popularity of impact investing and social investment, raises the question of what will happen to those NGOs whose work is in advocacy and campaigning. In many countries these organisations already find it difficult to fund themselves because domestic funders are unwilling to court official hostility and external sources are curtailed or carefully scrutinised. As philanthropic funds move in the direction of impact investing/social investments, the lives of these NGOs are likely to become more difficult still, because the kind of work they do is ill suited to social investment with its emphasis on tangible and readily attributable returns.

For-profit or non-profit?

The language of social investment (the very term investment) should not mislead us into creating a dichotomy between for-profit and not-for-profit activities. There are many examples where the two are combined. Social investment is an emerging field whose shape cannot yet be clearly discerned, and more time and exploration are required before judgments can safely be made about it.

Religion as a motive but not an object

It is clear that religion has played a huge part as the wellspring of philanthropy, often supplying both the motive for giving and its object. It still plays a large part in many places, especially in Arab countries where giving is enjoined by religion for both Christians and Muslims alike.

But just because giving springs from religious precepts, it does not follow that its purpose is promotion of that religion. Very often, giving that proceeds from religious

grounds can be for social justice purposes. In fact, it is often precisely in the mingling of these motives that new directions are opened, and new possibilities arise.

Section II: Objectives and Progress

The introductory note above formed the basis for the work of the Cultures of Giving Working Group. It was agreed that the objectives for the working group are:

- To build knowledge from around the world on the local cultures of giving¹
- To boost the cultures of giving
- To help create an enabling environment that supports the ecosystem of social investment with local and domestic emphasis.

The working group agreed early on to focus on four topics that formed common ground for all who participated in the group. The four topics are presented in the table below:

Topic	Description
Future of Individual Giving	Different ways of giving – small vs. large. How the rich deal with their wealth vs. Those who are engaged in crowdfunding as donors.
Endowment Management	Structures and Tools.
Trust and its many facets	a) Culture of trust. What triggers a culture of trust? b) Relationship between giving, trust and individuals - we give to people we trust. NGOs being trusted or not. c) The role of civil society is not properly understood. The conversation about civil society is needed and varies in different contexts. How community philanthropy shifts power (the case made by the Global Fund for Community Foundations): putting trust into the community, instead of a top-down approach.

¹ It was initially referred to in the singular local culture of giving but then, after several meetings, it was felt necessary to change to local cultures of giving since even within a country, there is a diversity of approaches that needs to be captured.

Corporate
engagement

Corporate engagement programmes in different cultures.
Differences of cultures come into play when employees react differently in different countries and giving is not only financial, but also in-kind, like volunteering. What are the cultural reactions to such approaches?

Also, it was suggested that we need to view the above topics from two different perspectives:

1. From the micro-practice level. To look at experiences from different parts of the world. Adapting not adopting. Cross-learning. Not only what we are doing, but also why we are doing what we are doing.
2. From the macro-level. Philanthropy exists to solve problems, but never alone. We need to leverage its force. This perspective touches on how we interact with other sectors. For example, philanthropy's role vs. government.

Deliberations and country presentations aligning with the above framework allowed for capturing the variety of perspectives and modalities of giving in various countries around the globe². This allowed the development of a template of country reports that aims to unify presentations from various countries, nevertheless allowing for ample space for diversities. It is acknowledged by the group that it is diversity that provides the richness of practices that define local cultures of giving.

The template that the group agreed upon included:

1. Baseline Data for comparison: geography, region, ethnicity, GDP, religion, etc.
2. Resources: Where are money and financial resources coming from for social good?

² Presentations from the Arab Region, Asia/USA, Brazil, China, and South Africa

3. Giving: What does giving look like?
 - a. Trust
 - b. Formal vs. Informal
 - c. Boundaries: Individual? HNWI's? Family? Social Enterprises? For profit with social benefit? Age Groups? Other?
4. Enabling environment: is it closing/shrinking, changing, or expanding for social good?
5. Other critical elements that contribute to the culture of giving that may be unique to a specific environment:
 - a. What resources exist to help civil society and philanthropy?
 - b. What are country/cultural specifics that affect giving?
 - c. Does/can governments act philanthropically?

Specific topics that the group agreed to continue thinking about are:

1. How to concretely incorporate other 'expert' areas like trusts, endowments, etc.?
2. Who is included in the discussion on cultures of giving? Should social businesses/governments be incorporated more strongly somewhere? What about the other new players that affect giving?
3. How to benefit/incorporate the various regional reports.
4. Gaps in knowledge are important to identify – the fact that we lack knowledge in certain areas (topic and region) is in itself useful in pointing us towards knowledge. This would require further attention and/or consideration of constraints.

Progress to date

Several country profiles have been produced since September 2020 and many others are in the pipeline. It is encouraging that after two years of work by the working group, the participating members are increasing, which is a sign that the topic is important to many members of WINGS and is gaining traction as more country profiles are being produced. It should be noted that the reports are not final documents but are works-in-progress that will be modified as needed based on discussions that the publication on the WINGS website will trigger. One key area that will be monitored is the effect of Covid-19 on the cultures of giving and country profiles will be adjusted accordingly as things unravel.

As co-moderators of the Cultures of Giving Working Group it was our great pleasure to have been involved in this journey. It was and continues to be an eye opener of the richness of the cultures of giving around the world.

