POWER SHARING AND "CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT"

Perspectives from Phase 3 of the Aspen Institute's evaluation of the Hewlett Foundation's strategy for supporting local advocacy in sub-Saharan Africa

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Funding
Sustainability

DECISIONMAKING POWER
Connections

Mutual
Accountability
Technical support
LOCAL
PRIORITIES
Organizational
Development

International
Flexibility &
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Nongovernmental
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CAPACITY

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation articulated a bold goal for its international reproductive health strategy to support local advocacy in sub-Saharan Africa: A vibrant sector of local civil society organizations (CSOs) in sub-Saharan Africa that can capably and positively influence the family planning and reproductive health (FPRH) policies and funding decisions of their own national governments and of international donors. The strategy embraces **five core principles** expected to shape the actions of the foundation, the portfolio of grantees, and the CSOs to which the grantees provide financial and capacity development support:

1. Support local advocacy priorities while seeking opportunities to connect these to global advocacy efforts.
2. Strengthen and provide more hands-on and sustained technical assistance tailored to each organization.
3. Support longer-term advocacy partnerships that strengthen and support local advocacy capacity.
4. Encourage mutual accountability among all parties: funders, intermediaries, and local partners.
5. Measure progress, document, adapt and share what is learned.

This report describes findings and recommendations from the third phase of a five-year learning process led by the Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program (APEP).[1] This phase explored whether and how practices aligned with the principles contributed to **power sharing and power shifting** and **capacity strengthening** – two of the strategy's intended short-term outcomes.

Our findings are based on data collected in 2019 and early 2020 via interviews with grantees and foundation staff, interviews and surveys of CSOs working with the grantees, and observations during the foundation's October 2019 grantee and CSO convening in Saly, Senegal (see appendix for details).

The Portfolio

Advocacy Partners

Four international non-governmental organizations (INGO) received five-year grants to provide local CSO sub-grantees with funding and capacity support aimed at advancing the sub-grantees' advocacy agendas.

- *Equilibres et Populations*
- *Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevoelkerung*
- *International Women's Health Coalition*
- *PAI*

Opportunistic Engagement Grantees

Eight organizations (six INGOs and two national CSOs) working at the country and regional levels to support local CSOs' advocacy and capacity development.

- *Center for Health, Human Rights and Development**
- *Center for Reproductive Rights, Africa Program*
- *Forum for Women in Democracy**
- *IntraHealth, CS4FP*
- *Johns Hopkins University/Advance Family Planning*
- *Mannion Daniels/AmplifyChange*
- *International Planned Parenthood Federation Africa Regional Office*
- *World Faiths Development Dialogue*

Advocacy Accelerator

Supported through a grant to Amref Health Africa, the Accelerator is an online and in-person platform aiming to strengthen advocacy capacity among CSOs and other stakeholders working on health and development in Africa.

* Beginning in 2019, the foundation provided general operating support grants directly to these two CSOs in the region.

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[1] The APEP team includes David Devlin-Foltz and Susanna Dilliplane, based in the US, and consultants Rhonda Schlangen, Coumba Toure, and Julie Tumbo, based respectively in the US, Senegal, and Kenya.

POWER SHARING AND POWER SHIFTING

Power sharing and power shifting in the grantee partnerships with CSOs

Shifting more decision-making power towards local CSOs in sub-Saharan Africa is at the core of the foundation's strategy. To advance a robust African CSO sector with the capacity to influence FPRH policies and funding decisions, the foundation emphasizes the need to shift power away from funders and its INGO grantees and towards local CSOs, enabling the CSOs to exercise more control over how they strengthen and exercise their organizational and advocacy capacity. The strategy assumes that this approach will lead to more effective capacity development, which will, in turn, result in more sustainable, effective advocacy organizations capable of influencing policy and funding decisions in the long run.

In this phase of the evaluation, we primarily examined how power dynamics manifest in different aspects of decision making and negotiation that occur in "sub-granting" or "intermediary" relationships between INGO grantees and in-country CSOs. The foundation added two CSOs as direct grantees, expanding our evaluation beyond the purely "intermediary" grantmaking model that the foundation sought to ground in its five principles. However, the strategy and this evaluation do not address in detail the relationship between CSOs and the community members they seek to serve through their advocacy work. Assessing whether the CSOs apply these principles to those relationships would be an intriguing area for future research.

Who has power over advocacy priorities, strategies, and activities?

Most CSOs report an equal or greater role than grantees in determining their policy priorities and advocacy strategies and activities.

As reflected in the strategy's first principle, the foundation expects grantees to support local advocacy priorities. A large majority of CSOs supported by the Advocacy Partner and

Figure 1. Determining policy priorities and advocacy strategies and activities

A large majority of CSOs reported that the grantee played a smaller role than the CSO or no role at all.

Policy Priorities

Determined by the CSO.	28%
CSO played a major role, with some input from the grantee.	51%
CSO and the grantee were equal partners.	13%
The grantee played a major role, with some input from the CSO.	15%
Determined by the grantee.	2%

Advocacy Strategies and Activities

Determined by the CSO.	39%
CSO played a major role, with some input from the grantee.	48%
CSO and the grantee were equal partners.	13%
The grantee played a major role, with some input from the CSO.	7%
Determined by the grantee.	0%

Note: Percentages total to more than 100 because a few respondents selected more than one response option. Source: Pooled data from the Phase 3 CSO survey and CSO interviews (N=61).

Opportunistic Engagement grantees reported that they have a greater role than the grantee in shaping their policy priorities and in determining what strategies and activities to pursue (Figure 1). This suggests that, at least when it comes to shaping policy priorities and advocacy strategies and activities, grantee practices are largely aligned with the strategy's emphasis on power sharing. A CSO's degree of power in determining strategies and activities does not appear to be a function of how long the CSO has been in operation or worked on FPRH advocacy specifically. Nor is control over these decisions necessarily contingent on how long a CSO and grantee have partnered: CSOs who said they had fully determined their own strategies and activities included those with new (2-3 years) and long-running (5+ years) partnerships with grantees.

Who has power to shape capacity development priorities and support?

CSOs report a strong role in shaping their capacity development priorities and the structure, content, and timing of the capacity support they receive.

Another key area of decision-making power in CSO-grantee partnerships: identifying CSOs' capacity needs and how best to address them. Foundations make grants to INGOs to bring funding and capacity development resources to CSOs, potentially creating a relationship of dependency and a power imbalance. The foundation seeks to disrupt this model by advancing principles aimed at encouraging longer-term partnerships between INGOs and CSOs, sustained and better-tailored capacity development, and mutual accountability among CSOs, grantees, and the foundation. Some resulting change in the CSOs' power is at least implicit in these principles. In 2019, the foundation explicitly encouraged grantees to shift power towards CSOs in identifying and addressing their capacity strengthening needs, and to fund CSO efforts to address those needs. More broadly, the strategy recognizes the agency of CSOs and their potential to generate as well as receive knowledge; as one grantee staff member said, "it's a two-way street."

Our interviews with CSOs explored the process through which their capacity needs are identified. Nearly all described the leading and/or equal roles they played in determining their own capacity needs – as part of a self-appraisal process, as part of their proposal, and/or on an ongoing basis during the course of a grant agreement.

Once capacity priorities have been identified, power may be expressed in who decides on the structure, content, and timing of capacity support. We found that 89% of CSO respondents reported that they played an equal or stronger role than the grantee in determining their capacity support. Overall, these responses suggest alignment with the foundation's emphasis on ensuring that CSOs exercise equal or greater power than grantees in shaping their capacity strengthening work.

Who has power over the use of funds?

Limits on CSOs' power over budget decisions represent a constraint on their ability to fully determine their advocacy work.

An important expression of power shifting involves transferring control to CSOs in determining how funds are used. Mindful that it can be challenging for CSOs to speak directly and candidly about power dynamics in their relationships with grantees, we probed budgeting issues indirectly through a hypothetical question to CSO interviewees: what would you do differently if you had the same grant amount from your INGO partner, but the funds were unrestricted?

Though some responses were ambiguous, the 18 CSO interviewees who answered this question generally fell into two categories. Eleven indicated they would adjust the topic, audience focus, or timing of some of their advocacy activities. These responses suggest how CSOs' ability to fully shape their own advocacy work is constrained by limits on their control over budget decisions. The second type of response reflected a strong sense of control over the CSO's strategic plans.

Seven the 18 CSO interviewees responding to this question said that they determine their advocacy work – so they either feel no need to do anything differently or have the flexibility to make adjustments as needed. Four of these respondents receive core funding from their INGO partner.

Is it possible to transcend the power imbalance of a funding relationship?

The inherent power imbalance of a funding relationship limits what some CSOs feel they can say or do.

A few CSO interviewees explicitly pointed out how this power imbalance can constrain them. One queried whether "equal footing" in this kind of relationship is achievable, observing that "ultimately there will be one who has power over the other" and "there's always the feeling that we don't want to jeopardize" the relationship. This interviewee has "learnt the art of flexibility" in accommodating suggestions made by the grantee or other donors. Another CSO interviewee echoed this view, noting the need to work "in a spirit of diplomacy." He emphasized that "we know the context" while also underscoring that "you have to go along with what they say a bit." Another CSO interviewee felt she could not mention the need for longer-term and greater funding, describing a sense of being "disempowered" by the power dynamic. For fear of losing the funding, she would "rather complain to [my colleagues] and then shut up and do my work." This interviewee noted that CSOs need reassurance from their Hewlett grantee that they can raise concerns without jeopardizing the grant. But she also acknowledged that CSOs need to exercise their own power in raising these concerns and "know how to voice it."

> " When somebody is funding you, you feel like they have power over you. The power within us is not matching the power that they have over us. – CSO Partner

These comments reflect a systemic power imbalance: the grantee's control over whether or not CSOs receive funding influences what CSOs feel they can say or do, even in cases where CSO staff reported playing an equal or stronger role than the grantee in shaping their own advocacy work.

Is power shifted through longer-term grant agreements?

There is little evidence that the foundation's five-year grants to Advocacy Partner grantees have translated into longer sub-grant agreements and a shift in power.

In its research and strategy documents, the foundation identified the short duration of "project funding" to CSO sub-grantees as a fundamental constraint on their power. The strategy's third principle calls for "longer-term advocacy partnerships that strengthen and support local advocacy capacity." The foundation has conveyed its expectation that Advocacy Partners will make longer-term (at least two years) sub-grants to their CSO partners, mirroring the longer-term support the grantees receive from the foundation.

We were able to gather information about the duration of sub-grants or agreements from 14 of the 16 CSO interviewees associated with Advocacy Partners. Only four (29%) had two-year agreements. The remainder had agreements ranging from less than a year to 1.5 years. The evaluation team will explore what factors hinder Advocacy Partners from consistently providing longer sub-grant agreements.

How do practices aligned with the strategy principles contribute to power sharing and power shifting in grantee-CSO relationships?

We observed **five areas of practice** relevant to power sharing and power shifting. These practices affect the degree of control and authority that CSOs have over their policy advocacy work and the capacity strengthening process.

Practice #1. Increasing the degree of CSO autonomy and flexibility. Control over the use of funds is especially important as an expression of power. One CSO noted that a shift from project funding to a core grant gave them "more power in decision making because we are not afraid that this would not be approved or that will not be approved." Grantee staff members also prefer being able to offer greater flexibility; as one commented:

"really the shifting of power is giving the partners the opportunity to really identify and decide how their money ... how this small grant is being spent." A related expression of power is the degree of flexibility CSOs have in adjusting as the work unfolds. As one CSO explained, grantee staff have "given us the space to pilot-test-refine as we go." Another noted that core support allows them to make the fast decisions that are sometimes required, without having to wait for approval.

Practice #2. Increasing the duration of grant agreements. As noted, the foundation expected its longer-term support to the Advocacy Partners to result in sub-grant agreements of at least two years in length by this point in the strategy's implementation – an expectation that has not yet been met. CSOs underscore the value of longer-term support and encourage grantees to embrace the practice of longer grant agreements. As one CSO commented: "we are restricted by shorter grants (1, 2 years) which make it difficult to communicate (and act upon!) long term organizational objectives through [this partnership]."

Practice #3. Resolving disagreements collaboratively. Disagreements offer a window into power dynamics between CSOs and grantees. CSOs reported cases in which they were able to voice their perspective and feel heard – either reaching mutually acceptable outcomes with the grantee or pursuing the CSO's preferred approach. In a few cases, CSOs expressed frustration or misgivings about the outcome of disagreements, suggesting that they were not able to exercise enough power over decisions.

Practice #4. Demonstrating respect for the CSO. Consistent with the principle of mutual accountability, respectful interactions between CSO and grantee staff represent another area of practice in which power can be shared. CSOs highlighted how respect is conveyed through grantee communications – for example, in how promptly a grantee responds to a request from the CSO, or in how a grantee explains a grantmaking decision, especially termination of support. These respectful practices demonstrate the grantee's recognition of its obligations to its CSO partners.

> " [Grantee] responsiveness is very important... that is an indication of respect, because they are valuing you.
>
> – CSO Partner

Practice #5. Making internal organizational and cultural changes within grantee organizations to permit greater power shifting. Grantees' internal complexities, practices, and norms can encourage or inhibit sharing and shifting power towards CSO partners. Foundation staff, for example, recognized that the "home office" of INGOs in the global North and their country or regional staff in sub-Saharan Africa may differ in how they interpret CSO needs and priorities. The home office may not fully reflect the field staff's perspectives when the home office negotiates with the foundation. The INGO may have accounting or sub-grant management norms and practices that discourage longer-term or general support to CSOs. The evaluation will explore this question in its next phase. Fully realizing the strategy's goal may require changes in norms, structures, and operations within grantee organizations.

Power sharing and power shifting in the foundation's relationships with its grantees

Beyond the grantee-CSO relationship, our evaluation also addresses the balance of power between the Hewlett Foundation and its grantees. Throughout the first two phases of this evaluation, grantees have had opportunities "off the record" to comment on their relationship with the foundation. We have consistently heard praise for the foundation's "flexibility" and "responsiveness" in its dealings with grantees. In this phase, we asked grantee interviewees for specific evidence that the foundation was actually shifting power and authority towards grantees – again, on a not-for-attribution basis to encourage candor.

One grantee said that the foundation's flexibility has enabled the grantee to innovate – and contrasted this with the inflexibility of other funders including bilateral or multilateral donors. Echoing this comparison, another grantee described other donors' requirements to "document every little single piece of money" as "soul crushing." These comments mirror the perspectives offered by CSOs about how power manifests in budget flexibility and autonomy. Two grantees observed that flexibility from the foundation trickles down to the level of flexibility that they, in turn, can offer CSOs.

A few comments point to ways in which grantees still feel power imbalances. For example, one experienced grantee staff member underscored the need for funders – including the Hewlett Foundation – to be more aware of how the power imbalance is always present in their interactions with grantees. Commenting on the foundation's annual convenings of grantees and CSOs, she observed: "the whole time you are deeply, deeply aware that... anything that you do that doesn't fall right could have massive impact on you and your entire organization." This power dynamic needs to be consistently and explicitly acknowledged, even as the foundation and grantees seek to shift power to CSO partners.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

CSO Perspectives on Capacity Strengthening Progress

We asked CSOs to identify three priority organizational or advocacy capacities they sought to strengthen during 2019. We then asked them to rate the extent to which they were able to strengthen each priority capacity, and to describe the capacity support that helped them strengthen each capacity, including naming the organizations involved in providing support.
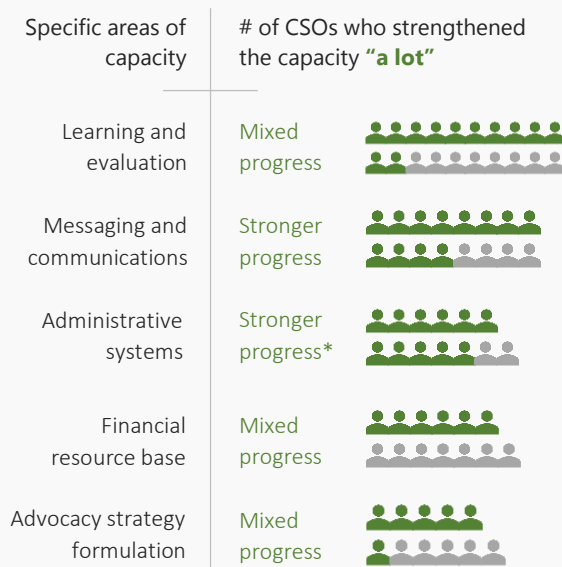
How much did CSOs feel they strengthened their priority capacities?

CSOs report a lot of progress on some of their priority capacities, but there is room for grantees to play a stronger role in supporting more progress on more priorities.

An impressive 84% of CSOs said they strengthened at least one priority capacity "a lot" in 2019. These gains were reported by CSOs across the grantees, suggesting that CSOs across the portfolio made significant progress on at least one priority capacity. However, this still means that a substantial proportion of CSOs reported weaker gains on one or more of their priority capacities.

Figure 2. Progress on Most Frequently Named Capacity Priorities

Specific areas of capacity	# of CSOs who strengthened the capacity "a lot"	
Learning and evaluation	Mixed progress	
Messaging and communications	Stronger progress	
Administrative systems	Stronger progress*	
Financial resource base	Mixed progress	
Advocacy strategy formulation	Mixed progress	

Note: CSOs were asked to name their top three capacity priorities in 2019 and rate how much each had been strengthened: not at all, a little, or a lot. Data source: Phase 3 CSO survey and interviews.* Two CSOs named two different capacities related to administrative systems and rated the level of progress as "a lot" for one and "a little" for the other.

For example, nearly a quarter (24%) of CSOs reported that they made no progress in strengthening at least one of their priority capacities.

CSOs reported an array of different sources of capacity support beyond their Hewlett grantee partner. So how much of the capacity strengthening progress (or lack of progress, in some cases) is attributable to the grantees? If we pool the 178 different capacity priorities named by CSO respondents, we find that 66% involved capacity support from a grantee. And within that sub-set of capacities for which these CSOs reported receiving support from a grantee, 74% were strengthened "a lot" in the CSOs' view. This suggests that the support CSOs received from grantees tended to be perceived as helpful in

> " [The grantee] supported our growth... We have really evolved from "just there" to a more structured organization.
>
> – CSO Partner

boosting capacity. But there is perhaps room for grantees to provide support for a larger proportion of their CSO partners' capacity priorities. Grantees may lack the expertise to meet every capacity development need. But grantees can offer flexible funding and help CSO partners identify appropriate sources of capacity support.

The Advocacy Accelerator's role in capacity strengthening

As an Africa-based and African-run organization, the Accelerator is an expression of the strategy's intention to shift power towards a vibrant CSO sector in sub-Saharan Africa. Established in 2017, the Accelerator is a young organization. Its purpose, reach, and impact – and its role in relation to other sub-strategy actors – is still evolving. It has a mandate and vision to provide resources and support for health and development advocacy in Africa. It serves a broader role in the African CSO ecosystem than we capture here. Our data speak only to how the Accelerator may contribute to capacity strengthening among CSOs in the Hewlett ecosystem.

There remains much room to expand the Accelerator's reach within the Hewlett ecosystem. Just under half (48%) of CSO survey and interview respondents indicated that they used the Accelerator in 2019, with Francophone CSOs particularly unlikely to have used it.

Communication with Hewlett's INGO grantees can encourage greater CSO use of the Accelerator. We heard some examples of communication between the Accelerator and INGO grantees. This contributed to the Accelerator's decision to waive workshop fees for grantees' CSO partners – an important step in addressing CSO concerns about resource barriers to participating in Accelerator offerings.

CSOs value Accelerator activities aligned with the strategy's principles. For example, CSOs highlighted the value of the Accelerator's efforts to share lessons learned and good practices among organizations doing similar work. CSOs also requested more tailored capacity support such as coaching or "learn by doing" approaches.

🌱 | What were tangible benefits of the capacity support?

CSOs reported both shorter-term and longer-term benefits of the capacity support they received from grantees.

We asked CSO interviewees to elaborate on how they applied or benefited from capacity support in cases where they felt they had strengthened a capacity a lot. CSO responses revealed both shorter-term and longer-term implications of capacity support.

For example, one CSO said that a resource mobilization training provided the skills needed to develop successful proposals for two new grants. Another described the value of the grantee's financial management training, which enabled the CSO to put financial accountability systems in place. These systems enabled the CSO to attract other funders. Another CSO described how a grantee helped them build a theory of change and an evaluation strategy, while core support from a different funder allowed them to hire a full-time monitoring, evaluation, learning, and sharing (MELS) staff person. This has enabled the CSO to use MELS for "thinking about what are we really learning, how are our programs improving out of this learning, what are we sharing?" – as opposed to thinking about MELS as "just a tedious thing that people do because it's required." More broadly, this CSO emphasized that core support from a grantee and a different funder has ensured "retention of staff, a happier working environment, just a stable organization."

Other CSO interviewees described the impact of capacity support on their advocacy work. For example, one CSO described the value of an external consultant engaged with grantee support. The consultant offered pointers, helping the CSO think about how to prioritize, how to engage, and whom to engage in order to "get quick wins." Another CSO credited the AFP Smart Advocacy tool with shaping how the CSO is doing its work: "At the back of our mind, we simply have to ask people, what is it that we want to achieve? Is this smart? Who is our target person?" A CSO described an even broader impact on its growth as an advocate: the grantee's remote and in-person advocacy

trainings enabled the CSO to "mature" to the point where "we can fly on our own wings."

How do practices aligned with the strategy principles contribute to strengthened capacity?

Drawing on CSO responses to various survey and interview questions, we gleaned insights into how principle-aligned practices by grantees and CSOs may contribute to strengthened capacity – and what practices could be improved to deepen capacity gains. We discuss **six areas of practice** below.

Practice #1. Applying power shifting to the process of determining capacity support. The strategy's principles do not explicitly call for a locally driven process of capacity development. But if we extend the idea of power shifting to this domain, it could mean that the CSO is fully engaged in identifying its own capacity development priorities and proposing a process to address them. It could also take the form of unrestricted funding with which the CSO addresses its capacity development needs. Our data suggest that this is happening in some cases.

Greater CSO power in shaping capacity support can contribute to stronger capacity strengthening outcomes but does not guarantee success. Regardless of who chooses the provider, the support may be inadequate. Or the CSO might not follow up to implement potentially helpful changes due to the urgency of other work. Other aspects of the grantee-CSO capacity support relationship, discussed below, also influence how much progress CSOs can make in strengthening their capacity.

Practice #2. Establishing capacity support relationships in which grantees are flexible and responsive thought partners. Ceding greater control over capacity development priorities and delivery allows the CSO flexibility in "tailoring" technical assistance to its needs, consistent with the strategy's second principle. It is also consistent with this principle for grantees to offer technical

assistance and advice that responds to CSO priorities and strategies as they evolve over time. Indeed, CSOs appreciate that grantees are flexible while also offering CSOs valuable suggestions and guidance. As one CSO put it: the grantee's advice is "always a conversation; it's never a top-down."

> " [Grantee] is our partner, not our donor. Because we have that relationship, we are very open to say "This is what we're going through. Can you support us in terms of our priorities?"
>
> – CSO Partner

Practice #3. Offering a thoughtful combination of technical support skills. "Tailored" support consistent with the second principle requires diverse types and sources of technical support. In many cases, CSOs value the technical support provided by grantee staff. But sometimes an external consultant may be a better choice. In some cases, CSOs can identify consultants on their own; in others, CSOs may value help in identifying a high-quality consultant.

Practice #4. Taking a longer view of capacity support. The strategy's second principle also calls for "sustained" technical assistance. Grantee and CSO responses underscore that "sustained" support can take different forms. For example, one CSO interviewee commented that real capacity development requires support following the initial training, "after everyone goes away," to ensure that "the knowledge is really there." Another described the value of having a seasoned consultant who assists with multiple areas as part of a longer organizational development process, rather than multiple consultants who do one discrete activity and then leave.

Other CSOs described the longer-term nature of their relationship with a grantee. One characterized a grantee as a "long-haul partner...whether there's money or no money." In a similar vein, a grantee

noted that it continued providing support for conference participation to one CSO even when it was unable to offer a sub-grant, sustaining the relationship until it was able to offer more funding.

Longer-term grant agreements are another element of sustained capacity development support. As we noted above, a "power shift" can occur when CSO-grantee agreements are two or more years in length. CSOs specifically flagged the value of longer-term agreements for developing capacity and for realizing impact as a result of advocacy efforts.

Practice #5. Providing support that can be used for staff salaries. Support for salaries and staff positions helps CSOs retain qualified staff and apply the capacities they develop more fully. One CSO underscored that funding for personnel is critical so that there is a person in place to actually carry out the tasks for which the CSO has received training and support. One CSO respondent commented: "sometimes when you talk to [other] donors, it's almost like they think the project might run itself."

Practice #6. Providing opportunities to share and learn. Consistent with the strategy's fifth principle, CSOs underscore the value of opportunities to share and learn from one another. CSOs value meeting counterparts from their own country and others. One commented: "There are certain strategies or certain implementation models that you find are either new or advanced." Convenings of CSO partners of a single INGO can also help level the playing field and perhaps partially address the imbalance of power in the capacity development relationship; as one CSO noted, bringing CSOs together can give them the courage to "speak out" to INGOs and other funders.

The foundation's convening role can also contribute to more meaningful exchanges among CSOs and between CSOs and grantees. A few CSO respondents specifically suggested that the foundation's convenings should include more CSO participants and more CSO participation, expanding their potential roles at the convening. These convenings and others can also facilitate mutual support and information sharing among grantees.

ADDITIONAL VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS

The value of grantee-CSO partnerships beyond capacity strengthening and funding

In this section, we explore whether grantee-CSO partnerships yield additional value for CSOs – beyond the funding and capacity strengthening that grantees provide. In our interviews, we posed this question directly to CSOs and grantees. Three key areas of benefit emerged.

Benefit #1. Grantees play a role in connecting CSOs to other potential funders. CSOs mentioned ways in which grantees help support their connections with other funders. For example, grantees can make introductions to contacts at other funding organizations and provide help with proposal development. This can make an important contribution to a CSO's capacity to mobilize resources. As one CSO remarked, a referral to a potential funder may not help if the CSO does not have the human resources – or perhaps the support with proposal writing – needed to respond to requests for proposals.

Benefit #2. Grantees enable CSOs to participate in national, regional, or international conferences or forums. CSOs cited participation in conferences and other forums as a significant opportunity for learning and organizational or individual growth. More than two-thirds of CSO interviewees mentioned participation in a meeting at the national, regional, or global level as a benefit of their relationship with a Hewlett Foundation grantee. CSOs value these opportunities for purposes of learning from others, sharing their insights, sharpening presentation skills, gaining visibility, and making connections with funders and with other CSOs.

Benefit #3. Grantees help CSOs connect to other CSOs virtually or in-person. As noted in the previous section, CSO interviewees described the value of connecting with other CSOs and networks for purposes of information sharing, mutual learning, and joint project development. Support for travel to gatherings of other CSO partners, or to broader conferences, encourages CSOs to adapt and share programmatic ideas across very different countries and contexts.

🌐 How do these benefits align with the strategy?

CSOs and grantees offer insights into how these benefits reflect and contribute to power shifting or sharing.

Invitations to national, regional, or international forums can contribute to a shift of power towards CSOs, particularly when grantees support or provide opportunities for CSOs to be on the dais or at the podium, or to have a voice at decision-making tables. Meaningful participation for CSOs means that grantees recognize them as equal partners in shaping the content, directly contributing their perspectives and experiences – and not just "telling their stories" or filtering their contributions to fit the parameters set by grantees or others. One CSO interviewee commented that if the CSO is only sponsored to attend, "you don't feel like you participated." These opportunities also promote South-South and South-North information sharing, further eroding the image of northern actors as the sole sources of expertise filling a supposed "deficit" in the global South.

Sharing access to relationships and information may contribute to power sharing as well. For example, one CSO respondent noted that INGOs have relationships and access to information that CSOs may lack. He valued the connections that the INGO could offer, including invitations to join the INGO in briefing officials at the Ministry of Health or elsewhere. The CSO reported feeling excluded from such meetings, even recently.

How the Hewlett Foundation's direct grantmaking model compares to the intermediary model

The foundation's strategy primarily focuses on an "intermediary model" of grantmaking in which resources flow through INGO grantees to CSO partners. But starting in 2019, the foundation decided to include direct grants to CSOs based in the region, starting with two CSOs – the Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD) and the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) – introducing a "direct grantmaking" model into the strategy. The Advocacy Accelerator occupies a different niche as part of the original strategy design, but it is also an Africa-based CSO in its own right.

The foundation's relationship to these CSO grantees – and their role in achieving the foundation's goal for this strategy – is evolving. In this phase of the evaluation, we gathered preliminary insights into how the direct grantmaking model compares to the intermediary model. We observe some similarities – as well as some differences – in how they contribute to power sharing and capacity strengthening. We will explore the roles of these two grantmaking models in greater detail in the final phase of this evaluation.

Comparative observation #1. Unrestricted core support brings welcome flexibility.

Interviews with staff of the Advocacy Accelerator, FOWODE, and CEHURD point to benefits associated with unrestricted support from the foundation. General support means that the CSO can maintain its overall strategy, including its existing policy priorities, and has a freer hand in addressing capacity development needs. In this sense, the foundation's support is welcome for the same reasons that general operating support is welcomed by the handful of CSOs who receive it from foundation grantees.

Comparative observation #2. Organizational Effectiveness grants contribute to power shifting and capacity strengthening.

Beyond core support, the Hewlett Foundation offers the opportunity to apply for separate Organizational Effectiveness grants. In one CSO grantee's experience, this is a unique opportunity "where you actually just get resources to spend in your institution. I've never seen it for the years that we've been doing fundraising." Another CSO grantee appreciated that the Organizational Effectiveness grants are "demand driven, rather than someone coming and saying: 'Maybe you should focus in these areas.'" Flexibility to shape the capacity strengthening work – and the ability to dedicate funds for this purpose – represents an important form of power shifting.

Comparative observation #3. The Hewlett Foundation plays some (but not all) of the supportive roles that INGOs play.

We observed some similarities and differences in the supportive roles that an INGO vs. the foundation might play in relation to a CSO partner. One similarity: CSOs noted that the Hewlett Foundation offers helpful strategic advice without being top-down or directive. This is consistent with one of the principle-aligned practices that CSOs valued in their partnerships with INGO grantees. We also heard an example of the Hewlett Foundation's role in encouraging donors to support one of the CSO grantees.

One CSO grantee did, however, emphasize a fundamental difference in a CSO's relationship with an INGO vs. the foundation. In that CSO's view, INGOs bring technical expertise and mentoring that can help a CSO become "ready as an institution to receive direct funding" and put it to good use. This surfaces significant questions: Which CSOs should receive direct funds from a foundation? What criteria should a funder use to evaluate when a CSO would benefit more from an INGO partnership than from direct support? When might it benefit from both models simultaneously? We hope to explore these questions in the evaluation's final phase.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, we offer a set of recommendations for the foundation, grantees, and CSO partners to consider as they manage their relationships in the coming year. We also describe some lessons learned and next steps for the evaluation team.

Grantees

Core support: Set as a norm providing general operating support with no or fewer restrictions on the use of funds, based on confidence in the CSO's ability to provide sufficient governance and accountability. Relinquishing budgetary control and providing flexibility represent a key expression of power sharing.

Principle-aligned relationships: Cultivate a responsive relationship with a long-term orientation. Grantees can provide guidance and accompaniment, without using their funding power to dominate decision making. They should strive to maintain supportive relationships in the long term – even at times when funding is unavailable. And they can actively disrupt power imbalances by encouraging CSOs to push back if they have reservations about the terms of the grant agreement or the process through which decisions are made (or disagreements resolved).

Mutuality: Recognize that the grantee-CSO partnership is a "two-way street" in which contributions and obligations flow in both directions. CSOs are contributing to the grantee's knowledge and advocacy goals at the same time as the grantee is contributing to the CSO's capacity strengthening efforts. Likewise, both actors have obligations to one another – which can be navigated effectively through respectful and timely communications.

CSO-driven capacity support: Consult with each CSO on its capacity development priorities and on ways to strengthen the capacity support provided to CSOs – including feedback on how to facilitate stronger progress on key organizational development priorities like a CSO's financial resource base and evaluation and learning capacity.

CSO profile: Continue and/or expand support for CSOs' speaking roles virtually or in-person at national, regional and global forums to ensure that CSO voices are heard.

Advocacy Accelerator use: Identify opportunities for the Advocacy Accelerator and INGO grantees to coordinate in ways that deepen CSOs' access to the practical, user-friendly capacity strengthening resources they need and value from the Accelerator.

Internal changes: Consider changes in internal structures, culture, and norms that would permit more flexibility in relationships with local CSOs. This may have particular implications for INGOs with "country offices" or a tradition of "project funding."

The Hewlett Foundation

Direct grantmaking model: Use the direct grants to two CSOs – FOWODE and CEHURD – to consider what criteria to apply in future decisions about providing direct support to CSOs.

INGO guidance: Develop guidelines for the foundation's practices in including INGO grantees' "home office," "country office," and CSO perspectives in proposal development where relevant. Ask INGOs whether internal practices and norms support longer-term and unrestricted sub-grants to CSOs.

Advocacy Accelerator: Communicate the foundation's expectations or hopes that grantees might work with the Advocacy Accelerator where appropriate to strengthen the capacity of CSOs. Encourage the Accelerator to continue its outreach to Francophone as well as Anglophone CSOs in the "Hewlett ecosystem," providing easy access to practical strategic guidance and tools.

CSO participation: Continue and perhaps deepen the foundation's efforts to incorporate CSO participation during key meetings or gatherings when the sub-strategy principles are discussed. This includes CSO participation in the foundation's meetings with grantees as they develop and refine their proposals – a practice begun in 2019. And it includes exploring potential ways to expand CSO participation in virtual or in-person convenings organized by the foundation for its grantees and CSO partners.

Intentional inclusion of CSOs in these meetings and gatherings promotes power sharing by enabling more CSOs to discuss and reflect on the principles and their implementation, and by enabling CSOs to provide feedback directly to the foundation. At the same time, the foundation should continue to be mindful that its presence does affect the power dynamics "in the room."

Funders: Use the foundation's influence in the funding community more actively to promote the strategy's principles to other funders focused on advocacy, power shifting, and capacity development.

CSO Partners

Agreement length: Ask grantees for longer-term agreements – especially if the grantee is one of the Advocacy Partners.

Capacity development planning: Communicate with grantees about capacity priorities – including emerging priorities or needs, as well as other potential sources of support to meet these needs. This will contribute to the grantee's ability to provide responsive and thoughtful support.

Budgetary power: Ask grantees for more budget flexibility and more control over capacity development support – provided the CSO trusts that this request will not jeopardize its funding.

Feedback: Offer specific feedback to the INGO grantees and to the Advocacy Accelerator on how to potentially strengthen the content, value and impact of their capacity support.

Evaluation Team

Power dynamics: Recognize the power dynamics inherent in our own interactions with stakeholders, including the foundation.

Qualitative insights: Continue to emphasize qualitative data collection methods, which have proven most effective in soliciting the level of nuance needed to understand complex processes of power sharing and capacity strengthening.

Constraints and incentives: Gain a better understanding of why grantees do or do not align their practices with the strategy principles, including longer-term sub-grant agreements and larger budgets.

Products: Solicit grantee and CSO perspectives on what evaluation products or insights they would find most valuable, useful, and practical.

Goal definition: Gather input from grantees and CSOs about what would constitute a healthy and vibrant CSO advocacy sector via the foundation's current strategy refresh process and via the next and final phase of this evaluation.

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APPENDIX

Evaluation Questions in Phase 3

1. To what extent is there evidence of power shifting and power sharing among sub-strategy actors – i.e., the foundation, grantees, and CSO partners? Among whom are any shifts in power occurring? In what ways do practices that align with the sub-strategy principles contribute to power shifting and sharing? What practices do not help – and why? What factors enable or inhibit power shifting and sharing?

2. To what extent and for whom is there evidence of strengthened capacity? In what ways do practices that align with the sub-strategy principles contribute to strengthened capacity? What practices do not help strengthen capacity – and why? What are other enabling or inhibiting factors?

3. Beyond the funding and technical assistance that CSOs receive from Hewlett's INGO grantees, how and to what extent does a CSO gain value from its relationship with the grantees? How does that model compare to the model of the foundation's direct grantmaking to CSOs?

Evaluation Methods

Our Phase 3 findings draw on confidential in-depth interviews with 25 CSOs conducted in late 2019 and early 2020. These interviewees encompass CSO partners of the four Advocacy Partners and of seven Opportunistic Engagement grantees, as well as the two direct CSO grantees.

To increase the breadth of CSO perspectives included in Phase 3, we supplemented the interviews with confidential survey responses from 37 additional CSOs, including CSO partners of two more Opportunistic Engagement grantees. Conducted in late 2019 and early 2020, the survey intentionally included a sub-set of the interview questions, permitting us to pool insights from the two modes of data collection. The combined total of 62 CSO interviewees and survey respondents represents a 53% response rate among the 117 CSOs invited to participate in Phase 3.

We also conducted interviews with program staff associated with the INGO grantees and the Advocacy Accelerator, as well as two members of the Hewlett Foundation staff. The APEP team also drew on insights gathered through observation of interactions among grantees, foundation staff, and CSOs during a convening organized by the foundation in October 2019 in Saly, Senegal.

Methodological Limitations

Representativeness. Our data collection was not able to include the full universe of CSO partners associated with the foundation's grantees. We cannot definitively determine the extent to which our findings are representative of this wider pool of CSOs. However, the sample of CSOs who participated as interviewees or survey respondents in this phase of the evaluation were diverse in geography, language, and organizational maturity. The 25 CSO interviewees encompassed seven countries (Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda); 36% (n=9) of the interviews were conducted in French. The 37 survey respondents encompassed 16 countries; 53% (n=20) of these responses were in French. Table A1 shows the range in the number of years in operation and the number of years engaged in FPRH advocacy.

Table A1. Number of Years in Operation and Number of Years Engaged in FPRH Advocacy among CSOs included in Phase 3 Data Collection

	Years in Operation	Years Engaged in FPRH Advocacy
Average	19.4	14
Median	17.5	10
Minimum	5	3
Maximum	63	63

Developmental evaluation. The evolving nature of the foundation's portfolio and the resulting developmental nature of this evaluation mean, in part, that there are some aspects of the strategy's implementation for which we do not have consistent data over the multiple phases of the evaluation. This extends as well to the CSOs involved in the evaluation; for example, some INGO grantees have terminated their partnerships with certain CSOs and/or added others over the past three years.

Response bias. We continue to note our concern about potential response bias. We know, for example, that those with less power may perceive a risk in participating in conversations with evaluators about power shifting. They may volunteer only positive responses. We have sought to address the risk of response bias by clearly stating when information is confidential, by carefully protecting the confidentiality of CSO respondents, and by developing rapport over repeated encounters with CSO and grantee representatives. We have found that interviews offer the greatest leverage for gathering thoughtful and candid CSO responses because we are able to pose questions in different ways, follow up with clarifications, and more accurately read the tone and body language of CSO respondents.

Context. The coronavirus pandemic modestly affected our evaluation activities in early 2020. In particular, we had planned to conduct all 25 in-depth interviews with CSOs in person. Due to travel restrictions, we conducted the last ten interviews virtually via Skype or Zoom.