



Partnering with the United Nations: The Value Proposition for European Foundations

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Introduction

In a post-911 world we need to work together more than ever. Global challenges such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, civil wars and environmental degradation are simply too large for any one entity, or even any one sector, to address. As recent world events have shown, repercussions of such concerns can reach far beyond their point of origin.

Diseases know no borders and problems don't require passports."

-- Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General

A global partnership is needed – capturing the expertise and scope of government, foundations, business and civil society. European foundations are a major player in such collaboration as their knowledge, experience, innovation, public influence and resources can help develop a more effective response to international objectives.

Common Goals of the United Nations and European Foundations

We can no longer afford to think of solving problems only in local terms; global challenges need collective action. In support of this need, the United Nations encourages foundations to increase their focus on global development issues. The Organization looks to civil society actors to enter in a policy dialogue, assist with advocacy, mobilize funds and people, share information and learning, and support operational delivery. In pursuing partnerships, the United Nations emphasizes transparency, accountability, integrity and good governance, just as members of the European Foundation Centre (EFC) have committed to these principles in the Prague Declaration and the 1996 EFC Code of Practice.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the blueprint for UN action in promoting development, serve as the framework for UN partnerships. In September 2000, world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit agreed to the MDGs, a set of measurable goals and targets to be reached by 2015. Endorsed by 189 governments, these goals now lie at the heart of the global development agenda. They include: halving

the proportion of the world's people who suffer from hunger and live on less than one U.S. dollar a day, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality by two thirds and maternal mortality by three quarters, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, and beginning to reduce the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. The MDGs provide a framework of accountability and transparency by setting forth concrete targets, and also help strategically focus programs and grants.

At the 2003 EFC Annual General Assembly and Conference in Lisbon, the EFC International Committee declared its full support for the MDGs, announcing its intent "to play an increasing and effective role in delivering the Goals set out by the Secretary General of the United Nations at the Millennium." Many European foundations already have a record of working on global development goals, such as poverty, child mortality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, education, environment, gender equality and human rights.

The EFC remains committed to supporting humanitarian and development issues in developing countries. Cooperation with the United Nations is key and we welcome opportunities to work together for creating a better world".

-- John Richardson, Chief Executive, EFC

Making business and civil society part of the solution is not just the best chance, it may be the only chance to achieve the MDGs. In response, European leadership moved quickly last year from policy to practice when it created the Europe in the World initiative (EitW). This new effort strengthens and increases international grantmaking and programs by European foundations, corporations and individual donors towards achievement of the MDGs. Almost 50 foundations have joined this initiative since its creation and EitW members represent €25 million in a powerful economic, social and political block.

The initiative has also successfully encouraged a growing number of foundations to increase by one percent each year for the next five years the amount of funds they allocate to initiatives outside of Europe. Some 30 EFC members already spend more than five per cent of their annual expenditure internationally. The United Nations – with offices in over 160 countries and expertise from microcredit to disaster relief - can greatly assist European foundations that wish to engage internationally but which do not yet have expertise in funding international projects.

Benefits of Partnering with the United Nations

European foundations can advance their global development mission and goals by partnering with the United Nations. Composed of 191 Member States, the United Nations network covers most countries in the world with the mandate and operational capacity to advance peace and development across the globe.

- The UN’s globally recognized name and impartial status provides **convening power** to bring together a broad range of partners for development.
- The UN has a **universal presence**, for example, UNDP works in 166 countries and UNICEF is active in 158 countries and territories.
- The UN has strong **on-the-ground operational** capabilities around the world.
- The UN has **expertise** and staff skilled in peace and development issues such as conflict prevention and resolution, demobilization, HIV/AIDS, human rights, and environment.
- The UN is a solid platform that can launch and provide **continuity** and **sustainability** to initiatives.
- The UN has established **relationships with governments** and civil society organizations.
- The UN is forging partnerships for development with **businesses** around the world.
- The UN can mobilize high profile **advocacy and public awareness campaigns**.
- The UN has a wealth of development and partnership experience that enables the sharing of **lessons learned** and **best practices**.

United Nations Values Key Strengths of European Foundations

Foundations are a powerful link, both between local and global levels, and between market forces and social needs. They can be a critical marriage broker, having the courage to tell their civil society partners that the private sector can be part of the solution. Foundations play a crucial role in supporting nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations, and are vital partners on the ground in developing countries as well as in donor countries, where they play a key role as advocates and creative contributors to policy-making.

Foundations work to address the root causes of problems, acting as catalysts for innovation through research, expertise and testing new approaches. They are positioned to provide creative solutions, unburdened by political considerations or inflexible mandates. This independence also gives foundations the latitude to provide funds quickly, and to use them to fill programming gaps.

“UNDP looks to foundations for innovation and new ideas because often they are the ones who take us places we couldn’t go alone or couldn’t go using just government funding.”

--Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator

As foundations can set their own funding priorities, and engage in areas that governments and/or the private sector might not be able to address within the priorities set by their stakeholders. As such, the UN looks at foundations to assist in crucial issues such as

women's reproductive health, human rights, fair trade and climate change. As voluntary contributors, foundations have great moral authority to act as advocates and shapers of public opinion. Michael Brophy, Director of the Help for All Trust and project leader of Europe in the World, stated at the EFC's 2003 Annual General Assembly and Conference: "We have proud records going back in some cases for centuries. We can't be pushed around. We have intellectual rigor on objectivity."

Finally, many European foundations have long and successful experience at the local level with how to get things done. This expertise can be used to work with local partners in other countries where the need for such knowledge and assistance is even greater.

How European Foundations Can Engage with the United Nations

Collaboration with the United Nations is not new. European foundations have long standing relationships with UN agencies on issues such as raising awareness on HIV/AIDS, peace-building efforts in conflict-zones, working with UNICEF on early childhood issues, and collaborating with UNESCO on world heritage. What is new is that partnerships have taken on a whole new meaning. Today, partnering means truly working together to pool intellectual and financial resources. Partnerships create policy dialogue, support advocacy efforts, and further operational delivery, technology transfer, technical assistance, information sharing and learning.

Collaborative efforts that leverage the comparative advantages of government, the private sector, foundations and civil society create synergies with which to address complex, cross-cutting issues that no single sector has the resources and ability to manage. Single initiatives might not only fail to reach their potential but they might work at cross purposes or duplicate efforts.

A variety of partnership options are available to foundations that wish to work with the UN. Collaborations range from global multi-stakeholder, multi-issue initiatives to local projects between two partners. They can be short-term humanitarian projects or long-term development programmes. Some partnerships take a holistic approach to social, environmental and economic issues, while others focus on specific topics or areas. Projects are developed with well-defined, time-bound goals to achieve results in a targeted area. Strategic global partnerships of multiple stakeholders with complementary competencies, by contrast, have the potential to create broad and sustainable progress over time by working simultaneously on different activities, such as advocacy, leveraging funds, and harnessing private sector and civil society expertise.

European foundations can:

- Help **design** innovative projects,
- **Fund** existing UN projects,
- Participate in **policy** dialogues,
- Share **best practices** and **lessons learned** with UN entities,
- Participate in **advocacy** and **awareness raising** initiatives, and/or

- Bring onboard new **partners**.

Some of the collaborative initiatives already underway between the UN and European foundations include:

- The EFC Orpheus Programme began working with UNAIDS in 2003 to map European funding for the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- The UN and EFC are working together to launch a funders network on global health issues with the World Health Organization playing a major role.
- The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation provided funding to the MDGs Project in 2003.
- The King Baudouin Foundation is part of the Mother to Child Transmission-Plus campaign led by the Rockefeller Foundation. Established in 2002, MTCT-Plus assists some of the world's most impoverished communities plagued by HIV/AIDS. The Foundation committed €1 million to address the spread of this pandemic in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo working with UNAIDS and UNFPA, among others.

A Gateway to the United Nations: UNFIP

The United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) is a concrete example of what the UN and foundations can do together. Our core partner is the UN Foundation (www.unfoundation.org), set up in 1997 by Mr. Ted Turner to administer his gift of US\$1 billion in support of UN causes. This successful partnership has yielded a \$594 million portfolio of over 300 projects executed by 39 UN implementing partners in 121 countries in the areas of children's health, population and women, the environment, and human rights. Due to the success of this relationship, UNFIP has been able to encourage and attract other partners.

Working with companies, foundations and civil society organizations, UNFIP takes collaborations to the next level. It engages partners not only on a financial level, but also on an intellectual level and mobilizes technology, expertise, delivery systems, funding and other resources to achieve the MDGs. UNFIP team members are the "conversion people", turning policies into practice, and principles into action.

In addition, UNFIP helps to implement a more coherent and systematic approach to developing and supporting partnerships across the UN system. UNFIP facilitates partnerships by providing one-stop shopping for partnership opportunities with numerous UN entities. UNFIP advises the private sector and foundations on strategic ways to support global causes, including the MDGs. UNFIP helps UN colleagues to develop new relationships with the private sector and foundations, and to create innovative partnership modalities such as networks, collaboration on project development, in-kind contributions, and corporate talent contributions to development projects on the ground, in addition to financial support.

Conclusion

Partnerships are fostered with effort, sometimes even with struggle. In the end, bringing two or more different perspectives and competencies to bear on today's interlocking crises and development challenges can open the door to a world of possibilities and impact. A convergence of core development goals between European foundations and the United Nations has produced a dialogue about how to create collaborations that leverage their unique contributions to global peace and development.

For more information about UNFIP or questions about partnering with the United Nations, please contact Ms. Camilla Schippa, UNFIP Outreach Officer, at schippa@un.org or 1-212-963-1000.

