

2008 Community Foundation Global Status Report Overview

Executive summary

The 2008 Community Foundation Global Status Report (GSR) tracks the growth of community foundations from a global perspective. It examines the trends that have emerged in the three years since the last report was published in 2005, and all the ways the global development of community foundations has been supported, including the funders promoting and supporting community foundation development, the support infrastructure, peer learning opportunities and the transfer of knowledge.

The information in the GSR is based primarily on survey research conducted in the first half of 2008, collected from in-country organizations that are promoting and supporting the development of community foundations. In countries where there are no support organizations, community foundations themselves were contacted.

What is a community foundation? Community foundations are grantmaking organizations that:

- seek to improve the quality of life for all people in a defined geographic area;
- are independent from control or influence by other organizations, governments or donors;
- are governed by a board of citizens broadly reflective of the communities they serve;
- make grants to other nonprofit groups to address a wide variety of emerging and changing needs in the community;
- seek to build a permanent resource for the community, most often through the creation of endowed funds from a wide range of donors, including local citizens, corporations, governments, and other foundations and nonprofits;
- provide services to donors to help them achieve their philanthropic goals;
- engage in a broad range of community leadership and partnership activities, serving as catalysts, convenors, collaborators and facilitators to solve problems and develop solutions to important community issues;
- have open and transparent policies and practices concerning all aspects of their operations; and
- are accountable to the community by informing the general public about their purposes, activities, and financial status on a regular basis.

The 2008 Community Foundation Global Status Report confirms that the community foundation movement around the globe is robust and expanding, both in terms of the numbers of new community foundations and the number of countries where community foundations have been formed.

Some of the major findings are:

- 1,441 community foundations have been identified in 51 countries; 4 additional countries have active community foundation initiatives
- The number of community foundations globally has grown by 21% since 2005
- 46% of the total number of community foundations exist outside the US; up from 40% in 2005 and 37.5% in 2004
- The number of community foundations in the UK and Canada represents only 33% of the total number of community foundations outside the US; down from 42% in 2005 and 47.5% the year before

- Germany has surpassed Canada to have the second largest number of community foundations after the US: 190
- A new global fund has been established, the WINGS Global Fund for Community Foundations, which, through its strategic grantmaking, is having a major impact on the development of community foundations in areas that are underserved and under funded

New trends have emerged:

- There is more cohesiveness in community foundation structures, as the numbers of community foundations grow within countries, and they share their experiences through in-country membership associations and across borders
- New activity has been especially strong in southeastern Europe and the Balkans, as funders have moved their efforts farther south and east
- The World Bank's Community Foundation Initiative, and its support for community foundations as a tool for community driven development, has helped increase the visibility of community foundations
- There is more organic growth – from the bottom up – coming from initiatives of individuals, especially in countries or regions, such as the Middle East, where there are no organizations to support the development of community foundations
- Individuals are taking the lessons they have learned in one country and applying their knowledge to the development of community foundations in other countries
- The influence of educational fellowship programs and networks of senior NGO executives is becoming evident, as their participants take the lead in forming community foundations around the globe

The GSR takes a special look at the development of the global movement, and the global support structure that was put in place beginning in 1998. A timeline of major developments in the history of the global movement is presented, showing the ramping up of activity in that year.

The evolution in how the movement has been supported is examined. A transition is taking place as some organizations that supported the development of community foundations have shut down and others have developed new strategies for continued viability, such as broadening their membership, scope and mission. However, these seemingly negative developments have been more than matched by the emergence of new associations of community foundations within countries, to provide mutual support, at an earlier stage of development, and by new avenues for the sharing of knowledge and lessons learned.

The creativity shown in adapting and using community foundations to meet the needs of local communities, once again demonstrates the power of the community foundation concept to build cultures of philanthropy around the globe, in regions with vastly different traditions of giving.