

Strengthening Youth-Led Projects in Post-Conflict Areas through Community Philanthropy for Sustained Livelihood: Lessons, Approaches, and Strategies from Community Foundations

Lynnette Micheni, Emerging Leaders, International Fellows Program ~ 2012

Abstract

Recent economic growth and increasing levels of education in some sub-Saharan nations like Kenya have corresponded with observable growth in citizen involvement in grassroots community organizations. Engaging with the large youth population is essential to the success of such groups. Over 70,000 youth groups exist in Kenya alone, over half of which operate in post-conflict areas. In this paper, Lynnette Micheni investigates how the community foundation model can mobilize the energies of Kenyans between the ages 18-35. Community foundations rely on secure funding and developing strong donor relations which often presents challenges to organizations centered on youth involvement. Seeking examples of community foundations that successfully promote youth participation, Micheni casts her net widely; her case studies include the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland and Youth Advisory Councils of America.

Ms. Micheni includes in her paper several principles which could govern the promotion of youth-led community philanthropy. These recommendations include a focus on multigenerational cooperation, where the experience and contacts of older members are combined with the innovations of youth members. To avoid “funder mission creep,” where local realities are ignored due to centralized planning from major donors, Micheni argues that youth leadership can keep a foundation flexible in its strategies. Micheni also urges that community organizations concentrate on training and professionalizing youth members, which in turn will prepare youth to assume leadership positions within community organizations.

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