

Study Visit Italy

November 2019

General reflections and learning

The Study Visit to Italy, hosted by Assifero over 6 days, involved meetings with staff and board members of community foundations, the national support organization, funders, community representatives and participation in the Italian national community foundation conference. Below are highlighted key issues observed and discussed.

Brainstorm on essential elements of the community leadership role of a CF:

- Should have a strong vision
- Demonstrate integrity, be well known in the community
- Importance of integrating our values (cooperation, sustainability, trust-building) in all we do!
- Community leadership is empowerment
- Appreciate and encourage people and recognize assets
- Community leadership is being open to new ideas (i.e. giving circles)
- Ability to bring people together
- Mobilize people based on trust
- Serve as convener
- Are very present in the community, “feel the vibes” and/or know who to ask
- Know community needs and create opportunities
- Inclusivity (e/she is representing everyone, minorities, vulnerable groups, etc.)
- Identify needs of community and connecting those who might fulfill the needs
- “Community development ladders” - use them to increase participation of community. At the top they identify the need and solution
- “We live here” forums - Talk to communities to find out what they want to do and use forums to show who else wants to do things
- Identify leaders of community activity and support them even if they are not formal groups
- Community leaders are motivators, guides, are active, give credibility

Final Reflection Session

The facilitator shared an initial list of key themes drawn from the reflection sessions and one-on-one discussions during the week and participants confirmed and added to this list. The list was prioritized by the group to select a topic for smaller group discussions. The topic of Power Relations was selected by the great majority of participants.

- Resourcing and its impacts on relation to community
- Power relations, including relations between:
 - staff and board
 - donors and CF
 - CF and community
 - support organization and CFs
- Impact Measurement
- Fundraising Events/Donor Circles
- Gender Dimension
- Donor Motivation: peer pressure, family tradition
- Differences North-South
- Business mindset, entrepreneurial approaches
- Relations with Church: may work together in situations of urgency, but generally Church takes very pragmatic approach
- Diversity in staff, boards, etc.
- Range of volunteers (from very young to old)
- Management model: limited attention to staff development

Main Points shared back from Small Group discussions on the topic of Power Relations

- Attention to Board members, their independence and diversity
- Representing community needs from bottom up can counter power dynamics
- CFs and Support Organizations - are membership fees a barrier?
- How to navigate pressures from different sides?
- Formalization of grant making and decision-making processes is important
- CFs need to gain confidence that their community knowledge = Power
- Needs assessment can help CF know the community
- Power relations can be challenged through process of impact measurement
- Diversify income to avoid dependence