

## **Funding campaigning & policy work: The philanthropy of changing minds**

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008  
Human Rights Action Centre, Amnesty International UK**

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City Parochial Foundation and the Baring Foundation convened this event for independent funders to consider the issues and challenges of funding campaigning and policy work.

These notes are a summary of the presentations and discussions at the event. This is a record of the meeting but the views captured here are not necessarily those of all the participants nor the funders of the event. We would like to thank everyone who contributed.

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### **Opening plenary**

*Bharat Mehta, Chief Executive, City Parochial Foundation*

The starting point is a belief that the issues facing society cannot be solved by charitable foundations funding service delivery alone. Whether our aim is to promote education, tackle climate change, improve housing, reduce inequalities or tackle poverty we need far greater resources than the annual £2 billion that UK foundations collectively distribute.

This requires influencing the public, civil society, business and government. As such, campaigning and policy work is an important part of our power to achieve change.

This event follows on from the successful workshop at the ACF 2007 conference on campaigning and the recent changes to the Charity Commission's guidelines. It is an opportunity for an honest and open debate about the issues and challenges of funding this sort of work.

This is not an attempt to put campaigning on a pedestal and promote it as the only thing to fund, rather a timely moment to interrogate what we fund and why.

Shami Chakrabarti, Director, Liberty

Key points:

- At a time when powerful dissent is being stifled by the authorities, Shami was clear that Liberty could not exist but for the support provided by independent charitable foundations. Such support was critical for the vast majority of campaigning organisations.
- Liberty's origins lie with the political Left, but more recently the organisation has consciously moved to cross all parties to work on the fundamental rights of freedom. The organisation is therefore not party political, an important point for charities engaging in campaigning work.
- Funding campaigning is crucial to democracy because without independent voices, democracy is undermined.
- The power behind all of Liberty's campaigns is a drive to mobilise the broadest coalition in civil society, to build a sensible argument that is thoroughly researched, that proposes alternatives, that is rigorously planned with clear outputs, that is well managed and that is professional at all times. These are important elements which funders should look for when assessing whether to fund a particular campaign.

Caroline Cooke, Head of Policy Engagement and Foresight, Charity Commission

Key points:

- It is a myth that the Charity Commission could or should be a reason for charities not to campaign or funders not to fund campaigning. Within the law, charities can campaign and carry out political activity.
- Recent relevant publications on campaigning includes: 2002 - Strategy Unit report 'Private Action, Public Benefit', 2004 - CC9 guidance revised, 2007 - Q&A to clarify CC9 published, 2008 - CC9 re-written.
- The 2008 re-write reflected ongoing confusion amongst charities about the rules and regulations regarding campaigning, particularly amongst trustees. The result was that some charities were overly cautious when it came to campaigning work. The Charity Commission also needed to bring guidance into line with new charitable headings in the Charities Act 2006 such as 'the relief and prevention of poverty.'
- The new guidance emphasises: charities must guard their independence; a political purpose cannot be a charitable purpose; charities must always stick to their mission; campaigning and political activity can be a means to an end; charities must never engage in party political activity or give support or funding to a political party, candidate or politician; and charities must not be used as a vehicle for a trustees' own political views.

- Campaigning includes: awareness raising, education, mobilising support and calling for existing legislation to be observed e.g. educating people on the benefits of a healthy diet.
- Charities can undertake political activity. This is activity which aims to secure or oppose a change in law, policy or decisions of government e.g. the campaign for an end to fox hunting using dogs.
- However, it is key that political activity must be additional to the rest of the charity's work because if a charity only ever carried out political activity it would have adopted a political rather than a charitable purpose.
- BUT, a charity can decide to focus all of its resource on political activity for a period of time if it believes it is the best way to support its charitable purpose.
- Trustees considering campaigning and political activity will need to ask is it going to be effective, is it a good use of resources, what are the costs and benefits and what are the risks and opportunities?
- For the Charity Commission, campaigning and political activity are key ways in which charities make a difference. It is a legitimate approach, within the legal framework.

#### Questions and comments to Shami Chakrabarti and Caroline Cooke

- Working with a local MP need not be considered as supporting a politician as long as it is clear why the charity and the MP are working together.
  - The best type of funding relationship is an honest one where organisations do not squeeze their goals and missions into programmes. Liberty has said no to applying to certain programmes opting instead to develop its own clear objectives and then seek funding for these. Organisations that are rigorous about planning and setting their mission resist capture and the powerful message will draw the right funders to them.
  - There is value in foundations being open in their guidelines about their willingness to fund campaigning. Recent research from NCVO and the Directory of Social Change suggests a large number of funders will consider applications for campaigning, but are not explicit about this.
  - Some foundations will fund 'education and awareness raising' but not consider this 'campaigning.'
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## Workshops

Catherine Howarth, Chief Executive Officer, Fair Pensions

Key points and discussion:

- Funding campaigning can be risky and so charitable foundations must honestly assess their appetite for risk. On the plus side, a successful campaign can lead to sustainable change for many people.
- There are things to look for that will minimise risk and lead to a good campaign. Has a campaign: got a clear vision; gathered evidence and solid analysis of the problem being addressed and the opposition to the campaign; placed beneficiaries at the heart of the campaign; been persistent; built coalitions, perhaps even internationally; been opportunistic (i.e. proactively seeking links with other work, political developments and so on); been smart about using limited resources for a big impact; and raised wider public awareness. But even after all of this gathering of 'evidence', a funder's gut instinct / the 'leap of faith' will still play a role.
- The act of campaigning can help people to feel they have a voice, which is valuable in itself.
- There is a role for 'good manners' towards the opposition in campaigning, before deploying more confrontational approaches.
- Foundations should think about what else they can provide in addition to money to support campaigns such as credibility, access to networks and carrying out their own influencing.
- Foundations can think about using their grants to support campaigns, but also their power as investors in companies.
- Because campaigns can take time to achieve success, funders need to record why they have supported campaigns so that there is an institutional memory.

Shehnaaz Latif, Senior Evaluation Trainer, Charities Evaluation Service,  
Tris Lumley, Head of NPC Tools, New Philanthropy Capital

Key points and discussion:

- Funding campaigning is an important way for foundations to achieve their aims but campaigning is under-funded.
- This is due to a combination of persisting uncertainty over legality and fears that campaigning is: slow to achieve results; that it is risky; that results are intangible; and that it is hard to know if you have made a difference. Monitoring and evaluation are useful for addressing these final two fears.

- Good campaigns need to have clarity of aims and objectives, to document intermediate outcomes, and to be built on an explicit theory of change. (Though do funders need to share this theory of change? How many funders actually have their own clear theory of change?).
- Good campaigns gather evidence, plan and are aware of the risks inherent in any plan. If campaign goals are not reached, it was not necessarily a bad campaign. There may have been other outcomes.
- Should foundations campaign themselves or get others to do it?
- Is it possible / desirable ever to fund both sides of the argument?
- It is worth remembering the link between service delivery and effective campaigning, where your experience legitimises campaigning. Delivering services under contract to government does not mean the organisation cannot also be an effective campaigner.

Barry Knight, Associate, Centris

Key points and discussion:

- There is a concern that the voluntary sector is losing its 'fire in its belly.'
- There is a business case for foundations to support campaigning and political activity as these are ways of addressing the underlying structures that cause the problems foundations are seeking to solve.
- Good campaigns understand these structures and are clear about what they are trying to achieve. Small investments can have a big influence.
- There is a need for better intelligence and learning.
- Funders need to be engaged and to collaborate to address issues together. This also shares the risk.
- Campaigns should be clear about the values underpinning them.
- Organisations should drop their self-censorship and broaden the diversity of their bases.
- The new Charity Commission guidance is a help.
- The risk to reputation can be managed by good evidence and having a plan for when things go wrong.
- Trustee boards made up of 'the great and the good' will not necessarily draw the same conclusions as members drawn from client groups. There is a need for Trustee boards to become more diverse to reflect this.

Laura Cheeseman, Campaigning Officer, Cluster Munitions Coalition

Key points and discussion:

- The cluster munitions campaign was formed in 2003 to oppose the use of this form of weapons where bomblets are dropped over a wide area and often fail to explode until they are stepped on.
- The Diana Memorial Fund 'stuck its neck out' to offer support even when the impact of the campaign was not clear and the visibility of the issue was low. It supported work to gather evidence, raise awareness and build a global campaign eventually involving campaigners, governments and the UN.
- The subsequent ratification of a treaty banning cluster bombs means now the challenge is to monitor implementation and sustain momentum.
- Developing a body of evidence is crucial.
- There is value in using different methods such as photography, film, testimony of survivors / others impacted. This helps to enhance legitimacy and to focus the campaign on the right things.
- It is important for funders to have faith and to use their independence to act as an honest broker.

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For more information about the event, please contact Mubin Haq at City Parochial Foundation on 020 7606 6145 or [info@cityparochial.org.uk](mailto:info@cityparochial.org.uk)

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**Organisations represented at the event:**

A B Charitable Trust  
A Glimmer of Hope Foundation  
Association of Charitable Foundations  
Baring Foundation  
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation  
Carnegie UK Trust  
Centris  
Charities Evaluation Service  
Charity Commission  
Children's Investment Fund Foundation  
City Bridge Trust  
City Parochial Foundation / Trust for London  
Cluster Munitions Coalition  
Comic Relief  
Cripplegate Foundation  
Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund  
Equality and Human Rights Commission  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Fair Pensions  
Groundswell  
Henry Smith Charity  
John Lyon's Charity  
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust  
LankellyChase Foundation  
Liberty  
Lloyds TSB Foundation  
Millfield House Foundation  
National Council of Voluntary Organisations  
New Philanthropy Capital  
Northern Rock Foundation  
Paul Hamlyn Foundation  
Pears Foundation  
People and Planet  
Sheila McKechnie Foundation  
Tindall Foundation  
Tudor Trust  
Venturesome