

THE GLOBAL FUND FOR CHILDREN

TRANSFORMATION

Strategic Plan
2013-2015



Transforming
children's lives

Supporting sustainable
grassroots organizations

Multiplying impact with
leverage and influence

Our world will go from 7 billion to 8 billion people sometime in the next 13 years. We don't know where or when that will happen, but there is one thing we know for sure: the next billion people will all enter the world as children. What do we owe them? We owe them a life better than being a child soldier or a slave. We owe choices that include school rather than work, safety rather than fear. **The Global Fund for Children** believes that children have a right to reach their full potential. They have a right to dream about what they want to be when they grow up.

OUR VISION

At **The Global Fund for Children**, we envision a world where all children grow up to be productive, caring citizens of a global society.

There is perhaps **NO WORD** that better describes **The Global Fund for Children** than **TRANSFORMATION**.

We are seeding transformative solutions for vulnerable children. We do this by supporting grassroots organizations as they transform into stronger institutions that are sustainable, more connected, and better positioned to reach more children. As we look back on GFC's first 18 years, and look forward to the next, it's clear that GFC is in the midst of a transformation of its own. At this moment, we have the opportunity to truly leverage all we have learned about life-changing solutions for the world's children and the sizable impact that small grassroots investments can make. GFC's unique model has the ability to transform philanthropy.

This work is as important as it has ever been. Whether we are talking about a billion children or just one, each child is important. Every one of these children came into this world with something to offer.

This big picture is always in view, and it was certainly in mind as we began our strategic planning process in the summer of 2011. Over the past year, we stepped back to review our progress and to ask ourselves questions about strategy. We mapped and analyzed the resources we put into launching each new grantee partnership, and what our investments yield in terms of lives changed, organizational stability, and long-term growth. We sought advice from board members and experts, surveyed our staff and grantee partners, and studied our current position in the landscape.

What did we find? The process affirmed the unique strength and niche served by GFC's model: scouting for emergent organizations with innovative solutions and pairing financial support with technical assistance, learning, visibility, and leverage. Our work has grown and spread significantly as we have built up grassroots investments, networks, metrics, and insights. Moving forward, we will have more focus on our core: we will prioritize issues, innovators, and countries where we can have the most impact. We will emphasize flexible support and long-term relationships to bring the most value to our grantee partnerships. Over the next three years, we expect to reach 3 million children and youth, for a total of 10 million by the end of 2015. That's a lot, but not enough. Thus, we will also prioritize building our influence and leverage. We want others to care about and invest in these issues and organizations—with us and after us. That exponential impact is the true measure of our success.

This document outlines the steps GFC will take to implement and measure progress toward critical outcomes for vulnerable children. We look forward to working with you to ensure that these plans fulfill their promise.

Kristin Lindsey, CEO

TRANSFORMATION | 2013–2015

WHAT WE DO

The most marginalized children in the world are the hardest to reach. They live in slums, tent camps, prisons, and rural villages, where they struggle to survive—let alone pursue their dreams. Though these children are the most disadvantaged, governments and large aid organizations often cannot reach them with the services and programs they need.

Photo by Jessica Dimmock



At **The Global Fund for Children**, we catch children who have fallen through the cracks. We find and invest in grassroots organizations that operate under the radar to provide the most vulnerable children in their communities with what they need to be safe, healthy, educated, and cared for. We invest in grassroots organizations because even in the most challenging conditions, they are on the ground, reaching children where they live, work, and play.

Since 1997, we have awarded over \$25 million in grants to more than 500 organizations in 78 countries, touching the lives of 7 million children worldwide.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

GFC's priorities advance three intersecting goals:

Transforming the lives of the world's vulnerable children. We will seek out emergent, innovative solutions to some of the most difficult challenges facing vulnerable children. The uniqueness of GFC lies in providing risk capital to organizations and issues that are under the radar, and in bringing them forward.

Supporting sustainable grassroots organizations. Pairing flexible capital with expert assistance, access to networks, and support from GFC program staff is integral to our partners' long-term success. We must do more.

Multiplying impact through influence and leverage. GFC's value is greater than the sum of its grants. To catalyze exponential change, we will bring a spotlight to issues, organizations, and results. We want others to invest in transformations that happen at the grassroots level.

To reach these goals, we must reinforce our healthy and effective institution. We will strengthen the human network that is essential to all we do. We will expand our funding base and efficiently deploy resources to do the most good.

Goal 1 | VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S LIVES **TRANSFORMED**

GFC funds interventions that directly reach the most vulnerable children. We will sharpen this approach, seeking out innovative strategies and underfunded organizations that can most benefit from GFC's resources, grantee network, and leverage. We will take risks, backed by experience and due diligence, to get emerging organizations and ideas better positioned. We will grow our overall grassroots network to reach the next 3 million children.

HOW?

- ✓ We will find and support grassroots organizations working on critical issues that most affect vulnerable children. While GFC will remain focused on organizations that address health, safety, and learning opportunities for children, we will look for strategies and innovations that are unique and underfunded, and areas where we are best positioned to help grantees and issues gain traction. As we look for clusters of the emerging solutions and critical issues, we will also gather more knowledge to share with others.
- ✓ We will fund 275 to 350 grantees each year, scaling up as we grow over the next three years. Each year, 20% to 25% of the pool will continue to be new groups, while the others will be in years 2 to 6 of their funding relationship.
- ✓ We will continue to prioritize organizations with budgets of less than \$100,000, and we will seek to be the first US funder. Focusing on truly emergent, under-the-radar groups keeps us true to our goal. While we will always have a small number of grantee partners in our hub regions (US, UK, Hong Kong), 94% of our grant investments will be in the developing world.
- ✓ As we add grantee partners, and as they grow in their capacity and service, greater numbers of children will benefit. We expect that 10 million children will be reached by 2015.

“Whether it's child trafficking, slavery, issues that are poorly funded ... we don't have the **constraints** that government and larger organizations have.”

—GFC Board Member

Goal 2 | **STRONGER, SUSTAINABLE** GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

We will increase our grant investments in size and flexibility to ensure that we get the right kind of support to the right organizations at the right time. We will intensify our value-added services so that more of our grantees can benefit from the regional Knowledge Exchanges, visibility events, and technical assistance that support their growth. The GFC grantmaking team will continue to foster the high-touch relationships that our grantees identified as a key factor in their growth and development.

HOW?

- ✓ We will increase our core grants, providing more flexibility to match the grant size with grantee needs, stage, and absorptive capacity. Grants will now range between \$5,000 and \$30,000.
- ✓ GFC's capstone award, the Maya Ajmera Sustainability Award, will also increase. Historically a \$25,000 award, the grant will now range up to \$75,000. We will review the eligibility criteria so that this award can infuse resources when most needed to grantee partners that are prepared for their next phase of growth and development.
- ✓ Smaller supplemental awards (emergency and opportunity grants) that allow grantees to overcome obstacles and take advantage of strategic opportunities will remain, and we will streamline organizational development awards to facilitate access and maximize benefit for our grantees.

FEEDBACK FROM OUR PARTNERS

Grantee feedback informs and shapes how we do our work and was a critical piece of our strategic planning process. Our grantee partner survey received a 67 percent response rate and produced some important learning for us:

- **60% of grantees say that through GFC they have connected to peer organizations and networks they would not have met in other ways.**
- **89% of grantees say GFC is different from other funders because it provides value-added services in addition to the primary grant.**
- **75% of grantees say GFC has helped take their organization's visibility to a higher level.**
- **96% of grantees say the relationship with their GFC program officer has been useful to their organization's growth and development.**

- ✓ We will concentrate our geographic focus by building our presence in countries to a level of significant investment (three to five grantees) and critical mass (six or more grantees) or gradually exiting from countries with only one or two partners. This approach will enable us to grow and deepen our experience and networks in each place, and to deliver support and technical assistance more efficiently and effectively.
- ✓ We will continue to focus on building strong, respectful grantee relationships and delivering high-touch support. We know this approach is linked to successful due diligence, monitoring, and grantee results. GFC's staff support, which includes helping grantees effectively use GFC's organizational capacity self-assessment and metrics tools to benchmark their progress, convening grantees locally, facilitating networks, and leveraging additional funds, was identified by grantees as a highly valuable and unique benefit of the GFC partnership.
- ✓ To ensure that we have the human resources we need, we will integrate additional local contract staff to support scouting, monitoring, and technical assistance in key regions.

Photo by Jesse Newman



MORE FROM OUR PARTNERS

- **GFC's ability and position to help build organization capacity and to connect and convene grantees were highly prioritized.**
- **Overall, grantees who had received a specific value-added input from GFC rated it as valuable or extremely valuable on a 10-point scale.**
- **After core primary grants, sustainability awards and opportunity grants were the highest-rated valued-added inputs.**
- **"GFC gives absolute freedom for implementation of programs but it has put in place very effective checks and balances. Many funders can learn from GFC the concept of tough love."**
- **"With the GFC support it would be much easier to get into the international funders pool because of its reputation and experience."**
- **"When [our GFC program officer] visited us earlier this year he gave us very helpful advice concerning our organizational development. We know that he is really interested in our strengthening and growth."**
- **"Knowledge about work of similar groups in the region gave us the opportunity to re-evaluate our own approaches and improve our work. We currently apply in our work some of the methods learned [at the GFC Knowledge Exchange], particularly in monitoring and evaluation."**

Goal 3 | **INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE**

The value of GFC's investments is greater than the sum of its individual grants. By raising the profile of grantees and broadening their networks, we support their long-term leadership and financial strength. We will spotlight the range of issues and solutions that shape the lives of vulnerable children to influence others to know, care, and invest. We will raise the visibility of GFC's unique model and results to strengthen the case for more grassroots investments.

HOW?

- ✓ We will continue to increase the amount of visibility and additional funding we facilitate for grantees. Using our social capital to provide this access is a powerful component of the GFC model and multiplies the sustainability and reach of the work undertaken and the number of children served.
- ✓ We also will continue to use our own resources—meetings and events, publications, website, and media relations—to raise the profile of our grantees, their work, and their results.
- ✓ Demonstrating the effectiveness of grassroots strategy will be a key objective over the next three years. We will leverage all that we have learned through our grassroots investments, our comprehensive metrics, and the quantitative and qualitative information we have collected as evidence to support the case for grassroots investments.
- ✓ We will deliberately and broadly share ideas and thought leadership on the issues and solutions we invest in. To maximize the value of our grants, we want others to know about the work, care about the issues, and invest with us.
- ✓ We will leverage the web, social media, and traditional media to maximize our influence and visibility. This will further GFC's position as a go-to source and ultimately enhance its financial success.

For every dollar GFC invests, another seven follow.

In fiscal year 2012, we leveraged over \$1 million in additional funding for our partners.

We need to be **intentional** and on the **cutting edge**, raise visibility of GFC and focus on innovation.

—GFC Board Member

GFC's Effectiveness | HOW WILL WE **GET THERE?**

To achieve these goals, GFC will continue to build up its institutional capacity. We will strengthen the human network that is essential to all we do. We will expand our funding base and efficiently deploy resources to do the most good. We will build on nearly two decades of experience, a unique body of work, and a reputation as a thoughtful, effective steward and partner.

FUNDING OUR STRATEGY

We will grow our donor base and offer more to engage donors through giving and family circles, donor events, leadership councils, and site visits. We will maintain an efficient overhead ratio to ensure that 85 percent of all dollars go toward program expenses, while at the same time investing in appropriate infrastructure.

HUMAN CAPITAL

People are our biggest asset. It will be important to continue to build and support our staff, nurture an environment where staff are valued, remain true to our core organizational values, and effectively work together to achieve results. This will include adding regional contract staff to support our program team, training and integrating them so that our culture and model prevails, and expanding thoughtfully without adding more overhead than required.

OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

Our new cohort management system and online application and reporting for grantees will enhance our ability to efficiently get data and to build strong relationships. These systems will help us to track trends and to get the right support to the right grantee at right time.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Ensuring that charitable dollars go where intended and do the most good is a critical measure for GFC as a global grantmaker and effective steward. We will continue to pursue and adopt all best practices. We will increase site visits and regional support staff to enable more frequent contact. GFC's tracking grants continue to be an incredible resource for staying in touch with grantees and tracking their organizational status after their funding relationship with GFC ends.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Through a strong board, operational effectiveness, stewardship of donors and transparency, we will continue to build on our eight-year record of achieving a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator.

The strength of the organization is **critical** to serving more kids.

—GFC Donor

Metrics | HOW WILL WE **KNOW**?

In 2011, GFC piloted organizational metrics and quarterly dashboards. This initial framework gave us a lot of experience to build a set of indicators to measure the goals set forth in this plan. Going forward, we will regularly track and assess a number of metrics that will help us know if we are making the progress we seek.

VULNERABLE CHILDREN

If we are seeking out under-the-radar issues and providing risk capital to support emerging organizations and children who otherwise would not have access to services, then:

- 70% of the time, we will be the first US institutional funder
- 94% of our grants resources will support work in the developing world
- 80% of grantee budgets will be \$100,000 or less in year 1 of our funding (median budget is typically \$50,000)

If our bigger investments are directly reaching the children who most need support through effective partners that grow stronger over time, then:

- the total number of children reached will average 1 million per year
- the number of children served by grantee partners over time will grow as their organizational capacity grows
- GFC total investments will touch the lives of 10 million children by 2015

SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATIONS

If we manage relationships and inputs (grants and services) so that we scout well and deliver the right supports at the right time, grantees will grow stronger, and then:

- 90% of grantees will have positive exits from our funding relationship
- 33% of grantees will be in the “best in class” or “exceed expectations” categories (as measured by budget growth, numbers served growth, visibility, and organizational capacity self-assessment score)

If we concentrate our geographic focus and provide additional regional staff support, then:

- all countries where we are investing will have three or more grantees by 2015
- grantees will experience at least one monitoring site visit per year and increased virtual touches by program staff



We like the way GFC functions, so **methodical**, very **systematic** yet very **understanding** and **appreciative** of our efforts. Best part is it will never compromise on quality.

—GFC Grantee Partner



Photo by Vineeta Gupta



LEVERAGE AND INFLUENCE

If we emphasize growing leverage and influence for GFC, our grantees, and the issues, then:

- the total dollars leveraged for grantees will increase each year
- the number and percentage of grantees that benefit from leverage before their exit from GFC funding will rise
- we will see steady and consistent growth in grantee budgets over the course of and after our funding relationship
- we will hit targets for grantee visibility at the regional and global levels
- GFC's visibility will grow
- GFC will be a go-to source for traditional and social media and for donors looking for insights on key issues, vulnerable children, and grassroots investing

GFC'S ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH AND EFFECTIVENESS

If we work toward these goals while always keeping one eye on our own organizational health and effectiveness, then:

- we will receive the highest Charity Navigator rating
- our donor base will grow and diversify
- we will meet (or exceed) yearly revenue targets

TO FIND OUT MORE

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