Big Bets and Bugbears for Social Justice

Enablers and Demotivators for Indian Philanthropy Today

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Abstract

This paper studies a critical question for India's private grantmaking foundations today, invested in justice and rights focused work. It seeks to answer, *what enables and demotivates their funding to non-profits?* Insights from three primary stakeholders—private foundations and funds, non-profits, and philanthropy support organisations—were studied for this. The paper details how these different actors work within the development ecosystem, navigating opportunities and risks.

The research is designed using a multiple case study approach. It incorporates insights from 21 interviewed respondents. The analysis reveals that the enablers and demotivators for funding are linked to four primary dimensions—the identity and approach of the interacting organisations (private foundations and non-profits), the external environment, the grantmaking process, and the project praxis.

The findings offer a useful roadmap for the development sector, highlighting tensions in resourcing and the critical levers to enable shifts. While the insights are India specific, they reflect trends in the Global South, given the resonating regional circumstances. The research findings and analysis aim to further the discussion around resourcing for social justice in India, and beyond.

Keywords

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

We are in the age of 'cascading and connected crises'—the polycrisis[1] (World Economic Forum, 2023). From global shocks and losses suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic to growing climate impacts, a cost-of-living crisis, and migration induced pressures … the list continues. Inequality has also grown over the years (Oxfam India, 2022; Oxfam and DFI 2022).

Within India too, multiple crises have converged. There is growing unemployment (at 10.05 per cent, highest since May 2021) and alarming levels of discrimination, intimidation and violence abound (Ganguly, 2023; Newsclick, 2023; Vats, 2023). In 2023, India slipped further down the World Press Freedom Index (161 of 180 countries), and ranked 111 of 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index (Global Hunger Index, 2023; The Hindu, 2023).

With greater social divide due to converging crises, the role of civil society acquires even more significance; 'Private action, in sum, for the public good' (Srinath, 2023). In recent years, threats to Indian civil society have rapidly increased (Srinath, 2022). At the same time, there is increasing interest to 'solve [for complex issues] across *samaaj* (civil society), *bazaar* (markets) and *sarkaar* (the state)', with big Indian philanthropic partners lending their weight behind such initiatives (Zimmer and Nilekani, 2019) for 'more effective outcomes through a "sharing of responsibilities"' (Morvaridi, 2015).

Despite increasing interest in stated collaborations, one part of the civil society ecosystem, that is, the non-profits working on justice and rights focused aims, have often found themselves in a corner in recent years. This is due to their struggle for funding, given their nature of work that is focused on governance accountability and systemic change. With added constraints on foreign funding (Chander, 2022) expectations from domestic philanthropy have risen, as this sector has grown (Bain & Company and Dasra, 2022 and 2023).

These prevailing conditions present an opportune moment to study the relationship between domestic philanthropy and its support for social justice and rights. Three

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[1] Polycrisis, coined by the French theorist Edgar Morin, 'refers to the various crises in economics, politics, geopolitics and the environment which are feeding into each other, exacerbating already difficult circumstances' (World Economic Forum, n.d.).

stakeholders have played a key role in this domain over the years—private foundations[2], partnering non-profits[3] and philanthropy support organisations[4]. This research studies their interactions, especially from the lens of what enables or demotivates funding. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the key enablers and demotivators for Indian philanthropic support of justice and rights focused work by non-profits?
- How do non-profits navigate financial support on justice and rights?

This research is led by the hypothesis—Social justice philanthropy is influenced by four key dimensions of private foundations and non-profits: a) their identity and approach, b) the external environment in which they operate, c) the grantmaking process, and d) the project praxis. This is derived from Ruesga and Puntenney's 2010 articulation of philanthropic approaches, which this research has further distilled for justice and rights focused work in the Indian context. The analysis of the findings from interviews with 21 respondents reveals that these four dimensions have a significant positive or negative influence, outlining the big bets or bugbears for India's private philanthropy. As no other research looks at Indian domestic funding for justice and rights work through this lens, this study contributes critical new knowledge to the sector.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This section contextualises justice and rights focused work within current dominant philanthropic approaches. It also details the Indian context within which this study is located, especially its specific needs, emerging risks and the gaps that this research seeks to address.

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[2] 'A private foundation's money comes from a family, an individual, or a corporation' (Candid, n.d.). Meanwhile 'funds' refer to 'Autonomous and independent public foundations' (Mama Cash, 2007). In the study, the term 'foundation' is used to refer to both categories. It also excludes CSR foundations, and other kinds of private foundations that are not into grantmaking for justice and rights focused objectives. The abbreviation PF is used to refer to this category of organisations in the research methodology and findings sections.

[3] Non-profits constitute the group of social purpose organisations 'with an explicitly defined core mandate of accomplishing the social purpose of equitable development for all' (WINGS, 2023). The study acknowledges existing complexities in the typology of social purpose organisations (Pandey, et al, 2022). Non-profits are coded as NP in the research methodology and findings sections.

[4] Philanthropy support organisations (WINGS, 2023) interface between non-profits and foundations, building governance and operational competencies, bridging networks, and consolidating knowledge in the sector. They may be formally incorporated as non-profit consultancies, social impact advisors or may be referred to as intermediary organisations in some cases (Dasra, 2016; Le, 2023). They are referred to as PSO in the research methodology and findings sections.

Defining 'Justice and Rights' Within Dominant Philanthropic Approaches Today

This study draws from Rawls' (1971) ideal conception of a just society to Sen's (2009) individual centred realisation-based approach, defining justice and rights focused work as—Philanthropy that seeks to attain comparatively more just outcomes in society through promotion of justice and rights focused initiatives (freedom and capabilities-enhancing interventions), which seek to   impact underlying causes or processes.

This definition is set within two dominant approaches to philanthropy in the Indian context today. The study acknowledges the limitations of the strategic philanthropy approach, which has guided much of India's social sector funding in recent years. While it lends itself well to service-aligned, tangible, short-term, measurable objectives, strategic philanthropy's focus on achieving 'clearly defined goals', 'evidence-based strategies' and 'monitor[ing] progress toward outcomes' (Brest, 2015), doesn't account for the nuances and challenges of justice and rights focused work. This research builds on the limitations of the approach that 'all problems can be fixed through markets, technology and the drive of the entrepreneur—without recourse to the messy realities of collective action, democracy and struggle, and avoiding the unforeseen effects of any human intervention' (Edwards, 2015).

Additionally, strategic philanthropy's increasing alignment with donors' interest areas often results in prioritising 'what can be measured rather than what is needed' (Center for Strategic Philanthropy: University of Cambridge Judge Business School, 2021). When philanthropy continues in this mode, it represents a model of preservation, not transformation (Bardowell, 2022).

In contrast, the social justice philanthropy approach, which is more suited to justice and rights oriented work, prioritises long-term shifts, and the interrogating and renegotiating of power relationships. The study complements research by scholars like Seltzer (2012), who argue that social justice philanthropy is based on a sound analysis of historical forces and institutional structures that perpetuate injustice, social categories that reinforce oppression, and the need 'to shift power from those who perpetrate injustice to those who suffer it'. This could be at the systemic level, and even within the processes that underpin giving, for example, did the power relations shift between the donor and grantee in the process, and whether they are guided by stronger diversity, equity and inclusion principles. This study echoes the need to rethink and shift approaches that are 'relentlessly donor-centric … [to build] the agency of those who are doing the work on the ground' (Edwards, 2015). With

funders not only critically examining methods and modes of giving, but also how they can support and share power, this research reinforces 'a "movement mindset"—a set of beliefs, attitudes, and actions that seek to support and expand the power of civil society—grassroots movements, informal activist groups, and people-powered organisations—to create transformative change' (Beautiful Trouble, 2023). By analysing what enables and demotivates funding for social justice oriented work, this study views larger organisational practices through this specific prism.

The India Story: The Importance of Diverse Stakeholder Roles, Critical Data Gaps and Emerging Needs

In India, the formal participation of civil society in policy making began in the 1980s, with 'the consequent demand from the bottom— people, their organisations and movements—for greater participation in the making of policies and decisions that affected their lives' (Centre for Democracy and Social Action and Oxfam, 2014). Some of these spaces have been 'at times "sanctioned" or "invited", and at times "claimed" or "occupied"' (Ibid.). Within this context, this research acknowledges the 'wider acceptance of the free market ideology', where 'governments are no longer considered the first and only solutions to socio-economic problems. The private sector has been given a bigger role not only in the economic but also the social sphere, in the space vacated by governments' (Sundar, 2017). By studying the interactions between private foundations, non-profits and philanthropy support organisations, especially from a financing point of view, this research adds new information on different stakeholder practices that converge or increase tension in the sector. The findings also add to the literature on philanthropic collaboratives[5] in India (Bridgespan, 2020), which have grown significantly in recent years, by assessing their perspectives and boundaries.

This study also situates itself within the prevailing data gaps of the Indian philanthropic landscape (The 2022 Global Philanthropy Environment Index). Annual India Philanthropy Reports and the Edelgive-Hurun India Philanthropy Lists[6] have offered some recent perspectives on the sector, and estimates of India's leading funder portfolios. There is growing media coverage too about the promising potential

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[5] Philanthropic collaboratives are 'entities that either pool or channel resources from multiple donors to non-profits' (Bridgespan, 2023b).
[6] Annually, India Philanthropy Reports, co-created by Bain and Company and Dasra, present insights on India's social sector funding and forecasts for the upcoming phase.
The annual Edelgive-Hurun India Philanthropy Lists share the names of India's top philanthropists, and the sector to which they largely contribute.

of domestic philanthropy. Yet, reading between the lines, the growth in giving is seen to be that of a few individuals, rather than of the sector as a whole (Shetty, 2019). It's also critical to see what kind of philanthropy has increased. While CSR spends have grown at 13% over the last five years, family philanthropy has grown at 12% over the same time period. 'UHNI [net worth above INR 1,000 crore] contributions have been volatile with contributions (excluding contributions by Azim Premji) dropping by 5% in FY 2022, despite a 9% increase in their cumulative wealth' (Dasra and Bain, 2023). Additionally, with differing definitions of what constitutes 'justice and rights' by different stakeholders, and fuzzy boundaries between service and rights focused initiatives, there is also a lack of uniformity in terms of appraising the sector. While this study does not directly address these data gaps, the findings are located within this broader knowledge ecosystem. They also foreground why data around justice and rights funding is critical, to better assess the current state, emerging needs, challenges and opportunities.

With its findings, this study also adds to the emerging literature on decolonising and localising philanthropy in a post-COVID landscape (Banerjee, 2022). In recent years, many grassroots organisations have struggled to survive, unable to receive subgranted funds since the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) Amendment 2020, or due to the cancellation of their licences to receive foreign funds. Given this context, expectations from domestic philanthropy have grown. This research aims to further shed light on these funding concerns and the ongoing discussions in this space (Jaikishen, 2022; Lalani, 2023; Seth and Shetty, 2023).

The Price of Engaging, and the Risks of Not Doing So: Gaps This Research Seeks to Fill

The monetary value of support for justice and rights focused work is a small percentage of India's entire development funding—at its peak, it was less than INR 150 crore annually (Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy: Ashoka University, 2018). Yet, there are numerous unexplored constraints holding this back, and the research aims to uncover these critical factors related to funding in the field. While a recent study acknowledged the risks that merit attention when giving (financial, social and personal) (Azim Premji Foundation, 2020), it does not examine it from the same lens as that of this study. By uncovering what enables and demotivates funding for justice and rights, from the perspective of leading Indian private foundations and non-profits invested in this work, as well as philanthropy support

organisations with a larger bird's-eye view of this field, this study offers critical new information for this sector.

The fallouts of not engaging in this work are immense, not only in the immediate phase but also in the long run. For one, 'access to justice, which is fundamental to democracy and constitutes one of the most basic rights of the people, is not a reality for most people in India', making it critical to increase support for this area (Ganguly, 2019). Further, given resourcing constraints, in recent years many non-profits that traditionally invested in justice and rights focused objectives have been forced to pivot to other areas. In many cases, due to this shift, they end up offering incremental support to marginalised groups and their issues, but are unable to effect larger systemic change. Therefore, on the surface there is the risk of 'mission drift' as Edwards (2015) says, 'by diverting support away from organisations that aim to change society in fundamental ways to those that are satisfied with reforms and improvements around the edges'. However, there are deeper implications if there is no recourse to rights and redressal, as intergenerational cycles of injustice continue. In the long run, there is a larger drain on resources and effort, if band-aid solutions are applied instead of engaging in systemic change. By uncovering what enables and demotivates funding for critical justice and rights focused work, this study fills this vital gap in understanding. The research insights spotlight what shifts can better enable funding support going ahead, and what are the risks to be mindful of.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Given its exploratory nature, this research is designed using a multiple case study approach. Multiple sources of information (interviews, audio visual material, documents, and reports) were referred to, to construct validity, reliability and avoid bias.

A replication logic was used to select respondents for the research. This includes:

- 5 private foundations and 1 national fund committed to justice and rights focused work
- 4 philanthropy support organisations
- 11 non-profits working in this domain

Respondents were selected based on the relevance of their work to the research questions. They participated via online interviews post their informed consent. A diverse respondent pool was sought (as presented through their profiles in the next sub-section). With a clear selection framework, a bounded design was ensured. However, selection was also determined by access, availability and the consent of respondents.

Profile of Respondents

Given the sensitive nature of the study, and the request for anonymisation of details, respondent profiles for each group have been generalised and presented as follows:

Five private foundations and a national fund were interviewed for this study. They are referred to as 'PF' in the findings and discussion sections. Most of them have been operational for nearly a decade. Majority are family foundations. Focus areas include human rights, advocacy, governance and judicial reforms, climate action, gender rights, environmental rights, among others.

Among the four philanthropy support organisations interviewed (referred to as 'PSO' in the findings and discussion sections), only one has been operational for 20+ years. The others have been set up within the past decade. They work with private foundations and investors, funder networks, corporate social responsibility teams, and non-profits. Focus areas of these organisations include philanthropy advisory, leadership development and collaborative action, amidst others.

Of the 11 non-profits interviewed for this study (referred to as 'NP' in the findings and discussions sections), five have been operational for over three decades, three are two decades plus, one organisation is more than a decade old, and the remaining two are in the first decade of their operations. Most organisations have focused their work within specified states; very few work across India. Organisational focus areas include human rights, migration, community development, advocacy, social equality, institution building, among others.

Research Dimensions

In framing the research dimensions, this study is inspired by Ruesga and Puntenney's 2010 articulation of how philanthropists position approaches—as 'a family of practices'—'philosophical traditions on which approaches [often a combination of them] are based'. Figure 1 articulates these traditions, guiding principles and approaches, with an addition by this researcher, based on the nature of this study's research questions and the insights from secondary literature to design the lines of inquiry.

Figure 1: Framing philanthropic approaches

Source: Ruesga and Puntenney (2010). Last line is an addition by the researcher.

TRADITIONS	GUIDING PRINCIPLES	APPROACH
Structural injustice	Addressing root causes of inequality	Holding interconnected systems accountable
Universal human rights	Security and dignity	Building supportive political systems
Fairness/Equal distribution of resources	Equality of outcomes	Creating effective distributive mechanisms
Legalism/Rule of Law	Equality before the law	Ensuring laws are enforced
Empowerment	Equal access to systems of power	Preparing people for engagement
Shared values	Agreement	Shared values translate to justice goals
Cultural relativism	Equal recognition	Promoting understanding and diversity
Risks	Support frameworks and processes	Holistic (internal and external)

These traditions were further consolidated by this researcher into four guiding research dimensions (detailed in Figure 2) for the respondents of this study—identity and approach of the interacting organisations (private foundations and non-profits), the external environment, the grantmaking process, and the project praxis. These four dimensions were distilled from the original traditions, given their ability to subsume the larger categories. They also reflect the nature of respondent organisations as well as the processes of their interactions, and the influences of the

environment in which they operate. The four dimensions relate to the objectives of the research questions too, and were used to design the interview schedule. This research acknowledges the boundaries of this framing, as well as the overlaps of traditions across the stated dimensions.

Figure 2: Derived research dimensions for this study from Ruesga and Puntenney's
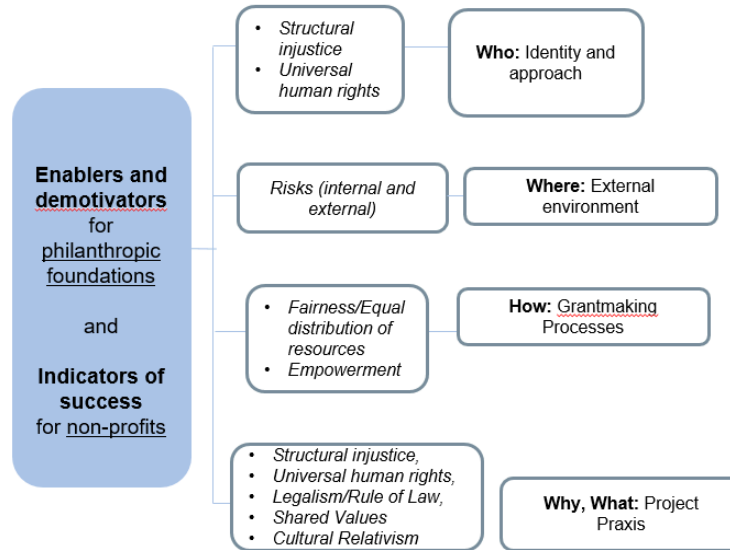
(2010) framing

Each dimension leads to further sub-dimensions (broadly presented in Table 1), which are detailed through the research interview and analysis phase. For instance, 'Identity and approach' seeks to understand the leadership and governance at respondent organisations, the nature of funding and operations, the framing of outcomes and impact, among others. 'External environment' seeks to understand the effect of FCRA amendments, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and other recent regulations on respondent organisations. The 'Grantmaking process' seeks to detail the nature of grant design and related indicators, interactions, decision making and nature of sustainability, and other areas. 'Project praxis' refers to the theory of change, intersectionality, nature of impact, monitoring, evaluation and feedback, and more. Research sub-dimensions emerged from a deeper study of each broader dimension, related to the aspects that the research questions are focused on. Overlaps/simultaneity of occurrence of dimensions and sub-dimensions were acknowledged and further studied and coded through the interview and analysis stage.

13

Table 1: Dimensions and sub-dimensions guiding research design

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions
Nature and characteristics	Funding and operations
	Leadership and governance
	Objectives, values and principles
	Framing of outcome and impact
	Networks and influence
Regulatory environment	Effect of policies and laws
	Perceptions and pressures
	Impact on resourcing
Grantmaking process	Grant design, indicators
	Interactions
	Decision making
	Sustainability/institution building
Project praxis	Grantmaking strategies
	Theory of change
	Impact
	Intersectionality
	Monitoring, evaluation and feedback

Research Method and Data Analysis

This research is driven by detailed semi-structured interviews with respondents. In some cases, two representatives within the participating organisation were spoken to, for a richer insight on perspectives across levels. Each interview lasted from one to one and a half hours. It consisted of specific and semi-structured questions designed around the research dimensions and sub-dimensions. Respondents were also requested to share additional material that would contribute to the objectives of the study. Additionally, secondary research was also conducted on the respondents and their work.

All the terms of use of the information generated during interviews were outlined in the participant information sheet and the informed consent form shared with the respondents. A case study protocol was designed to guide the data collection process. The research information was transcribed and segregated, on the basis of emerging patterns and themes. All respondent quotes were anonymised. The research also triangulated information from different sources to observe patterns, insights and emerging conceptual knowledge. It has tried to address emerging rival explanations and interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of the study, respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymisation of details, as their consent was sought. The interviews were organised only post their informed consent to participate. Further, the participant information sheet detailed respondent rights and the informed consent form elaborated on the confidentiality and terms of use of the information shared. Respondents reviewed the case study draft, alongside ongoing ISDM review protocols, before the paper was finalised.

Limitations and Bias

Indian private philanthropy is a young, emerging field. As most interviewed foundations are young organisations, the research acknowledges their evolving practice. Sharper trends and insights will emerge over time.

This study is also limited by its sample size (i.e., the number of cases that could be included in it). Given the nature of this research, a few additional organisations

contacted did not wish to participate. While a few of them openly acknowledged this, others did not respond to repeated requests.

In conversations with respondents, private foundations and philanthropy support organisations responded with different levels of candour. Those familiar with the researcher's employer were more open in their responses. Participating non-profits were more frank with their insights, probably given their positioning vis-à-vis the study objectives. A larger sample size of non-profits is included in this study, to account for their diverse experiences in seeking funding, and the researcher's access to their work. The study also acknowledges the researcher's own positioning and bias, being employed at a non-profit. All efforts have been made to overcome prevailing biases by working objectively and upholding the standards of the research process.

Findings and Emergent Themes

This section presents the findings of this research, dimension-wise, along with emergent themes. As an exploratory research, it adopts two categories for analytical purposes—enablers (characterised by ⬆) and demotivators (characterised by ⬇). While not being established practices yet in all respondent organisations and beyond, enablers outlined offer directions for foundations to strengthen their social justice work, while demotivators highlight the barriers to funding. Examples shared in this section are practical use cases supporting the conceptual presentations of the relevant enablers and demotivators. The choice of framing by the researcher, whether as an enabler/demotivator, is to highlight the potential of facilitatory funding practices (enablers) as well as the prevailing risks and barriers (demotivators) to the same. The reverse of these framed statements also holds true.

Some findings may also overlap with each other in some respects and are not mutually exclusive. These discrete analytical categories were adopted for the purpose of the study. They are listed in response to each research question below:

What are the key enablers and demotivators for Indian philanthropic support of justice and rights focused work by non-profits?

The Role of Identity and Approach: Starting from the Self

In ascertaining how the identity and approach of private foundations may enable or demotivate funding, the study illustrates the following:

a. ⬆ <u>Diversely constituted foundations (at Board, leadership and staff levels) enable funding</u>

Of the interviewed private foundations, it was seen that family foundations, especially, emerge from specific interest areas of the founding family. As a prominent foundation shares, 'It's really about what the family thinks is the issue that needs to be funded' (PF-6). Additionally, most Governing Boards are heavy on family members who set the organisation's agenda. A prominent PSO working with many private foundations explained how this is limiting. 'They [private foundations] still haven't emerged from that family centric approach to giving' (PSO-2). Interviewed foundations shared that they offer recommendations to the board for funding approval. In the absence of a diversely constituted Board, the foundation is limited in its own exposure, 'still linked to maintaining that legacy of the family, rather than looking at what the sector needs, what social movements need' (PSO-2).

When it came to hired teams, a foundation hiring for diversity reflected on their practice sharing, 'In our grants team, we've had hiring straight from the internship [only open to persons from historically marginalised communities] into grants' (PF-3). They further elaborated on how this affects all downstream partner interaction and management processes. Another foundation shared, 'For us, there is definitely a strong focus on having people who have been in any field role in the past' (PF-1). Diversity, even if only at the team level has a limited, although positive impact, as a leading non-profit illustrated, 'They [the foundation] understood the rights landscape pretty quickly, because I think it has mostly to do with the people who are getting employed there, and what kind of backgrounds they're coming with' (NP-1).

The analysis is limited by not being able to peruse different diversity indicators comprehensively as some organisations talked about this in detail, while others summed it up briefly, and not all information is publicly available online. However, both the representation and lived experience of marginalisation, in decisioning and implementation, is a key enabler for funding. Moreover, it reveals how a foundation not only espouses but practises its stated values. For example, the question of caste is central when working on issues of justice and rights. Yet, hardly any of the foundations interviewed expressed their work in these terms. Very few have representation from marginalised backgrounds that may push for this reckoning. Contrast this with Global North philanthropy trying to address questions of white supremacy and racism and the possibilities this can spur (Naylor and Blackwell,

2022). Debrahminisation and the dismantling of caste supremacy in social justice work is critical, and a diversely constituted management and team structure can ensure that 'an anti-caste analysis and lens be brought into the work of all social justice practitioners, foundations, movements, and narratives whether fighting for economic, gender, racial, or environmental justice' (Patankar 2021).

The findings reveal how diversely constituted foundations (at Board, leadership and staff levels) can enable funding for social justice. However, among the interviewed foundations only a few reflect this in their practice across levels at present.

b. ⬆ Peer sharing and learning enables support

'"Philanthropy has been a lonely space," Raj [Mariwala, Director at the leading grantmaking foundation, Mariwala Health Initiative] says (The Philanthropist, 2023). Most interviewed foundations mentioned that they do not share best practices and learnings with one another as such, or at least not in a structured way, and/or are unsure if their conversations with one another are having any influence or impact. A leading national fund shared the dilemmas and challenges on this front, saying, 'Bringing funders around the table to have these conversations is not easy. It's not a very easily mobilised community I can say' (PF-6).

In some cases, the nature of the funding model, such as collaborative funds, have meant that more foundations come together to solve a common problem. Peer learning in these cases can be very useful, especially for first-time funders in these domains, for those with anxieties around these themes or about how these funds may cause impact, and/or when new areas are being explored, so that the 'burden of discovery doesn't lie on a single organisation' (PSO-1).

There have been some shifts in recent years, as PF-6 recounts. 'There is, I think, a sense since COVID has happened … of being able to see how you can do things better … now I slowly see people trying to make an effort to build those forums'. In the post-COVID landscape, for example, the Grassroots, Resilience, Ownership and Wellness (GROW) Fund by EdelGive Foundation was born, bringing together 20 institutional and individual funders who supported key organisational resilience building and future readiness for 100 grassroots non-profits (AVPN Asia, 2022 and EdelGive-GROW, n.d.).

A leading non-profit also highlights how donor signalling can enable others to build similar portfolios too. 'It needs to be made much more acceptable, even aspirational, for people to give beyond education, medical or need-based charity or religious donations, to more widely in India' (NP-6). PSO-4, working with a sizable network of private foundations and investors, shared how funders can be motivated by one another's work, saying, 'Document those case studies [of how foundations have enabled shifts] and those journeys from that lens … that will be a very, very powerful thing for others to then follow'.

In recent years, both national and international forums and opportunities have also emerged for foundations to connect and learn from one another, such as via The Giving Pledge, Asian Venture Philanthropy Network events, Dasra Philanthropy Forum, Giving Pi[7], among others. The dialogue in these spaces may still be determined by the priorities of the organising entities, but it is clear that more conversations are happening around funding practices, the need for long-term and flexible funding, and related aspects. Funders can '… model the process for others … upend the status quo by setting a new example for their peers' (Florant and Williams, 2022).

Peer sharing and learning is also a critical conversation for foundations in this sector, given how few of them there are in India. There are likely to be big shifts, even if a prominent donor or a few change their focus areas or restrict funding. As a leading philanthropist says, 'Wherever I go, whichever NGO I deal with, they also have the same limited number of donors, and they're just half a dozen or maybe ten at most!' (PF-2)

The model of collaborative funds is an interesting one for cross-sharing and learning. However, it has its limitations as the following quote illustrates. 'One of the things that we can definitely outline is that collaboratives will be leaning towards more service delivery and action, as opposed to rights and advocacy', says PSO-2, a leading catalyst in these networks. A more focused analysis of philanthropic collaboratives can highlight the opportunities and tensions in this space, and how foundations can encourage one another to overcome prevailing barriers.

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[7] The Giving Pledge 'is a promise by the world's wealthiest individuals and families to dedicate the majority of their wealth to charitable causes' (The Giving Pledge, n.d.). Asian Venture Philanthropy Network is Asia's leading social investor network. Dasra Philanthropy Forum is 'the only annual Indian event dedicated exclusively to advancing and strengthening philanthropy' (Dasra, n.d.). Giving Pi is 'India's first and exclusive family philanthropy network focused on growing the philanthropy circle for a transformed India, where a billion thrive with dignity and equity' (GivingPi, n.d.).

Overall, the findings demonstrate how peer sharing and learning from one another can serve as a strong enabler to funding. However, foundations need to overcome their own silos and create opportunities to share and learn from one another. Inspirations and learnings from each other's practices also have the potential to influence bolder collaborative initiatives for justice and rights. This remains to be explored further.

   c. ⬆ Greater experience of funding and learning from the experiences enables support

Interviewed foundations explained how their funding evolved with increasing experience in this domain. As PF-2, the leader at a prominent grantmaking organisation shared, 'Initially, my purpose was plain and simple charity … [but over time] through my discussions with others, they pointed out, there's a limit to how many [masked] you can build … the main thing is if you can set the systems right'.

A prominent PSO advising philanthropy also reflected on this aspect, adding, 'The large foundations have, you know, evolved to that stage after a bunch of grantmaking' (PSO-4). The leader of a prominent fund described how their work today involves, '… a lot of sharing between national, regional, sub-regional funds on what's working, what's not working, how can we collaborate, how do we share information with each other about opportunities for fundraising, for seeking funds?' (PF-6).

Interviews revealed that while the initial interest to support a particular thematic is driven by personal interest or triggers, the nature of support deepens over time. At the start, foundations may sometimes work in traditional ways or support more traditional organisations in their area of interest. Especially for foundations with a learning mindset and deep listening capabilities, efforts likely pivot and sharpen over time to address systemic issues.

The experience around funding also relates to who is being funded. Newer non-profits starting out often struggle as they don't have a body of experience to showcase, as an interviewed respondent shared, '[M]ost donors don't want to take that risk to be a first donor for that organisation' (NP-7). 'Most funders would go with the tried and tested well-known sort of organisations that are not necessarily led by people from the community they're trying to change', said another foundation leader (PF-6). Among the interviewed foundations, some have changed strategies to

support organisations with smaller sized grants. Reflecting on this same challenge, another interviewed non-profit leader said, 'Both global as well as local philanthropies will require to introspect much more deeply. They also need to have more conversations, with their grant officers, whether they are going to the usual suspects, the top 10 NGOs' (NP-6).

The journey of learning from philanthropic giving acquires more significance within the Indian context, 'where philanthropy is now evolving to actually serve ourselves and foreign funders are retracting', said PSO-2, which works with a range of philanthropy partners. With prominent private foundations being set up within the last decade, sources of funding have grown. Although a large segment comprises corporate foundations whose funding operates within a limited development agenda, there are newer supporters for justice and rights work too. While some may be intergenerational funders, there are some first-time wealth creators turned philanthropists too. It remains to be seen how differently these categories will operate in the years ahead.

The research findings illustrate strongly that learnings from prior funding experience in justice and rights enable resourcing in times ahead. As funders gain more experience through their interventions, they invest in deeper change efforts.

d. ⬆ Support for ecosystem building, in addition to project funding, is an enabler

All interviewed foundations shared how they work intersectorally and intersectionally, deploying many approaches to get at the same problems. Foundations recognised that an enabling ecosystem is key to achieve justice and rights oriented goals, articulating their work in some of the following ways. 'Whatever we are funding or working on, has to engage with structural oppression and social justice' (PF-3), 'support ideas, individuals and institutions that build the foundation that can build society' (PF-5), a 'complex, wicked problem ... There is no simple one solution, one sector, one lever answer to this' (PF-4). An interviewed PSO also described their work as, an 'ecosystem enabler ... [to] activate and interconnect networks to be able to do more than what they're doing individually' (PSO-3).

However, despite the stated intersectionality, and greater intentionality around funding, an interviewed PSO described the limitations of the current funding approach as, 'there is a hesitation to, you know, go one level deeper in terms of

looking at caste more closely … and it's probably different in one geography versus another, but really understanding what will it take to move the needle.' (PSO-1). Another prominent PSO working with multi-stakeholder groups on systemic issues, articulated it as, 'In the last few years, I see a shift towards trying to deploy solutions rather than unpacking the problem … trying to understand the starting point … without this it's just one part of the solution, one part of the problem that you have solved' (PSO-3).

An interviewed foundation mentioned how they are getting started by 'trying to find pockets where the government is starting to think intersectionally … 'if you can grab an inch of local decision making, you are in a better place' (PF-4).

While the stated intent to ecosystem building is enabling, foundations will need to bridge the gaps between articulation and action, to get to root causes. It is critical to build and strengthen ecosystems, but equally necessary to do this at all levels to ensure sustainable systemic change.

From Self to Society: Effects of the External Environment

The external environment comprises the wider socio-economic and political circumstances that foundations operate in, as well as the current laws and regulations in place. Especially for social justice focused work, the external environment and its influences and pressures can impact what work is supported and how. The research illustrates that:

⬇ Risk with accountability focused work demotivates support

Justice and rights focused work seeks systemic change, and accountability from decision makers and leaders to enable this. Therefore, philanthropic support for this work has to consider the risks of questioning power. A growing philanthropy shared this dilemma as, 'We would like to continue to function, right? So we don't want to take an antagonistic stance against anybody' (PF-4). A non-profit shared some recent funder responses to their work as, 'We've come across these kinds of explanations, quite often, where they say—You're doing fantastic work! But we really do not want to get our hands muddied by supporting you' (NP-2). Another leading PSO said, 'The space for having a differing political view in India has shrunk, right. And

on top of that, you add this thing of trying to sensitise masses' (PSO-3).
An experienced funder, looking at the situation over the past few years, explained the prevailing anxieties as, 'Don't get into something where you have to explain yourself' (PF-2).

These risk apprehensions influence the boundaries of what foundations support, as the following quotes reveal. 'We've stayed away from anything that looks like activism or litigation so far', a prominent foundation, PF-4 said. There is more funding around 'simpler themes of rights and advocacy—so rights of girls, child rights, women's rights, domestic violence, as opposed to going mainstream and working on projects that directly contest with the government', said PSO-2, which partners with many different foundations for their work. A non-profit working on access to rights shared, 'For example, leveraging … public interest litigations … now it's a strict no go … It is sad, because we are a legitimate homespun Indian institution … using a legitimate instrument of accountability and in public interest' (NP-5). These boundaries also lead to other implications, as a prominent non-profit leader shared, 'We have naturally started to lie low on our unionisation work … we're unable to make unions and our collectives very central to our own discussions and debates with policy makers … unable to say clearly, that these are also union-led arguments ' (NP-1).

What has enabled funding in some cases, foundations say, is their support to organisations rather than specific projects. In some cases, philanthropists contribute individually as well as through their foundations, to offer support in diversified ways. 'It is just as well because laws, as they have changed over the last few years, have made it claustrophobic for funding agencies … there are hurdles in all directions', says an experienced foundation leader (PF-2).

The other challenge to enforcing accountability, that emerged from the interviews, relates to the mutualism between the source of philanthropic capital—business—and the government. A leading PSO identified this demotivator as, 'because of that correlation between the government and philanthropy, I think philanthropy is averse to taking risks and holding governments accountable' (PSO-2). A non-profit reflected on this question, adding, 'Philanthropy and giving are some of the tools used to

create political patronage … poverty, inequality, injustice is not entirely due to lack of resources. A large part of it is political' (NP-9).

On accountability, some non-profits are not only seeking it externally, but also focusing on how they can be more accountable themselves. An enabling practice by a non-profit has been, 'To be more critical to ourselves … [to counter] the larger perception about civil society organisations—that we are not accountable, we are not transparent' (NP-10).

This non-profit has consciously engaged with the state more frequently in recent years. They share that when a study of theirs was not agreed to by the government, they used it as an opportunity to keep engaging, sharing the raw study data too, and persisting till there was acceptance of their findings. '[Eventually] we developed a policy for the state government … the system should know that what we are saying is not politically motivated. It is actually evidence and fact based'.

Accountability seeking increases risks, as the findings demonstrate. Therefore, it often emerges as the demotivator for funding. However, interviewed foundations not only talked about existing risks, but also how some of them are overcoming current barriers. It will be critical to further strengthen tactical approaches ahead.

⬇ Frequently changing regulations demotivate support

Interviewed foundations, especially the smaller foundations, shared the impact of recent regulatory changes, such as the amendments to the Income Tax Act, The Companies (CSR Policy) Amendment Rules 2021, and the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act Amendments. 'We have great difficulty in even understanding the law, because sometimes these changes are subtle, and they impact you in a manner which is not clear from the language. And so just understanding it, getting the legal opinions, and then doing the right thing … it [regulatory changes] keeps happening, not as if it happened once … it happens again and again and again', says the leader of a foundation (PF-2) which operates with a lean team.

Limitations and restrictions of some of the regulatory conditions also impose barriers, as respondents revealed. For instance, given the scale of CSR giving in the country and some of its larger indicators—project based funding, short-term cycles, measurable outcomes—these conditions are also seen in other forms of philanthropic giving, as a leading foundation commented: 'If there was more flexibility in thinking about it long-term, and thinking of systems change, rather than this whole implementation bias to CSR … If the regulatory framework took cognizance of this possibility a little more, it would definitely help a lot' (PF-4).

A fund supporting the rights of marginalised persons called out another gap, saying, 'There are a lot of … unregistered groups that are doing really good work … but they remain out of the margins of most funders simply because there is a requirement for grantmaking, that it should be registered groups' (PF-6).

Many of the interviewed foundations didn't want to state the impact of regulatory changes on their work in detail. Opinions varied among the three categories of respondents on whether the FCRA licence renewal challenges have impacted which organisations receive support, and which don't. Foundations acknowledged that they have a higher application load now. Some shared that as long as there are no red flags associated with a non-profit's FCRA status, they are okay to support. 'Today if you are funded by … some of the well-known Indian philanthropists, then it automatically kind of becomes a surrogate for what they were looking at from an FCRA point of view', PSO-4, which advises many investors, said.

On the non-profit side, those whose FCRA licence has been suspended, struggle to raise money, sometimes even from domestic sources. They also attribute it to increased competition for domestic funding in the sector, and the reluctance of funders to support areas that are governance related, rights focused, and empowerment oriented. 'Today it is extremely difficult to find anybody from the domestic philanthropy sector to support work on empowering people in terms of anti-corruption laws or access to information laws, or citizen rights vis-à-vis the police', says NP-2, with significant experience of rights focused work.

The leader at a respondent non-profit, whose FC licence is now operational, with a stay order from the court on their earlier suspension, shared how they have found it

challenging to raise money domestically. While their foreign licence was operational, they had not actively pursued domestic donors. A leading Indian foundation was conducting due diligence on them while their income tax inquiry was on. The foundation initially said that the inquiry had no bearing on their internal practices, and even agreed to fund them after due checks, but subsequently they backtracked.

The findings reveal how regulatory changes of the past few years have added pressure to the non-profit funding cycle. While compliance is an important prerogative, it is critical 'to also ensure that these laws are relevant, proportionate, transparent and permit accountability and redress and that they are framed through inclusive, participatory processes' (Srinath in CSIP, 2019).

Given their current top-down approach, however, frequently changing regulations end up demotivating support.

How the Grantmaking Process Enables or Impedes

The findings in this section, especially the first three, are relevant for all kinds of grantmaking to non-profits. That is, even service-oriented work benefits from longer and more flexible grant cycles, from community-driven models, and accessible grantmaking processes.

For social justice focused work, these aspects become more critical. As this work is long-term in nature, longer duration grant cycles play a critical facilitatory role. A community-driven design is essential, with grassroots leadership guiding systemic change efforts. Accessible grantmaking practices ensure that non-profits most in need can also reach out to seek support. Further, the findings illustrate the following:

⬆ Grant structure: Duration, nature of grant, and flexibility

Interviews revealed that foundations typically structure grants on a multi-year basis (largely in three or five yearly cycles, which may be renewed basis need). Grants may be designed in different ways, as project support grants, organisational grants, grants to continue interventions earlier supported by another partner and so on.

Some of the interviewed foundations spoke about their grantmaking process in the following words. 'Our goal is to provide unrestricted multi-year grants, because we

believe that it's necessary for ideas, individuals and institutions early in their journey, to be able to derisk their work and build a body of evidence, that people might support later' (PF-5). 'We don't fund for just three years or five years as many of the agencies do. We treat this as a long term association. So by and large, we go on for a long time. I mean, I have not discontinued with anyone so far' (PF-2).

Another foundation shared how agility in one's funding operations can make a key difference, especially for small grassroots organisations: 'In fact, there was one funder who kind of pulled funds overnight … So what happened then was that a) these organisations were left without funding … and b) they were still too small to apply for either foreign funds or to apply to bigger grantmaking organisations [domestically] … So after we came in and funded them [one such organisation] for two years, we were able to reach out to [name of domestic foundation], make introductions, have [foundation] come and visit us, open up our Excel sheets and

show them funding flows and you know, show them that paying for all these salaries is what would make this program work. And in the end, they got [foundation name] funding but they would not have been able to make that. At that point it was like you have to get over one crore already to be eligible', says PF-3.

This same foundation mentioned practices they institute to enable funding resilience for non-profits. 'Ideally, we wouldn't want any of our partners to be solely dependent on us as funders … So whether some of our partners are able to build a corpus using the money that we give them, or for us to actively reach out to other funders on their behalf and get more funding coming in. This need not be for a program that we are funding …. and of course, this definitely falls into place when we are planning our exit from a partner. We do try to ensure that we have other funding in place for them to continue that work' (PF-3). The foundation's role in this case demonstrates how critical support of this nature can be. It is also significant, since non-profits may be limited in their ability to reach diverse funding networks.

Flexibility in grantmaking also emerged as a key enabler in interviews, and private foundations can enable this in different ways, as the following example from one of them shows. 'We try to keep it very flexible … you can make changes in your budget line items within a certain percentage and you just have to inform us, you don't even have to take permission … If you're facing a problem in restructuring your budget, our finance team will help you work a way out … If you're having a problem in reporting, our program team will help you figure it out … Now we're thinking of a mechanism

where the burden of report writing should not be on the partners; we should be capturing those stories' (PF-6). Another foundation shared how this facet is core to their conversations with non-profits. 'From the very beginning, when we're having the initial conversations and discussing the proposal, we keep an open mind and try to look at what their [partner] requirement is as opposed to what our framework is' (PF-3).

The findings illustrate how the duration of the grant, its nature and flexibility are all key enablers to funding. Where foundations have offered perpetual funding, as in the recent case of Azim Premji Foundation, non-profits have also been able to invest in organisational development and build resilience (Mishra, 2023). Recent research on the impact of Mackenzie Scott's large unrestricted grant also illustrates the same (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, 2023). Thus, higher grant duration cycles and increased flexibility aid both foundations and non-profits to better invest in justice and rights oriented work.

⬆ Community-driven model

Interviews revealed that domestically, interest in community-driven models of change has grown. Foundations are invested in building the leadership of communities, and to enable this in diverse ways, within their larger thematic of supporting change.

Some of the interviewed foundations described their work for community-led change as follows. 'The broader picture is to let communities participate in the process of problem solving … essential for good governance and good society' (PF-5). 'The idea is to fund community based organisations that are very steeped in the community, are run by the community themselves, and can take charge' (PF-3). 'We look at organisations that are good in terms of their presence in the community, their past rapport with the community' (PF-1)'.

Community-focused work is strengthened when partnerships respond to their needs. As a leading foundation says, 'We are only supporting them, so it is their objective that we look at and see if it makes sense to us … We may give suggestions … but these are entirely subject to their acceptance and approval and we don't push hard or anything. That is their business (PF-2)'.

The commitment to community-driven change is also often coming from foundations that are investing for the long-term, as an experienced PSO in this domain adds. 'If you, as a funder, are thinking about creating impact that will last over generations, if you're thinking about scale ... then think about community driven change' (PSO-1).

At the other end, non-profits whose work spans from community organising to advocacy share what demotivates holistic support from foundations. 'You just be in the community, facilitate services entitlements, some collectivisation ... but then don't get into anything beyond that ... This comes a lot, particularly from the local donors ... they will not fund a campaign or the secretariat of a campaign or your networking to build a campaign ... what is missing, for instance, when local philanthropies don't support larger advocacy, is that we can't then attract more specialised resources—human resources, programmatic resources, so we're always left trying to balance this with that', says NP-11, highlighting this gap.

The findings highlight how a community-driven model is a key funding enabler. Yet, they also highlight how foundations and non-profits need to be well-aligned on each other's strengths, to take ahead the learnings from community-focused designs to larger justice and rights oriented networks and goals.

⬆ Iterative improvements to make grantmaking more accessible

Interviews revealed how foundations are enabling grantmaking practices for non-profit partners. From simplifying existing formats to accepting proposals in multiple languages, taking in proposals as prepared for other funders, foundations are testing different ways to make the application cycle smoother for partners. Those with more evolved practices are doing away with fixed application formats, being open to receiving an email as a concept note, and/or improving framing questions for proposals. This remains an iterative process, as a foundation shares, 'It's a process of learning by doing ... we are very mindful about taking feedback from partners from time to time to say, what can we do better? ... but it's an ongoing process' (PF-6).

A brief glimpse of some of the most evolved practices heard during interviews are presented through the following quotes. 'We try to make the grant application as

simple and clear as possible … If you don't have access to the internet, …
you can just send us a write up and that's fine too. But we … still are not at the stage ….
to take audio proposals, or ask people to send in a video' (PF-6). 'If the concept note
has been given to us and we've had some calls with them and feel like there is a
value alignment and merit in taking this further, then we will actually help the partner
in writing out the proposal if need be, and of course, looking at the numbers and
doing those as well, because there are often times when smaller teams may just not
have the kind of bandwidth or capacity within their team' (PF-3). 'On a case to case
basis, each of the grant managers could kind of pursue those kinds of opportunities
[financial assistance if an applicant needs to visit some other organisations to see
their work and develop their own proposal]' (PF-1).

However, the experience from the non-profit side on how accessible application
processes are may be contrary in some cases. The leader at an experienced
non-profit says. 'When they [a foundation] came for another grant, they said, "Oh, we
made it simple". … I said I don't think it's simple at all, have you asked NGOs … and
they had nothing to say … Maybe they've gone from 20 sub sheets on that Excel sheet
to 10 sub sheets … not all organisations can have these specialised folks just servicing
this grant' (NP-11).

In terms of what they look for from applicants, most foundations mentioned that it is
the non-profit's understanding of the problem and how they seek to intervene. 'How
organisations see their work in the larger context and the system in which they
operate' (PF-5). 'We always make field visits to the shortlisted set of organisations,
spend time with them, understand their work, understand why they're doing what
they're doing, where their motivation is coming from. And use that opportunity to also
understand a little bit about how the organisation is living out its values, how
participatory the process is, both within the community and within the organisation,
and use this data to make a final decision on which partners we can support' (PF-6).

While interviewed foundations mentioned how they have evolved their grantmaking
processes, some of them still have a closed application process. This means that
support only reaches a certain circle. And even with open application processes,
access is still conditional on additional factors. A progressive foundation
acknowledges this gap. 'We are still dependent on people using our website [to
reach out]. And while we do tell our partners to spread the word about us, that may
not be enough. We also tend to ask our partners who are working in marginalised
communities for recommendations quite often … but I think one really does need to
move beyond traditional ways to allow people to approach you, and I think we

haven't yet quite figured out how to be better at that' (PF-3). A one-size-fits-all application format can be restricting for smaller organisations, without the specialised skill sets, as a long-standing non-profit says. 'We have a limited reach within funding networks. Sometimes we are unable to frame proposals as desired, and also unable to afford those who can help with this kind of writing' (NP-3). A leading PSO also describes the barriers and limits of cold calling. 'Fundamentally, the challenge from an NGO side is to a) showcase the work properly, b) be a little bit more strategic about who you approach and how you approach them. If you go directly, it's not going to work. But how do you approach, via a peer always or a referral, so that at least they give you that audience' (PSO-4).

The findings demonstrate that the foundations are taking different steps to evolve grantmaking practices. However, accessibility to grantmaking is an important precondition to this enabler, and this needs to be studied closely, especially from the lens: are non-profits, especially the smaller sized organisations located in remote geographies, able to approach foundations for support?

⬇ Rights-justice framing: Positioning and language

Respondents shared the challenges of aligning with a rights-justice framing, and how this is a demotivating factor. For one, the separation caused by created categories, such as rights based work or service-oriented work is falsifying. While they may be seen as discrete, implementing organisations often work in an integrated way. There is recognition of this across foundations, PSOs and non-profits as the following quotes reveal. 'I think conceptually it is very difficult to define what is rights based and what is service based. In every work, there is an element of the right of a citizen to avail this particular entitlement or a benefit, and there is always a service associated, to which the government has an accountability' said a prominent domestic foundation, PF-1. Representatives at an experienced PSO echoed this, adding: 'In reality, service delivery and rights and advocacy are flip sides of the same coin, especially while working with communities and focusing on people who have been historically marginalised, while factoring in all their intersectionality' (PSO-2). An experienced non-profit working to enable both rights and services shared, 'From our perspective, we try to convince or educate the donor to not put these things in different boxes and basically, try to think comprehensively' (NP-7).

While there is recognition that categories create separations, lack of its reflection in project design in a holistic way reduces funding support for organisations which work

in this space. Moreover, respondents shared how each organisation's use of language and framing sometimes alienates it from another. Reflecting on this challenge, a foundation shared, 'Non-profits often need to pitch certain aspects of their work, in terms of let's say, capacity building, livelihoods' (PF-3). A prominent PSO further added, 'Rights and advocacy is fairly complex for them … within the mandates that they may have as the foundation' (PSO-2). Additionally, an interviewed non-profit leader placed this dissonance within the larger perspectives about non-profit work, saying, 'On a day-to-day basis, the media publishes hundreds of stories against the not-for-profit … in the larger society, the narrative about us is very negative' (NP-7).

A foundation also explained what role they are considering to overcome this challenge. 'What we heard from a lot of private philanthropists was the need … for a bridge actually … that will help them understand the language and the vocabulary that a lot of rights based groups use many times that they don't understand completely … they felt nobody's playing that role, and that's really important to be done at this point', said PF-6.

The findings reveal how the challenges of aligning on framing and positionality increase, given how foundations and non-profits often use language quite differently. There is increasing anxiety about how to frame, what words to use. Given the commitment to the same broader goals, though, it is critical to consider how the barriers around the use of language and framing can be overcome, to enable funding.

The Role of the Project Praxis

Social justice focused work demands specific conditions during the project praxis for its continuation and success. To start with, it is key to align on perceptions that both foundations as well as non-profit partners hold about each other's roles (intention as well as implementation), as well as the perception the foundation has regarding its own giving and reputation building around it. Additionally, short term impact may be hard to achieve and measure, and when scale is only looked at linearly it may be limiting. Moreover, with additional support to non-profit partners through the grantmaking process, in different ways, foundations can increase grassroots resilience and implementation capacities in key ways. On how different aspects of the project praxis may influence funding support, the research findings illustrate the following:

⬇ Perception to action: Intent and implementation gap and concerns with attribution

Trust and alignment between foundations and non-profit partners is key, to allay any concerns of gaps between proposed intentions and how the implementation unfolds. How each side perceives the other's role, and how it translates through the partnership is critical for its success. Respondents spoke about their anxieties related to perceived gaps between intent and implementation, and concerns about attribution, if sought. A prominent private foundation voiced this dilemma as, 'So it is very difficult to assess whether what we are supporting is genuinely for the cause of the most vulnerable' (PF-1). A leading PSO highlighted this aspect too, adding, 'Be very, very sure that you're not leaning towards a particular set. So areligious, apolitical … and how do you give them that confidence is going to be very very crucial' (PSO-4).

Attribution emerges as a big challenge too, as respondents revealed. A leading philanthropy described it as, 'Attribution is useful for certain things, but it's also a blocker for a lot of good outcomes … because these are complex, systemic changes. No one effort, no one whatsoever will add up to a dramatic change in a short term way' (PF-4). A PSO further detailed the gradual shift in expectations as, 'A brandable and ribbon cutting moment as opposed to having a systemic change, and now I think that shift is coming a little bit in certain pockets, but not by any means across the board' (PSO-3).

The findings highlight how the perceptions of gaps between intention and implementation, as well as needs around attribution may be a demotivator. They reinforce that, given how justice and rights focused work operates, with its impact not being easily visible or immediately tangible, trust is key among partners. Additionally, concerns around attribution are also connected to the questions about the legacy that philanthropy aims to build around its giving. This provokes the question, what steps can philanthropy take to prioritise what is needed and reduce the risk of being self-serving?

⬇Preference for impact (measurability, certainty, short-term outcomes) often demotivates funding

Respondents shared how the preference for short-term and certain impact, which can be measured, is a key funding demotivator. A PSO shared on this aspect as, 'The service delivery model is easy to explain. It ends, there is something as an output at the end of one year, whereas a lot of the advocacy and rights work is a long term sort of sustained effort. And the tangibility of that becomes difficult to assess' (PSO-2). The leader at an experienced foundation detailed, 'As far as others are concerned, most of them have great difficulty in looking at things long term … How do you measure this and how do you satisfy yourself that you're doing the right thing?' (PF-2). A non-profit with decades of experience echoed the sentiment. 'They would like to see cut-and-dried kind of description of outcomes … that's not how empowerment works. That's not how inculcating a culture of citizenship among citizens works' (NP-2). Offering a tangible example, a leading non-profit said, 'If we had stopped the project after four years of work, we would have been a failure, because there would not have been a single right granted. But from the 5th, 6th, 7th year, slowly the situation changed' (NP-4).

These quotes from the study respondents highlight the challenges with outcomes in justice and rights focused work, which are often long-term and not easily measurable. Sometimes intermediate goals may be challenging to measure too and the pathways to change may be winding. When it's around justiciable rights, such as implementation of the Right to Education Act, it's still more tangible and easier to find support for, as opposed to any long term policy change, or shifts in Government Resolutions. On the non-profit side, organisations that don't do direct grassroots implementation also find it challenging to show measurable impact, as highlighted by respondents in interviews.

What is being measured, while working for change is also key, as a respondent shared: 'If you see most of the websites [of NGOs] they say that, so many million people reached. All of them put together, I think we would have reached everyone in the country. But are those parameters really the ones that are going to solve the problems of malnutrition or poverty?' (NP-4). The leader at a progressive fund summarised impact as, 'It's important to be accountable for the money you're taking, so you must have numerical data. But you must be able to see numerical data against the context of the fact that you're countering some thousands of years of inequality' (PF-6). This same foundation highlighted how critical it is that 'the outcome is not framed in a way which is very close ended … like, they have attended

so many meetings, so many workshops… but it's using concepts like agency or leadership' (PF-6).

The findings highlight the importance of indicators for impact providing a meaningful sense of the transformation taking place and whether it empowers or disempowers communities in the process. Moreover, with a chunk of giving in India moving the corporate social responsibility route, bias towards short-term giving and easily measurable outcomes has grown. This drives the question: When supporting work of this nature, are funders okay to fail or to seed something which doesn't succeed in the short run?

⬆ <u>Scale with depth enables funding</u>

On the question of scale, interviewed domestic foundations shared how they go beyond staid indicators to really assess what shifts their work enabled in the ecosystem, even if it is ongoing, or at the early/intermediate stages. A foundation described it as, '… being reasonable around the pace and complexity of social

change … each programme is so unique … therefore the partnership should be seen as being limited to how the fund has helped an organisation build their capacities around a certain issue … how said capacities have led to improved implementation on the ground … there is change if the starting points are very different in that community' (PF-1).

About how they frame scale, foundations said that they have often taken time to refine their own understanding. 'We were trying to figure out what measurement would look like to account for these larger directional, needle moving changes that we were trying to imagine. I think now we have a better sense of it. It has to come through the lived experiences of people', says PF-4, having evolved this understanding over time. 'I mean the results that I see are process results. That means the process has improved, it has gone further', says PF-2, with decades of experience in supporting this work. A non-profit also sums up the framing experience from the lens of philanthropy as, 'Three types of foundations are there … one believes in depth … second in scale … and the third category is, some donors believe in both … scale and depth … we believe depth versus scale is not a good thing, but scale with depth is our idea' (NP-7).

35

A leading foundation shared the limitations when only looking at scale in terms of increasing linear outreach. 'Most philanthropists want to go with what they call scale … they do not want to look at groups which have tiny budgets or … they don't show potential for scale … because of this mindset, you find that those who are lesser known and who're working on the margins tend to get constantly left out' (PF-6).

The research findings reveal how the question of 'scale with depth' is a critical one, and needs to be determined in an empowering way for communities. When foundations can do this, this is a critical enabling factor. Foundations that do not look at scale only in terms of increasing numbers unlock deeper opportunities for systemic shifts.

⬆ Additional support through grantmaking

Social justice work is often undertaken by grassroots focused non-profits that may or may not be professionally trained. Learnings from lived experiences can be richly supplemented by a range of organisational development skills, which refine and improve community-driven models of change onground. Additional support from foundations, on different organisational parameters, can play a crucial role to

strengthen organisational development and resilience. Interviewed foundations shared how they are expanding the ambit of how they support partnering non-profits.

'It could be some networking support, it could be providing some sort of marketing or designing support … it is very routine and it happens with each and every partner … [their CEO] mentors personally a lot of our partners … We found that there is a need for mentorship, more frequent check-ins and just more talking support to think through what they're doing or what they intend to do' (PF-3). 'There's a lot of… what we call an accompaniment support journey … a lot of investment of time in connecting them to similar organisations or experts in organising training programs and capacity building … creating mechanisms for partners to share with each other, how their work is going on, what are the challenges they're facing, and to sort of explore solutions together' (NP-6).

A leading foundation explained how they create space so partners can reach out as needed, adding, 'When someone has a problem, they come and discuss it, because they find that people like us, we're not going to be upset if they have missed the date

or they have not been able to do what they set out to do … they need some help, and we try to provide that to the extent … mostly it is encouragement' (PF-2).

A progressive fund also shared how the added support, in addition to the grant, also offers non-profits the opportunity to step back and assess how they can work better. 'Spaces for doing this kind of reflection and analysis for grassroots organisations are very limited. And they have to be intentionally facilitated. Otherwise, organisations are so busy just doing, that they don't really get the time to reflect and many times typical funders are not interested in investing in these processes because you know, it's not seen as part of the programmes' (PF-6).

The findings demonstrate how creating the space where partners can reach out and ask what they need has been the most evolved nature of this support. In this way, partners can also talk more freely about the critical gap areas. Additional support through grantmaking is a key enabler. The examples reveal how it can help non-profits build core resilience and adaptability skills, in addition to being able to respond to project requirements.

2. How do non-profits navigate financial support on justice and rights?

Non-profits working on issues of justice and rights often struggle in seeking resources for their work. Conversations with respondents revealed that they are using a range of strategies to navigate support from private foundations, as detailed in this section. This includes, strategically reframing how they present their work, to raising not just for their projects but larger issues, and how they manage compliance to evolving regulatory norms. It is also important to acknowledge that non-profits with stable funding and well-evolved programmes are able to undertake these strategies much more successfully than others who are struggling on these accounts and related aspects.

<u>Diversifying funding sources, seeking part funding for initiatives, occasionally cross funding rights work with other work, and exploring retail fundraising where possible</u>

The interviews revealed that non-profits are diversifying how they can raise money. This is driven by the fact that there are few foundations providing funding for social

justice. As a leading non-profit, NP-1 says, 'The problem is, for the kind of work we do, there are very few domestic donors'. From philanthropic foundations to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, support from high net worth individuals to accessing collaborative funding or exploring retail fundraising, non-profits are intentionally diversifying their funding in different ways, building their domestic portfolio to reduce the reliance on foreign funders. Organisations which have only relied on foreign funding are more pressured, given the recent retraction of funding from this source. While many interviewed non-profits do have periodic interactions with the government, none mentioned seeking financial support from them directly to implement their work.

Where organisations have sometimes made shifts from their core work to cross fund rights based work, they reiterated that they are mindful the focus doesn't shift to donor driven priorities. 'We've done small things, but it has to fit within the core of the work' (NP-6). Another prominent non-profit shared their conversation with a donor to seek part funding: 'We very clearly told our donor, if you don't want to support one intervention of the programme, feel free to say no … we will raise money for that intervention from another donor' (NP-7).

From the interviews, it also emerged that retail fundraising is an area of interest for non-profits. '… especially as a rights based organisation, to create that citizen engagement … that's a large pool that is kind of not fully tapped to its potential today' (PSO-4). '… ordinary Indians give money … that's a great value statement that keeps us accountable, helps us be transparent to people, gives us legitimacy when we're questioned' (NP-6). However, interviewed leaders shared that whether non-profits are able to implement retail fundraising practices depends on where organisations are in terms of their growth and priorities, and the capacity to invest in this area. 'I know many people talk about it, but it needs capacity to do it, maintain it, service it … We are not so set up, we don't have a separate fundraising team' (NP-1). '[Our] focus might go off on just raising funds rather than doing the work on hand' (NP-4). 'We've been less successful, because, you know, I guess our model doesn't lend itself to retail fundraising' (NP-5). 'Nor are donor agencies willing to support those kinds of activities because there is not much of an outcome to show at the end of it' (NP-2).

The findings reveal how justice and rights focused organisations need to have a diverse funding portfolio, to take ahead the work on the ground with strength. Sometimes part-funding and cross-funding approaches have built their resources.

Although interest in retail fundraising has grown, non-profits acknowledge that this needs investment and focus, and not all organisations are able to devote time and effort to develop this capacity.

<u>Building support for issues rather than projects, externally and internally</u>

Interviewed non-profits emphasised the need to build support for issues rather than projects, both internally and externally. As a leading non-profit shared, 'If you want to raise money for a particular issue, don't try to raise money for your own organisation. But try to build that issue within the sector … If they started investing … you will be the first beneficiary or second beneficiary because of that narration building or field building' (NP-7). A prominent PSO highlighted how this approach makes non-profits uniquely collaborative. 'You see a lot of organisations naturally working together very organically, to not actually compete with each other. And to say that, if one of us gets funding, it means that the sector gets funding because I think the funding pool has been so difficult to get' (PSO-2).

Additionally, some interviewed non-profits shared how they work to facilitate the setup and strengthening of a diverse range of local institutions (including collectives, self-help groups, community-based organisations and other entities) that go beyond project-based support to work on wider justice and rights focused goals.

They help these entities develop from their formative stages to independent organisations. This strategy ensures that grassroots leadership can drive change processes.

A long standing non-profit (NP-7), for instance, shared how they support small and medium sized community-based organisations. While they initially subgrant to these organisations from domestic sources, they parallelly offer the mid-sized organisations structured support on governance, fundraising, technology, monitoring and evaluation, and statutory compliance so they can independently develop over time, while investing in key organisational development processes. In 3–4 years, they try to ensure that each community-based organisation is being supported by at least three donors. NP-11 too is exploring this model, by trying to be 'like a secretariat space for smaller organisations or campaigns that are running' (NP-11). NP-8 reflected on their investment to incubate and build issue-based institutions and networks as, 'It remains a larger coalition, and we all share the common values and the framework and be accountable to one another' (NP-8). NP-1 spoke of the value of

this network beyond that of one organisation as 'it has a national or a broader relevance, so they can start operating in other areas as well' (NP-1).

Internally too, interviewed non-profits shared how they go beyond project requirements, by building processes for organisational development. However, this is conditional on the organisation's current health, its access to suitable funds, or leverage with existing funding partners. 'So for example, if you have a good board member from the corporate [who can] ... help you a lot to raise money ... if you have some OD [organisational development] support, and if you strengthen your organisation in terms of leadership, team building, good documentation, monitoring, evaluation processes, that also contributes' (NP-7).

An interviewed non-profit leader also explained how they have built systems and capacities in a way that they can do more with less: 'We decided to restructure how we can use resources and time ... advocacy can be done at a lesser budget and we can leverage existing networks to spread it further ... we do our research in-house and it doesn't cost us a penny ... we have built our own internal capacities and systems to support us' (NP-10). NP-10 stressed that their main requirement from funders is often for human resources, who can then take on multiple responsibilities. 'The stronger your internal systems, the more you can do. If you're dependent on external systems/factors, if you have an intensive funding requirement, you will face more challenges' (NP-10).

The findings reveal how social justice focused non-profits often seek support beyond projects at a broader issue level. This is quite unique to organisations with this focus, as they frame their funding ask not just for an immediate project, but to build support for the larger issue in the sector. Externally, therefore, respondent non-profits shared how they build donor understanding of why their support is so critical in the first place, going beyond specific projects to build consensus at the sectoral and ecosystem level. They invest in donor relationships to help foundations better understand issues, and evolve their idea of impact over time. Additionally, many non-profits are invested in institution building in the sector, so that leadership from the ground, of marginalised people, can lead and sustain change going ahead. Many organisations are focused on internally strengthening their systems and processes too.

Strategically framing work to build support for justice and rights

Interviewed non-profits shared how they use language strategically to build a narrative to gain donor support. There is more use of storytelling and evidence based approaches to build donor trust, confidence and influence support. A lot of the framing is done also keeping in mind how donors' pre-perspectives may restrict support and designing their initiatives and sharing accordingly.

'Narration building is very, very important', said NP-7, citing an example. 'When we built the narration and shared the evidence with their [funder] board and the leadership team, they realised this is a very important thing. Before that, they focused on education or health related projects … nowadays they're supporting the migrant community and worker rights' (NP-7). Another established non-profit said, 'Whatever we are saying is based on evidence and data' (NP-10). Reflecting on their new stance, another non-profit leader added, 'We have changed some strategies. Earlier we could say some things louder, but now we may need to do it differently' (NP-10). NP-10 admitted that their sharing of impact, stories and documentation may be loud, but they ensure that there is sufficient evidence available publicly on how they seek to drive change, to be accountable to donors and wider audiences.

An interviewed non-profit leader talked about how their strategic articulation has evolved. '[Our earlier] framing was a little bit more around constitutionalism or constitutional morality, saying … this is the socially just thing to do … We also sensed that the environment was changing. And we also got feedback from domestic foundations saying, you need to tweak from a social justice pitch. There are other ways this model lands really well with other potential funders … we need to reframe' (NP-5).

However, interviewed non-profits also acknowledged the limitations of narratives that cannot account for certain aspects that are foundational to grassroots work, such as the work of collectivising people. If it is not possible to seek support for it, while they may continue this work in their own capacity, as it is pivotal for larger shifts, 'it'll take longer, it will be slower … if you have money then you can do more, right' (NP-1).

The findings reveal how critical it is for non-profits to frame their work in a way that does not alienate foundations. Strategic communication is key, without giving up on core objectives, however.

Navigating regulations and compliances

Interviewed non-profits shared how they are adopting a strong process-driven approach
to ensure compliance to changing regulations. This includes ensuring that records are constantly updated, reports frame the work as needed, and to be ready for any scrutiny that may come their way. Being agile to changing regulations is a key organisational survival strategy. Non-profits share their experiences as follows.

'The amount of compliance eats up a high amount of cost in terms of time, staffing, contractor cost, headache, the fear of the probability of things not being done properly by you, and then being alleged as some, like large regulatory lapse or things like that. So it's just making it really difficult for you to exist, grow on scale and have an enabling environment. It's very, very discouraging. The second is that you always maintain a power in regulation in terms of having the ability of determining the path and the existence of a non-profit', said the leader at a prominent non-profit, NP-6. Another leading non-profit reflected on their experience, saying, 'Now we have realised that this is never ending; it is an obstacle course with no end ... we need to run to keep meeting it ... plus all the skills to keep handling it, managing it, but also these skills cost more than most NGOs can afford' (NP-11).

Not only specific rules, non-profits also struggle within the larger environment pressures. Action against one kind of organisation offers a chilling example to others, often resulting in anticipatory self-censorship. As a leading non-profit leader says,

'The first thing is to remove this atmosphere of insecurity and going against people and organisations. If you address that, more than half of the problem is addressed' (NP-9).
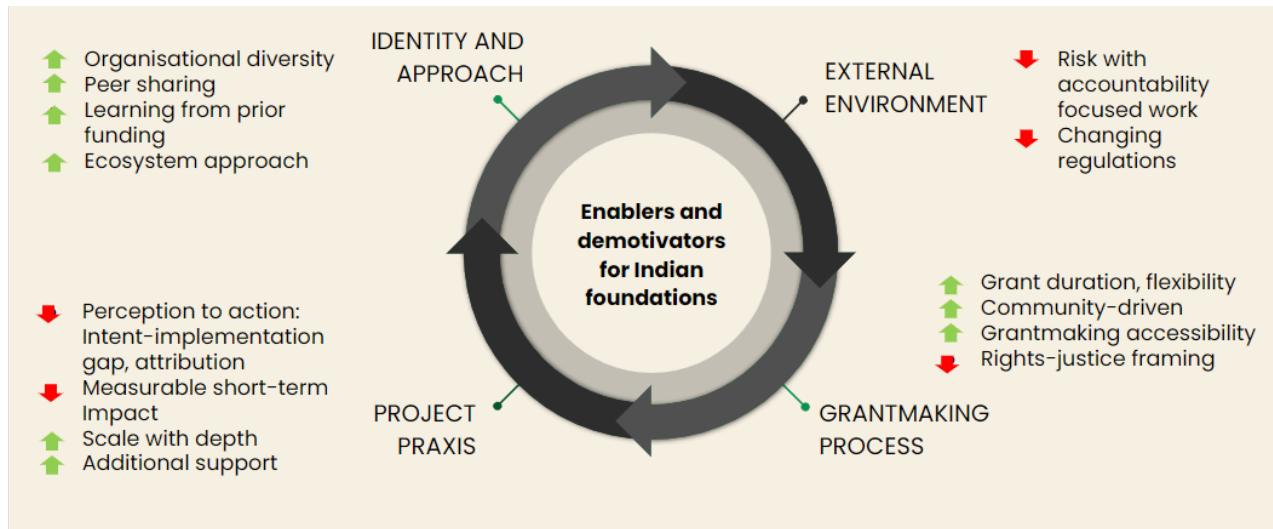
Developing risk mitigation strategies at the organisational level is key, along with furthering resourcing strategies. 'So before you start any work or initiate anything you have to think, how will we manage. So, a lot of energy actually goes into this, the managing of this regulatory framework', said an experienced non-profit, NP-8.

The findings reveal how a large part of a non-profit organisation's time and resources are committed to ensuring regulatory compliance, given the current pressures and the constantly changing nature of regulations. This burden is harder on smaller organisations, and the pitfalls of not being able to comply are high.

Findings Summary

In sum, the findings from this research point to specific enablers and demotivators for Indian philanthropy supporting justice and rights focused work today. The findings are not mutually exclusive and may overlap with each other in certain respects, given the dynamic, evolving and unique relationships between foundations and partnering non-profits. They are grouped into the following analytical categories for the purpose of this research. The framing of a finding as an enabler/demotivator is to highlight whether it facilitates or restricts funding, and the reverse of these framed statements also holds true. The key enablers and demotivators related to philanthropic funding are visualised in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Enablers and demotivators for philanthropic support of justice and rights focused work by non-profits

Enablers and demotivators for Indian foundations

IDENTITY AND APPROACH
↑ Organisational diversity
↑ Peer sharing
↑ Learning from prior funding
↑ Ecosystem approach

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
↓ Risk with accountability focused work
↓ Changing regulations

GRANTMAKING PROCESS
↑ Grant duration, flexibility
↑ Community-driven
↑ Grantmaking accessibility
↓ Rights-justice framing

PROJECT PRAXIS
↓ Perception to action: Intent-implementation gap, attribution
↓ Measurable short-term impact
↑ Scale with depth
↑ Additional support

Discussion

Further Implications from Research Findings

The research findings reveal how potential enablers and demotivators for philanthropic support of justice and rights focused work by non-profits relate to the four key dimensions studied. Each enabling condition offers opportunities for foundations to further strengthen their support to grantmaking; while demotivators highlight potential risks and barriers. Not only that, there is also a strong interplay of potential enablers and demotivators across the research dimensions too. In its entirety, all the enablers and demotivators taken together influence the overall strategy, work and impact of both foundations and non-profits. Foundations seeking to strengthen their grantmaking can use the learnings from this study to plan a progressional pathway to enhance their funding approaches, as detailed in this section.

To start with, the identity and approach of foundations plays a key role in how they approach decisions related to funding. Right from how diversely the Governing Board and teams are constituted, to learning from peers and one's own experience of funding, as well as the focus to build an enabling ecosystem and not just fund projects—all these conditions enable funding. To support work of marginalised communities on the ground, foundations need a team and leadership representing that lived reality, and this can be instituted by them through progressive hiring

practices. Just the commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) isn't enough. It cannot be 'an initiative or a phase or a point-in-time commitment—it has to be an enduring commitment' and it has to be practised both internally ('minimizing bias, recognizing talent in all forms, and developing a more diverse pool of philanthropic leaders') and externally (through the nature of grantmaking practices) (Candid, 2023; Mills and Ross, 2017). Internal DEI commitments therefore amplify externally too, in what kind of work is supported and how. The absence of diversely constituted foundations showcases 'funders' biases for certain causes, approaches, and geographical areas, reinforcing their mental models and limiting the exploration of innovative and comprehensive solutions to address root causes' (Indian School of Development Management, 2023) (added in Appendix 1).

Additionally, it is also important to consider that, with the pool of funders for justice and rights oriented work being small, even small shifts within their own funding may majorly impact the nature and scale of work on ground. While this makes it all the more critical for foundations and funders to share best practices and learnings, to influence a wider cohort to similarly support this work, there is hesitancy to engage publicly, given additional risks and backlash to businesses. Some are also not keen to influence how others should act. Few foundations are sharing some learning practices, but there is no focused or deliberate strategy to this. Yet, there is no alternative to peer learning, if the support for justice and rights needs to prevail. 'I think they need to have a high amount of courage if they are wanting to make India a better country, not only on specific metrics of health, sanitation, gender, etc' says a prominent leader, NP-6. And given the potential of philanthropy to respond, not only financially but in deeper solidarity and power shifting ways, expectations from domestic funders have grown, despite emerging challenges. Additionally, with the growth of knowledge and conversations in the sector on how to partner better for change, there is increasing expectation and interest on how this path can be navigated more intentionally. For new foundations wanting to support justice and rights focused work, the findings offer implications on how their own funding, and sharing of learnings can have outsized impact. It is also worthwhile to consider starting small, exploring pilot interventions, and building one's scope and impact from there. As NP-6 says, 'Test us out with a Rs 5 lakh grant … We can even start with that.'

Another research dimension, the influence of the external environment, is also studied through this research. Especially, the perception of risk in accountability focused work, and the impact of changing regulations act as key demotivators.

There are a range of risk apprehensions, which influence what kind of work is supported. Moreover, given that philanthropic capital emerges from business, and industry is loath to hold the government to account, tensions and pressures increase. However, it is critical to find strategic and tactical ways to manage these external pressures, or resources for critical rights struggles will further diminish, and organisations will be forced to pivot or close doors. There are already developments to this effect. Some interviewed non-profits mentioned how they are increasingly witnessing more organisations shifting their work towards government adjacent or government prioritised areas, for instance on capacity building and livelihoods support, instead of investing in more long-term community organising and advocacy efforts. As a leading non-profit shares, 'I know hundreds of organisations, and they've worked very well in the last 10–20 years. But now for the last 4–5 years, they are closing their programs because funds are not available. And that's the reality of our sector' (NP-7). The influences of the external environment, especially on risk, call for stronger foundation strategies, to help them continue what they are doing. While the externally emerging factors may not be within control, sharper strategies on how to tackle them, and peer sharing and learning among foundations on how they are doing this, can develop stronger sectoral voices and coalitions to resist unjust pressure and recommit to justice and rights.

This research also studied the impact of the grantmaking process on funding. Grant flexibility and its increasing duration, as well as a community-focused design are seen as key enabling factors. Additionally, iterative improvements to make grantmaking more accessible have meant that more justice and rights focused organisations are able to seek funding for what they do. However, there are often tensions around the rights-justice framing, and both non-profits and foundations need to find ways to overcome gaps between them, how the work is positioned and presented. It is also important to critically examine the grantmaking process in light of a recent pioneering study, Bridgespan's *Pay What It Takes*, which highlights how non-profits struggle to raise indirect (non-programme costs) and Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi-led organisations are much more stressed, with 70 per cent reporting no reserve funds as of September 2020 (added in Appendix 2). With many small grassroots organisations struggling to raise funds and sustain operations, the findings demonstrate why grantmaking has to be more accessible and accommodating, even beyond direct project costs. It also underlines how diversely constituted foundation teams, and learning and sharing between foundations can play a critical role to plug these gaps. Foundations need to listen closely to groups

working on the ground, about how funding can be made responsive to their needs, and reflect on what they are doing to prioritise support to smaller organisations.

This research also considers elements of the project praxis, from the lens of whether they enable or demotivate funding. The gap between intent and implementation, and concerns about attribution emerge as key demotivators. Additionally, the preference for measurable, certain and short-term outcomes is a key demotivator. However, foundations investing in scale with depth see it as a key enabler. Additional support through the grantmaking process is also a key enabler. The different elements of the project praxis throw light on how key project interactions enable or demotivate funding. It is also influenced by the nature and identity of foundations and their grantmaking practice. Foundations looking to enable facilitatory funding practices could start from framing questions on outcome and scale, in empowering ways. Process shifts (such as how the community is able to engage with the government for its own services and rights, with grassroots leadership) is far more scalable than measurements at the unit-level. Foundations invested in this way are able to ensure deeper process shifts and sustainable change, even if the shorter-term progress is not that apparent.

In sum, the research findings present key enablers and demotivators for Indian philanthropic support of justice and rights. The enablers and demotivators across the four research dimensions studied also interact with and influence each other along the way. For instance, the enablers and demotivators emerging from the nature of the foundation influence how the organisation operates within the external environment. This, in turn, influences how the grantmaking process is designed, and further how the project praxis unfolds. While the initial implications from the interplay of enablers and demotivators are presented by this research, the findings and discussion presents a pathway for further research in this domain.

For foundations seeking to use these enablers and demotivators to strengthen their grantmaking for justice and rights, some practices are easier to institute; others require more careful reckoning. To start with, the top five practices foundations can undertake are:
Ensure diversity in governing Boards, leadership and teams
Ensure accessibility to grantmaking processes
Share with peers the experience of funding to inspire others
Ensure an approach to ecosystem building, not just project funding

Ensure flexible, community-focused design of grants

The Call to 'Shift the Power'

It is also important to place this discussion in context of the question of shifting/sharing power, one of the key aims of social justice philanthropy (as discussed in the literature review of this research). Although Indian philanthropy is young, it is important to interrogate the nature of partnerships (not only *what* is done, but *how* it is done) as it reflects how deeply foundations are invested in dismantling structures of control. While financial support constitutes a critical aspect, it is equally important to build and value local assets and resources, to distribute leadership … to recognise, as the #ShiftThePower movement says that 'Another way is possible' (ShiftThePower, n.d.).

Although these kinds of conversations may often be in early or nascent stages domestically, in some cases being entirely absent too, there is a slow appetite for it as the interviews revealed. This research is limited by not being able to pursue all the nuances in this area comprehensively. As Patankar (2021) says, 'we need to base our power analysis on the understanding of the geographically and culturally specific power structures built on the local religious, caste, or ethno-supremacist ideologies.'

Listening to what organisations need at the grassroots and being able to co-create that journey with them, by letting them lead, is a powerful enabler in this regard. As a prominent foundation leader says, 'And so the process of co-creating where the money should go, what agendas it should actually pursue… and what should be the modality of that funding? I don't think there are spaces at all for such conversations … without that engagement … you can't really make a difference in the best way possible … that recognition right now is not there, [it] is much more on the other side, that you know the funder has the upper hand … that the funds are more important than what you do with the funds … [We] need to listen very closely and listen with humility. Because what those groups are doing in the community, nobody can go there and do, they're doing it because they're so passionate about it, and to respect that and to really listen to that voice' (PF-6).

The process of sharing power or ceding power is a long and difficult journey. But foundations that are willing to spend time on these questions and ways of learning can make all the difference. 'We need to start talking about, you know, what power

means. And what does power sharing mean? What ceding power means and to sit with that discomfort for a little bit. I think we're in the early stages of that journey. While there is in principle alignment, that this needs to happen, how it will happen and how it will impact the funding community is something that we will get to see over the next few years' (PSO-4).

Moreover, the question of how power can be shifted, how can the foundation share power with different stakeholders, can determine how the path ahead builds up. It is also critical to keep rechecking one's own power and act accordingly, as the following quote from a philanthropy reveals.

'If you are looking at redistribution of wealth as part of your philanthropy approach … it's not enough to give money, you have to … be careful about how you do it as well … I think we have representation from every historical marginalisation on our team. But separating your own kind of marginalisation, from like having the funder's hat on is a challenge. And I think sometimes we need to keep on repeating this, especially with newer team members when we say yes, you are from that community. Yes, you live with that marginalisation. But remember, you are talking as a funder and you do hold some power. So I think that's quite a big challenge, honestly. And I think for all of us, including me, it's always like a learning, a balancing [act], like how are you going to do this really?' (PF-3)

Social justice philanthropy has, as its roots, the question of how power can be shared as an intrinsic part of the change process. Therefore, this discussion, in context of the research questions, raises these two critical questions for further consideration and study:

How may foundations reassess their relationship with power, especially in relationships with non-profits and communities? What steps can they take to ensure that local assets and knowledge are valued and taken ahead?

Given the power asymmetry, how can foundations make it easier for smaller organisations to approach and interact with them too?

Conclusion

'What if philanthropy wasn't just about financial investment, but also about reckoning with the systems that created concentrated wealth in the first place, and understanding how to transform those systems to make them more just for all?' (Florant and Williams, 2022)

Private foundations supporting justice and rights oriented work by non-profits are on a bold, often complex, pathway of change. The scale of this work and its impact in challenging systemic injustice is undeniable. Yet, there are numerous constraints that restrict funding. A stronger understanding of facilitatory conditions is also needed, to encourage these practices to be instituted in foundations and support their work ahead. This research sought to address this gap in knowledge, and with its findings has succeeded to some extent.

The findings detail how enablers and demotivators for funding relate to four key organisational dimensions of private foundations. This includes their identity and approach, the external environment in which they operate, the grantmaking process, and the project praxis. Further, the findings demonstrate how the enabling and demotivating factors, across studied dimensions, interact with and influence one another across the grantmaking cycle. Insights emerging from the discussion section point to further areas of research and inquiry ahead.

It is also critical to place this research within its domestic context today. With organisations invested in this work not willing to speak openly on this topic in some cases, and some others opting out from being interviewed, the research reiterates the need for a safe and enabling environment for justice and rights today. Moreover, given the challenges and pressures that prevail, the role of each entity (whether foundations, philanthropy support organisations or non-profits) is critical, now and in the years to come. How each upholds its role in the ecosystem and supports the other will determine the pathway that shapes up for social justice ahead.

With its findings, this research contributes critical new knowledge, while reopening earlier conversations and encouraging newer areas of inquiry too. The learnings from this study hope to inspire India's brave foundations and implementing non-profits to take bigger bets for social justice every day!

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

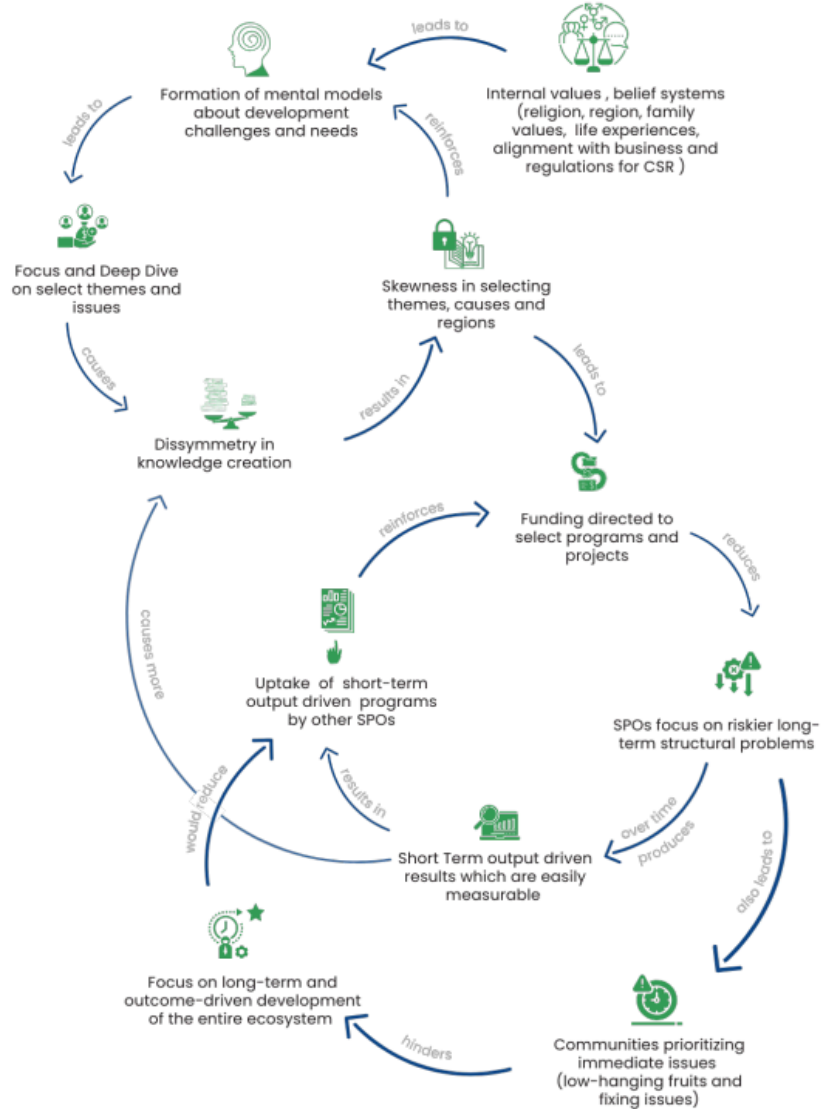The author of this paper has no conflict of interest to declare.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Figure 9

Source: Indian School of Development Management. (2023). Unleashing the Power of Philanthropy for Inclusive Development. Retrieved from: https://www.isdm.org.in/sites/default/files/2023-11/unleashing-the-power-of-philanthopy.pdf

Appendix 2

83% of 388 nonprofits responding to a Bridgespan survey found it challenging to recover their core (or indirect) costs from funders. Amongst nonprofits reporting a shortfall, there was on average a 13-percentage-point gap between actual expenditures and allocations from their major funders.

72% of nonprofits stated that lack of funding for organisational development left them unable to make key investments in capabilities required to deliver better programme outcomes and impact.

54% of nonprofits had less than three months of reserves in September 2020; this proportion was also large before COVID, with 38 percent of nonprofits being below that threshold.

70% of Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi-led nonprofits reported no reserve funds, a sign of particularly acute financial weakness for these historically marginalised groups.

Source: Bridgespan. (2023a). Funder Practices that Strengthen Nonprofits' Resilience: Lessons from India. Retrieved from:
https://www.bridgespan.org/getmedia/69d362dc-5cd2-4ab4-96d0-d467b367b0fa/funder-practices-that-strengthen-nonprofit-resilience-in-india-nov-2023.pdf?ext=.pdf

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