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The UN Foundation – A foundation for the UN?



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Barbara Adams and Jens Martens

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1. Introduction

The United Nations Foundation (UNF) was established two decades ago principally to champion and support the work of the United Nations. In pursuing this aim, particularly over the last decade, the Foundation appears to have developed a business model and growth strategy that promote its own priorities, activities and expansion. In continuing to have a special relationship with the UNF, the UN must guard against the possibility that the Foundation has evolved from a net funder of the UN to a net competitor for both philanthropic and Member State funds.

With the aim to explore these developments, and the trends that give rise to them, this working paper builds on the analysis elaborated in the 2015 publication “Fit for Whose Purpose?”¹ and puts it in the context of today’s re-evaluation of multilateralism.

The evolution of the UN Foundation should be seen in the context of much broader changes in the relationship between the public and private sectors, nationally and globally, and the approach of governments to their governance responsibilities. At both levels, this approach has shifted from the role of provider to that of manager; and more significantly, this has been accompanied by a major shift from regulator to “incentivizer” in the approach to the business sector. Some of the possible consequences of this policy re-orientation are now being manifest in increased unrest and inequalities of all kinds.

Evolution of the UN Foundation should be seen in the context of much broader changes in the relationship between the public and private sector

Confronted with these realities, the (still new) UN leadership has charted a comprehensive reform agenda which includes working to reset the relationship between the UN and the UN Foundation. Sustainable and just multilateralism requires sustainable and predictable financing for the mandate and core activities of the UN, and this can only come from a new Funding Compact with Member States. The resources needed will not be secured by uneven earmarked funding that comes from short-term and opportunistic patterns of finance that have characterized donor preferences – public and private.

The past 20 years have witnessed significant changes in the engagement between the UN and the private sector. This new era can be described as *selective multilateralism*, shaped by intergovernmental policy impasses and a growing reliance on corporate-led solutions to global problems. Multiple partnerships between corporations, philanthropic foundations and the UN have been established in recent years. Private funding from

¹ Adams/Martens (2015).

corporations and philanthropic foundations for UN activities has increased steadily. These changes have deep implications for global governance.

The United Nations Foundation is one of the proponents behind these trends. It plays a particular role not only because of its financial contributions but also because of its exclusive Relationship Agreement with the UN. Its origins date back to the years 1997/1998.

On 12 June 1998, at an unprecedented event at UN Headquarters, Hans Corell, then UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, and Timothy Wirth, founding President of the UN Foundation, signed the first Relationship Agreement between the UN and the UNF. This agreement contributed to the growing openness of the world organization towards corporations and philanthropists.

About nine months before, US billionaire, CNN founder and then Co-Chairman of Time Warner, Inc., Ted Turner had announced his intention to make a gift of US\$1 billion in Time Warner stock to support the United Nations. In order to process the payments he established the UN Foundation as a US not-for-profit public charity in early 1998.

Counterbalancing political attacks against the UN

Turner's contribution was announced in response to the decision of the US Congress to withhold part of its assessed UN contributions

Turner's contribution was announced in response to the decision of the US Congress to withhold part of its assessed UN contributions at a time when the USA was over US\$1 billion in arrears.² It was intended not only to fill the funding gap but also to increase support for the UN in the USA – and thus counter attacks against multilateralism and the UN system by right-wing politicians and think-tanks that had influenced US policies towards the UN since the early 1980s. Since then the UN Foundation has created a broad network of advocates and supporters of the UN in the USA.

Annual reports by the UN Office for Partnerships reiterate this point, most recently in July 2017: “The Foundation helps to foster a common understanding about the mission of the United Nations and also to ensure strong and sustained support by the Government of the United States for the United Nations.”³

2 For an early critic of Turner's donation see Williams (1999). She warned: “Allowing individuals, who are accountable only to themselves, to have an influence on the only truly democratic, international organization might be dangerous. Problems may arise if the U.N. has to rely on private sources so much that it begins to answer to private individuals and not member states. Further, by encouraging individual donations and corporate charity, the U.N. may undermine the responsibility of U.N. member states to pay their dues and remain accountable to the Organization” (p. 426).

3 Cf. UN Doc. A/72/167, para 6d.

Turner himself drew on that support after the inauguration of Donald Trump as US president, urging Americans to join him and the UN Foundation in doing all they can to support the UN.⁴

This support has never been motivated by pure idealism. According to the UN Association of the USA, which the UNF has housed since 2010, cutting UN funding not only undermines US national security but also “will diminish our ability to leverage the UN in support of vital U.S. interests”.⁵

No such thing as a free lunch

The UNF’s support of the UN must also be seen in context. Turner and the UNF leadership have a clear vision of the way to tackle global problems and the role the UN should play, centred solidly on public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder approaches. The UNF has been among the driving forces behind the opening of the UN towards the business sector, as in its view “governments working through the United Nations can’t do it alone.”⁶

The UNF has been among the driving forces behind the opening of the UN towards the business sector

Over time, the UNF has broadened its activities and spearheaded many initiatives that have not been developed with or directly benefit the UN system. In fact, a growing share of UNF’s expenditures has been spent on activities outside the UN system, with a strong emphasis on US-based organizations. The majority of UNF-supported initiatives have not been covered in reports of the UN Secretary-General to the Member States, yet benefit by association with the UN name.

At the same time, representatives of the UNF became close advisors to then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and participated regularly in internal meetings convened by the Office of the Secretary-General. Furthermore, the Foundation has provided resources to hire additional UN staff “off-budget” and has become a key outreach and campaigning arm for the UN leadership.

The UNF has shifted gradually from a financier to a facilitator and has recruited a growing amount of resources from other contributors, public and private. This shift in financing and functions has a number of noteworthy features, which are examined in this working paper. One concerns the relationship between the UNF and its contributors, notably the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which was by far the largest contributor in 2016 (see Tables 3 and 5). Another concerns the UNF’s

4 Cf. <https://medium.com/@unfoundation/an-open-letter-from-ted-turner-join-me-to-stand-with-the-un-5ae7dcfb336d>.

5 Cf. <http://unausa.org/advocacy/advocacy-agenda/un-funding>.

6 Cf. www.unfoundation.org/what-we-do/working-with-the-un.

grant-making activities and beneficiaries, which include organizations outside of the UN system. A third concerns the increasing number and variety of “partnership” arrangements, into which it has entered on behalf of, or ostensibly under the umbrella of, the UN, but without adequate standards of transparency and accountability.

The current nature of the UNF’s association with the UN is governed by a Revised and Restated Relationship Agreement, dated as of 23 October 2014. It institutionalizes UNF’s direct access to the UN Secretariat, *inter alia* by forming an exclusive Joint Coordination Committee comprised of an equal number of high-level officials of the UN and the UNF. Further specific information to assess impact and adherence to UN standards is not publicly available as neither the new agreement nor the minutes of the Joint Coordination Committee are in the public domain.

As the role and influence of the UNF in the UN have changed, evolving from an organization contributing all of the Turner funds to UN programmes and activities, to a fundraiser from multiple sources and pursuing a variety of functions, it has brought mixed results in terms of funding the UN and its causes. Its role as a broker for the participation of third party funders and beneficiaries needs to be scrutinized to ensure that this business model complements and adds value to UN mandates and is not irrelevant to or in competition with the UN. In addition to the need for enhanced transparency and accountability of the UN Foundation and its activities to the UN and Member States, the special status granted to the Foundation should be included in the assessment of the role of partnerships in implementing global agreements.

Need for enhanced transparency and accountability of the UN Foundation and its activities to the UN and Member States

Box 1**A brief chronology of the Relationship Agreements between the UN Foundation and the UN**

18 September 1997	Ted Turner announces his intention to make a US\$1 billion gift to support the United Nations
28 January 1998	Ted Turner establishes the United Nations Foundation Inc. (UNF) and the Better World Fund Inc. (BWF) as not-for-profit 501(c)(3) public charities.
1 March 1998	The UN establishes the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) as an autonomous trust fund to interface with the UNF
12 June 1998	Hans Corell, UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, and Timothy With, President of the UNF, sign a Relationship Agreement between UN and UNF
18 April 2007	Renewal of the Relationship Agreement between the UN and the UNF
18 November 2010	The United Nations Association USA becomes a membership programme and the Business Council for the United Nations (BCUN) becomes an official programme of the UNF
23 October 2014	Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General, and Ted Turner, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the UNF sign the Revised and Restated Relationship Agreement between the UN and the UNF

2. The evolving UN Foundation: From funder to broker

The US\$1 billion gift that Ted Turner announced in support of the UN and its causes was not given in cash but in 18 million shares of Time Warner stock, which in September 1997 had a value of US\$1 billion. From this stock, Turner intended to make annual donations valued at approximately US\$100 million each over a period of ten years.

According to Turner, there were two specific motivations for his pledge:

“First, my announcement was motivated by disappointment over the U.S. Government debt of more than \$1 billion to the UN. I considered trying to pay off that debt, but was unable to for a variety of practical and legal reasons. So I concluded that a contribution to key UN programs might help shine a light on the importance for the United States to honor its financial commitments to the UN.

“My second motivation was the needs and rights of the world’s poorest people. Half of the world’s population, more than 3 billion people, lives in conditions of serious poverty. Education is an elusive dream. Clean water and basic sanitation are miles away physically, and years away financially. Women do not enjoy equal rights under the law. And disease is an all too familiar companion for the world’s children.”⁷

The early years: the UN Foundation as funder

As the UN is not an established tax exempt public charity in the USA, Turner and then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan agreed on a foundation-trust fund structure, creating 1) the UN Foundation to channel the funds to the UN, and 2) the Better World Fund (BWF) to promote the work of the UN in the USA, as not-for-profit 501(c)(3) public charities. UN Secretary-General Annan also set up the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) as an UN autonomous trust fund to receive (exclusively) contributions from the UN Foundation.⁸

The details of the relationship between the UN and the UN Foundation were laid down in a Relationship Agreement that was signed on 12 June 1998 in New York, and designed to expire on 31 December 2007.⁹ In it, the parties clarified that the Foundation had the responsibility for final formulation of its programme priorities. UN departments,

7 UN Foundation (2002), p. 7.

8 Cf. UN Doc. A/52/7/Add.9 and A/53/700.

9 Cf. UN Doc. A/53/700, Annex I.

funds, programmes and specialized agencies were invited to submit to UNFIP project proposals that respond to the priorities identified by the Foundation. The proposals were to be reviewed by an Advisory Board established by the UN Secretary-General, but the final decision to approve a proposed project was to be made by the Board of the UN Foundation.

Three years after Ted Turner announced his donation to the UN, the value of Time Warner shares decreased dramatically as a result of the merger of AOL and Time Warner in January 2000 and of the burst of the ‘dot-com bubble’ on the US stock markets. In order to keep Turner’s US\$1 billion promise (without increasing the number of 18 million shares) the UN Foundation started to raise additional resources. In fact, by the end of 2007 UNFIP programmed grants totalled US\$1.03 billion, but only US\$406 million represented core Turner funds. Other donors contributed US\$597 million.¹⁰

The UN Foundation as a fundraiser

At the close of the ten-year period the UN Foundation decided to continue its activities, mobilizing an additional US\$1 billion in support of United Nations causes.¹¹ Subsequently, on 18 April 2007 the Relationship Agreement was renewed for an additional ten-year period.¹²

This evolution from funder to fundraiser marked a significant change in the role of the UN Foundation

This evolution from funder to fundraiser marked a significant change in the role of the UN Foundation, from channelling core Turner money to support UN programmes to soliciting and managing third party money. In 2013, for instance, the UN Foundation disbursed US\$52 million through UNFIP to UNICEF and WHO to implement the Measles and Rubella Initiative. Of this amount, US\$50 million came from outside donors and only US\$2 million from the Foundation’s own funds.¹³

As the cumulative contribution from core Turner funds to UNFIP has stagnated over the decade, the Foundation increasingly turned to other donors. At the end of 2016, the cumulative allocations to UNFIP projects reached approximately US\$1.4 billion, of which only US\$450 million came from core Turner funds and US\$990 million was mobilized as co-financing from other donors (see Table 1).¹⁴ In fact for 2015 and 2016 Ted Turner’s direct contributions to the UN Foundation had dropped to zero.

¹⁰ Cf. UN Doc. A/63/257.

¹¹ Cf. UN press release DEV/2594 of 11 October 2006 (www.un.org/press/en/2006/dev2594.doc.htm).

¹² Cf. UN Doc. A/63/257.

¹³ Cf. A/69/218, para. 9.

¹⁴ Cf. UN Doc. A/71/159.

Table 1**Allocations by UN Foundation through UNFIP to projects implemented by the UN system, 2007–2016 (in US\$ billions)**

Cumulative by year ending	Total through UNFIP	Cumulative core Turner funds	Cumulative contributions from other donors
2007	1.03	0.43	0.60
2008	1.06	0.44	0.62
2009	1.09	0.44	0.65
2010	1.17	0.44	0.73
2011	1.19	0.44	0.75
2012	1.25	0.44	0.81
2013	1.30	0.45	0.85
2014	1.36	0.45	0.91
2015	1.41	0.45	0.96
2016	1.44	0.45	0.99

Sources: Secretary General's Reports on the United Nations Office for Partnerships (various years, estimates).

Despite the move towards co-funding, the value and number of approved UNFIP projects is today much lower than in the middle of the last decade (see Table 2).

From a high point of US\$191 million in 2006, contributions in 2016 had declined to US\$28 million, the vast majority of which was co-funded relying on contributions from other donors.

Co-funders and third party donors

All in all, the top contributors to the UN Foundation in 2015 and 2016 were governments, other philanthropic foundations, and a few transnational corporations (see Table 5).

However, the ability of UN Foundation's business model to mobilize additional resources for the UN was relatively limited in its second decade. Between 1999 and 2007 UN Foundation grants to UNFIP totalled US\$942.5 million, those between 2008 and 2016 totalled only US\$413.6 million (see Table 6).

A large share of the UN Foundation's revenues from other donors has come from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Between 1999 and July 2017 Gates gave US\$286 million in grants to the UN Foundation, mainly for projects in the areas of health and agriculture (see Table 3). However,

A large share of the UN Foundation's revenues from other donors has come from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

a large share of these funds has not benefitted the UN system directly and did not involve consultation with the UN and with UNFIP. Instead they have gone to a range of outside initiatives, mostly based in the USA, and outside the official reporting and accountability lines of the UN with regard to its norms and standards.

Table 2**UNFIP approved projects 1998–2016**

Year	UNFIP approved projects	
	value (in US\$)	number
1998	81,031,371 *	60 *
1999	108,968,629	53
2000	74,560,044	53
2001	111,912,251	55
2002	69,294,672	29
2003	73,683,616	40
2004	76,822,202	32
2005	170,456,083	52
2006	191,138,234	24
2007	38,816,908	24
2008	28,165,187	33
2009	26,126,716	18
2010	79,085,838	28
2011	48,614,168	18
2012	63,932,309	13
2013	52,976,932	7
2014	56,823,856	19
2015	46,145,323	29
2016	28,499,273	26
Sum	1,427,053,612	613
<i>According to UN Doc. A/72/167</i>	1,435,464,714	618
*estimates		
Sources: Reports of the UN Secretary-General on the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (1998–2007) and the United Nations Office for Partnerships (2007–2017).		

Table 3**Direct grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to the UN Foundation
(May 1999–July 2017)**

Date	Purpose	Amount (in US\$)
July 2017	to provide general operating support	250,000
February 2017	to develop and commit to implementing government-led gender action plans to improve women's and girls' status in India	3,589,227
November 2016	to accelerate the production and use of gender data and to guide policy, better leverage investments, and inform global development agendas	7,233,940
September 2016	to advance objectives for vaccines, family planning, the Global Fund, malaria, and the Sustainable Development Goals	24,558,004
April 2016	to support the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the 2030 Agenda and team to carry out their mandate, advancing progress on implementation of and accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals (April–December 2016)	699,780
November 2015	to provide for general operating support	250,000
November 2014	to support one-time, concrete unanticipated gaps that any Family Planning 2020 country might encounter as it works towards achieving Family Planning 2020 goals	2,946,323
November 2014	to create a Mobile Hub which aims to unite key public and private sector stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of digital products and services that seek to improve the lives of the poor	18,500,00
November 2014	to increase availability and use of gender data that will guide policy, better leverage development investments, and inform global development agendas, and to build partnerships that address gaps in internationally comparable gender data, including through innovative data sources	1,348,967
November 2013	to establish the Family Planning 2020 Task Team www.familyplanning2020.org	9,576,904
August 2013	to raise awareness of and mobilize resources in support of Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6	27,985,759
November 2010	to provide short term working capital to recipients of donor funds to increase the predictability of financing for reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria commodities	20,000,00
November 2010	to raise awareness of and mobilize resources in support of Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6	36,659,900
April 2010	to provide support for a policymaker roundtable on the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Summit	200,100
November 2009	to support the measles partnership for mass campaigns to reduce or eliminate measles	13,997,518
September 2009	to provide strategic support to the UNAIDS Secretariat during the leadership transition	511,314

Date	Purpose	Amount (in US\$)
November 2008	to develop a strategic approach increasing US support for global family planning	4,987,489
October 2008	to provide support to organizations that aid the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria in Africa from constituencies based in Africa, Australia, Europe, Japan, and the USA	3,227,175
September 2008	to use an international television broadcast to heighten general awareness of the crises in women's health in the developing world, and to encourage charitable donations that target solutions to these problems	530,000
January 2008	to build constituencies for Global Health in a replicable model	10,851,627
August 2007	for general operating support	10,000,000
May 2007	to build constituencies for Global Health in a replicable model	500,000
January 2007	to protect the genetic diversity of 21 critical crops for food security and poverty alleviation, by supporting national gene banks, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, and the Global Crop Diversity Trust	29,911,740
January 2007	to increase awareness about malaria and raise funds to purchase and distribute anti-malaria bednets to children under 5 in Africa	3,080,000
October 2005	to implement a replicable outreach and fundraising campaign that engages civil society in support of malaria prevention and control through the Global Fund	450,000
January 2004	to strengthen immunization services in Africa through measles mortality reduction	1,900,000
February 2002	to support the Aspen Strategy Group to convene meetings on global health issues	200,000
August 2001	to support Health InterNetwork pilot project in India	734,000
February 2001	to support the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reorganization efforts	500,000
November 1999	to strengthen surveillance and control of vaccine-preventable and epidemic prone diseases	1,250,000
May 1999	to eradicate polio in the Indian Sub-continent and Sub-Saharan Africa through immunization and surveillance activities	50,000,000
May 1999	to support education regarding UNFPA programmes in China	33,380
Total		286,463,147

Source: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grants Database
(www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database).

Direct funding from UN Member States

Another means by which the Foundation has sought to broaden its funding base has been through government contributions, either directly or through initiatives set up by the Foundation for that purpose. Among these contributors are:

- » Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- » Department for International Development of the Government of the UK (DFID)
- » Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- » European Commission
- » Government of Denmark
- » Government of Japan
- » Government of the Netherlands
- » Government of Norway
- » Italian Ministry for the Environment
- » United Arab Emirates
- » United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- » US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

According to its Financial Statements the UNF received more than US\$200 million in government contributions between 1999 and 2016 (see Table 4).

UNF received more than US\$200 million in government contributions between 1999 and 2016

This fundraising strategy means that the Foundation has leveraged funds from governments that may have otherwise gone directly to the UN agencies concerned. This practice would be a source of considerable concern if the UN Foundation has become a competitor for scarce multilateral resources from governments, as well as contributing to fragmented programming and reporting – and inefficient use of UN staff resources.

Table 4

Government contributions (grants) to the UN Foundation (in US\$)

Year	Government contributions (grants) to the UN Foundation in US\$	Year	Government contributions (grants) to the UN Foundation in US\$
1999	2,863,166	2009	14,500,000
2000	291,884	2010	16,910,000
2001	6,564,153	2011	9,060,000
2002	23,712,913	2012	9,060,000
2003	15,139,206	2013	6,420,000
2004	36,242,693	2014	10,044,026
2005	30,684,828	2015	9,400,990
2006	8,500,000	2016	5,943,450
2007	17,500,00		
2008	8,100,000	Sum	213,437,309

Source: UN Foundation, IRS Form 990

Monitoring this trend should be a priority for the UNFIP Advisory Board and included in assessments of Member State funding of multilateralism.

The role of the UN Foundation as a broker and fundraiser has generated additional complications, as a 2015 audit of the UNFIP management by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services pointed out:

“Third party donors and other co-financing partners had made significant contributions to projects financed by the Foundation.... The source of such funding however, was not known to the United Nations until after the project documents were received by UNFIP for disbursement of funds. In one instance, a project had to be reconsidered as the United Nations had concerns about the donor. Inadequate review of donors by UNFIP may result in a reputational risk to the United Nations and conflict with its ethical values. UNFIP management indicated that reliance was placed on the rigorosity of the Foundation’s policies.”¹⁵

Inadequate review of donors by UNFIP may result in a reputational risk to the United Nations and conflict with its ethical values

Partnering with corporations

In addition to its outreach to individual governments, the UN Foundation has actively explored opportunities for building so-called ‘anchor partnerships’ with multinational corporations and corporate philanthropic foundations as an important element of its long-term sustainability strategy. This intention caused, again, concerns in some parts of the UN because of the potential reputation risk involved. The UN Foundation currently (December 2017) lists 24 corporate partners, including Exxon Mobile, Shell, Goldman Sachs, and the Bank of America (see Box 2).

Box 2

Corporate partners of the UN Foundation

Bank of America, CEMEX, Deutsche Bank Global Social Finance Group, Dow Corning Corporation, ExxonMobil, Inc., GAVI Alliance, Global Language Solutions, Goldman Sachs, Google Foundation, IEEE Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc., International Copper Association, John Deere, Johnson & Johnson, MLS W.O.R.K.S., NBA Cares, Nike Foundation, Orkin, Project Perpetual, (RED), Shell, Sports Illustrated, Sumitomo Chemicals, Time, Inc. Home Entertainment, WNBA Cares

Source: www.unfoundation.org/what-we-do/partners/corporations/ (December 2017)

15 Cf. UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (2015), para. 18.

Table 5**Top contributors to the UN Foundation 2015 and 2016 (in US\$)**

2015	
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	\$18,392,644
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	\$3,625,533
Department for International Development (DFID)	\$29,569,396
The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation	\$2,248,000
Caterpillar Foundation	\$2,872,252
Jynwel Charitable Foundation Limited	\$2,750,000
Johnson & Johnson	\$2,307,155
American Red Cross	\$2,000,000
National Philanthropic Trust	\$3,500,500
Silicon Valley Community Foundation	\$2,109,370
Total	\$69,374,850
2016	
Vodafone Americas Foundation	\$5,107,500
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	\$32,320,725
Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Ltd	\$9,531,071
The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation	\$4,130,000
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	\$3,675,740
Walgreen Company	\$1,839,233
Johnson & Johnson	\$2,009,653
Total	\$58,613,922

Sources: UN Foundation: IRS Forms 990 for 2015 and 2016

As part of its strategy to strengthen the relationship between the UN and the business community, the UN Foundation, in 2010, integrated the Business Council for the United Nations (BCUN) into its programmatic activities. BCUN describes itself as a “catalyst for action, understanding, and innovative business opportunities between member companies and the United Nations”:

“BCUN provides its members with unique opportunities to directly connect with the United Nations and its network of organizations and country representatives. Our relationships with key policy makers and diplomats at the UN who work on global subjects of interest to our member companies allow relevant and current information exchange.”¹⁶

16 Cf. www.unfoundation.org/features/bcun/join.html.

The BCUN has been a participant of the Global Compact since 17 October 2003. It was delisted on 28 October 2016. As reason for delisting, the Global Compact website notes “organization never joined”.¹⁷

In addition, in 2011, the UN Foundation created its Global Entrepreneurs Council, which brings together young entrepreneurs to support UNF campaigns such as Girl Up (www.girlup.org) and Nothing But Nets (<http://nothingbutnets.net>), to reach new audiences and to enhance public-private partnerships.¹⁸

These activities are examples of the new business model of the UN Foundation and its strategic shift from a focus on support to the UN to one on UN themes or “UN causes”, however broadly defined or loosely tied to the UN itself.

Staying in business: shifting roles, shifting funds

In moving from provider of project grants to support the UN to also raising money for its own operations and programmes, the UNF has in effect benefitted from this unique association with the UN to build and strengthen its own operations. In the period 1998 to 2016 the sum of UNF revenues reached US\$2.6 billion and the overall expenditures of the Foundation amounted to US\$2.3 billion, while the grants given were 76.5 percent of expenses – approximately US\$1.7 billion (see Table 6). Over this period, only US\$1.4 billion went to UNFIP.

The share of UNF grants to UNFIP fluctuated between 1999 and 2006, after which it decreased dramatically. In 1999, nearly all of UNF’s expenditures went to UNFIP. By 2016, the share decreased to less than a quarter. That year, UNFIP received US\$28.2 million from the UN Foundation, while the total expenditures of the Foundation were US\$117.0 million, and the grants made were US\$50.7 million. In other words, UNFIP received only 24.1 percent of the UN Foundation’s total expenditures.

Significant share of UN Foundation expenditures was spent on activities and grant-making outside the UN system

Thus, a significant share of UN Foundation expenditures was spent on activities and grant-making outside the UN system, with a strong emphasis on the support of US-based organizations and multi-stakeholder partnerships and alliances that they coordinate directly. For example, in 2015 the Planned Parenthood Foundation of America received US\$310,000 and the Public Health Institute in Oakland, CA received US\$543,145.¹⁹ The Better World Fund, established as sister organization of the UNF, even received a grant of US\$4,578,000.

17 Cf. www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/participants/1538-Business-Council-for-the-United-Nations.

18 Cf. www.unfoundation.org/who-we-are/experts/global-entrepreneurs-council/.

19 Cf. UN Foundation (2016): IRS Form 990 for the year 2015.

Table 6**UNF revenues, expenses and grants approved to UNFIP (in US\$)**

Year	Revenues	Expenses			Grants to UNFIP as percentage of total expenses
		total	of which grants	of which grants to UNFIP	
1998	83,271,192	na	na		
1999	132,504,878	147,364,991	146,333,576*	143,978,538	97.7
2000	51,026,739	91,368,357	88,956,077*	83,767,631	91.7
2001	99,122,687	98,602,727	91,790,015	90,428,592	91.7
2002	108,234,904	98,013,347	90,358,653	88,425,261	89.7
2003	105,138,811	78,483,951	70,008,146	49,197,925	62.7
2004	103,047,794	94,197,357	84,721,910	56,311,725	59.8
2005	203,355,197	188,969,234	176,097,642	157,633,482	83.4
2006	243,249,150	240,018,570	227,675,435	225,753,351	94.1
2007	177,794,996	81,078,740	64,731,293	47,009,740	58.0
2008	114,451,567	140,224,505	117,582,684	63,679,828	45.4
2009	105,050,738	83,081,439	54,354,979	28,176,920	33.9
2010	137,514,520	107,661,444	72,514,564	40,365,238	37.5
2011	192,737,803	127,292,648	86,264,857	60,950,996	47.9
2012	134,808,629	134,850,608	83,162,074	51,351,365	38.1
2013	230,764,474	137,838,875	75,324,528	47,288,362	34.3
2014	147,183,981	147,928,448	80,666,635	49,766,771	33.6
2015	101,198,453	139,463,058	63,210,163	43,747,632	31.4
2016	97,659,264	117,040,619	50,727,382	28,226,475	24.1
Sum	2,568,115,777	2,253,478,918	1,724,480,613	1,356,059,832	

* Programme service expenses
Source: UNF Form 990 and Financial Statements.

Many campaigns and initiatives supported by the UN Foundation have not involved UN entities and have not been covered in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Member States, yet have benefited by association with the UN name. Indeed, the UNF balance sheet has shifted over time such that these non-UN initiatives receive greater resources than do UN agencies. This trend towards outsourcing – not only to the UN Foundation – raises questions about governance and accountability, and how to sustain the ability of the UN to tackle complex, unpopular issues as well as mobilize attention and action for emerging issues of global scale.

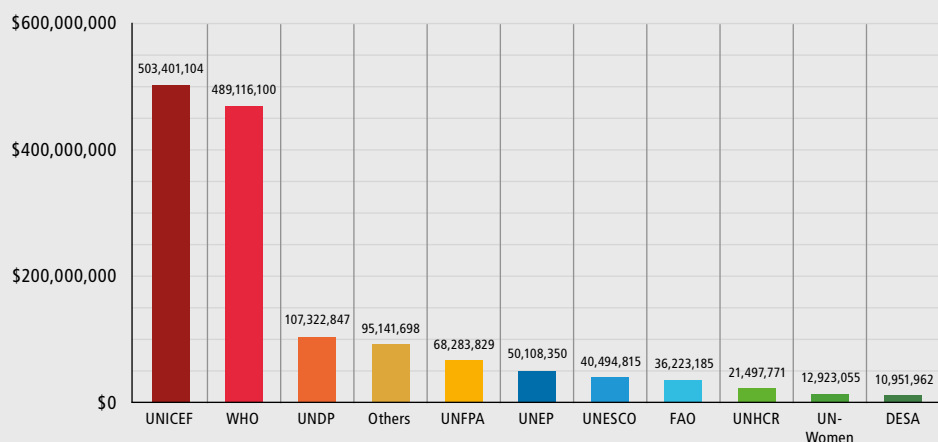
The two UN agencies that have received by far the largest share are WHO and UNICEF

Limited number of beneficiaries within the UN

Contributions from the UN Foundation to the UN have not only decreased over the years, they have also been limited in scope. The two UN agencies that have received by far the largest share are WHO and UNICEF. Together they have received US\$992.5 million from the UN Foundation via UNFIP – 69 percent of the cumulative allocations approved by the UN Foundation between 1998 and 2016 (see Graph 1).²⁰ Other parts of the UN system benefited little if at all from UN Foundation grants. Together with the decline in core resources for the UN development system, this skewed distribution contributes to the silo and sector-specific approach and the tilt away from the systemic and integrated approaches called for by the 2030 Agenda.

Graph 1

Top recipients of UN Foundation grants to the UN system (cumulative allocations 1998–2016)



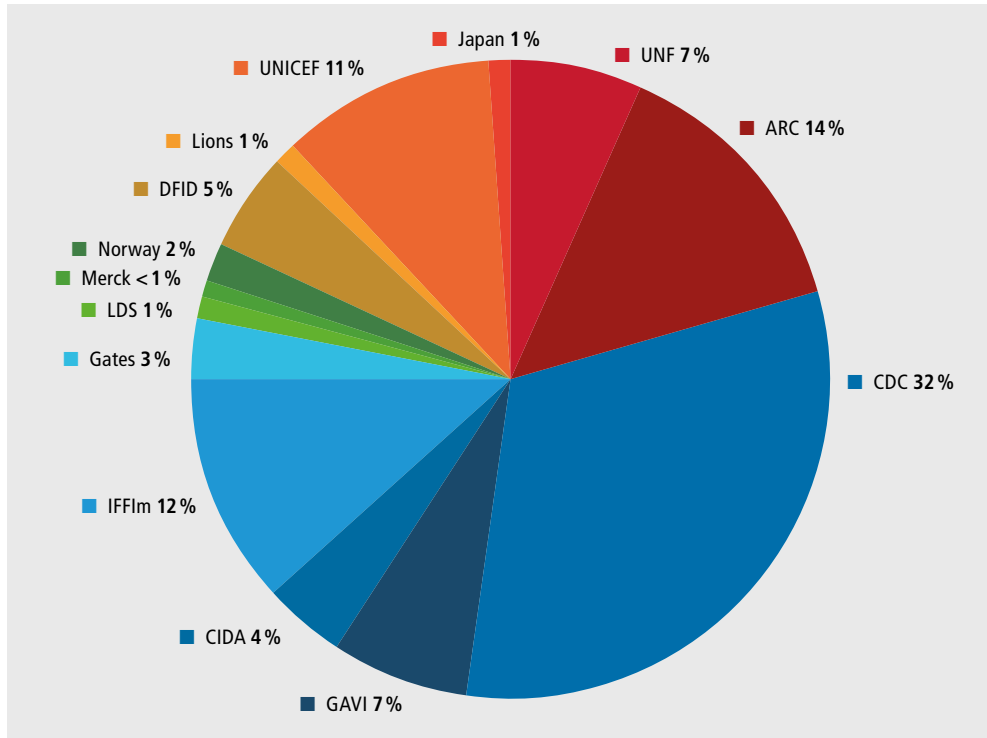
Source: UN Doc. A/72/167, Annex I.

The vast majority of UN Foundation grants have been allocated to the health sector, and to children's health projects in particular. And within this sector, the Measles and Rubella Initiative (M&RI) was the major beneficiary of UNF support: up to 98 percent of the UN Foundation's annual contribution to UNFIP went to the M&RI.²¹ However, it is

²⁰ Cf. UN Doc. A/72/167.

²¹ In 2013, cf. the Annual Reports of the M&RI, <https://measlesrubellainitiative.org/resources/reports/the-measles-rubella-initiative/>.

worth noting that between 2001 and 2014 only 7 percent of the M&RI funding came from the UN Foundation directly, 93 percent came from other public and private sources, mostly pooled together and channeled through UN Foundation accounts (see Graph 2).²²

Graph 2**Donors to the Measles & Rubella Initiative, 2001–2014**

Source: <https://measlesrubellainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014-Finance-Update.pdf>.

From UN programme support to UN issues: advocacy moves to centre stage

While the health sector is still dominant in UNF grants to the UN, a growth area is “advocacy and communications.” In 2016 11 percent of the UN Foundation’s funding was allocated to this priority area (see Table 7).

22 Cf. <https://measlesrubellainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014-Finance-Update.pdf>.

Table 7

Priority areas of UN Foundation funding to the UN 2012–2016

Programme area	2012			2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Proj #	Value \$	total %	Proj #	Value \$	total %	Proj #	Value \$	total %	Proj #	Value \$	total %	Proj #	Value \$	total %
Global health	7	57,643,541	90	2	52,074,880	98	6	53,785,068	95	13	42,555,373	92	6	22,863,854	80
Energy and climate	4	3,764,750	6	0	—	—	5	720,610	1	3	567,500	1	1	500,000	2
Women, girls and population	1	73,315	0	2	716,340	2	2	949,589	2	8	2,246,002	5	7	1,870,000	7
Peace, Security and Human Rights	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	84,213	0	—	—	—
Advocacy, communications and other development-related issues	1	2,450,703	4	3	185,712	1	6	1,368,589	2	4	692,234	2	12	3,265,419	11
Total	13	63,932,309		7	52,976,932		19	56,823,856		29	46,145,323		26	28,499,273	

Sources: UN Doc. A/72/167, A/71/159/, A/70/202, A/69/218/ and A/68/186 (the names of the programme areas have slightly changed in 2014)

According to the UN, in 2016,

“... these efforts included channelling resources to United Nations entities through targeted fiduciaries, supporting United Nations capacity and creating and engaging in advocacy platforms and tools to support a robust global communications strategy around the 2030 Agenda and supporting key drivers of its implementation, such as data, by housing a select number of multi-stakeholder initiatives.”²³

This shift can also be seen in the Foundation’s new strategy, approved by the Foundation Board of Directors in November 2016. Clustered under five headings, these functions reflect the shift in focus from project-based grant-making to the UN to supporting broadly defined “UN causes”, not necessarily within the UN institutional framework:²⁴

(a) “Channelling. The Foundation continues to work with a wide range of stakeholders to mobilize and channel financial resources to the United Nations system through UNFIP;

(b) “Convening. The Foundation collaborates with various United Nations entities to bring stakeholders together and foster dialogue on

²³ Cf. UN Doc A/72/167, para. 31.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 6.

a range of issues, including, in 2016, the lead-up to important milestone events, including the World Humanitarian Summit and the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(c) “Communicating. The Foundation deploys a diverse set of communications tools to build informed public support for the United Nations and to give wider visibility to issues high on the Organization’s agenda. This work is conducted in close collaboration with the Department of Public Information and other communications experts across the United Nations system;

(d) “Championing. The Foundation champions the work of the United Nations through global and United States-based advocacy initiatives that connect citizens to the United Nations. The Foundation helps to foster a common understanding about the mission of the United Nations and also to ensure strong and sustained support by the Government of the United States for the United Nations;

(e) “Collaborating. The Foundation has become an institutional home for a number of multi-stakeholder initiatives in support of the sustainable development priorities of the United Nations, including the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Family Planning 2020, the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, Data2X and the Digital Impact Alliance.”

From an initial interface with the UN exclusively through UNFIP, the UN Foundation has interacted directly with other parts of the UN from the Secretary-General on down. Representatives of the UN Foundation became close advisors to former UN Secretary-General Annan and participated regularly in internal meetings convened by his office. In addition, the Foundation has provided resources to hire additional UN staff and has served as a key outreach and campaigning arm for some UN activities. The Foundation provided, for instance, “external communications, media and executive team support” around the official launch of UN Women in February 2011.²⁵

The Foundation has provided resources to hire additional UN staff and has served as a key outreach and campaigning arm for some UN activities

More recently, the UN Foundation has also increased its interface with civil society, focusing on creating advocacy platforms and tools to support a robust global communications strategy with regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and at the end of the 2015, were facilitating civil society engagement in the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD).

25 Cf. UN Doc. A/67/165, para. 28.

In 2017 the UN Foundation conducted an annual stakeholders' survey on the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), developed in consultation with UN DESA to measure national civil society support for the SDGs. Preparatory calls, such as the UN DESA hosted Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) Coordination Meetings, were facilitated by the Foundation.

Up-dated Relationship Agreement

The shift in priorities from a funder to a broker and facilitator had outgrown the 2007 Relationship Agreement between the UN and the UN Foundation. The internal audit of UNFIP by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for the period 2008–2012 found that:

“The existing operational practices were not in line with the relationship agreement. UNFIP did not play a prominent role in reviewing and prioritizing project proposals submitted by implementing partners. UNFIP only authorized the commencement of project execution and implementation. Additionally, although the UNFIP Advisory Board met at least annually over the past five years, the Board did not review project proposals or select projects for approval. Instead UNFIP and the UNFIP Advisory Board received project proposals for information purposes only.”²⁶

As a consequence, the OIOS audit recommended that: “UNFIP should update the relationship agreement between the United Nations and the United Nations Foundation”.²⁷

UNFIP later reported that “UNFIP, the Office of Legal Affairs and the United Nations Foundation had worked extensively on developing a new, revised and restated relationship agreement between the United Nations and the United Nations Foundation.”²⁸ The new Relationship Agreement was signed by both parties on 23 October 2014.

Under the new agreement, the UN and the UN Foundation established a Joint Coordination Committee, as “the principal forum to ensure strong and timely communication and coordination between the United Nations and the Foundation.”²⁹ The Committee has been constituted with half UN and half UN Foundation staff and normally meets twice a year.

26 Cf. UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (2015), para. 15.

27 *Ibid.*, para. 16.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Cf. UN Doc. A/72/167, para. 4.

The drafting of the new agreement took place behind closed doors without intergovernmental oversight or transparency to the broader public, and, in contrast to the initial agreement, it has not yet been published. Likewise, neither the composition nor the minutes of Joint Coordination Committee meetings have been disclosed.

The drafting of the new agreement took place behind closed doors without intergovernmental oversight or transparency to the broader public

UNF, Global Partnerships and Member States: a governance challenge

Global partnerships between different governmental and non-governmental actors are not new, but date from the early 1990s. The 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development recognized the crucial role of “major groups” in achieving sustainable development, and the 2002 Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development endorsed what were known as “Type II partnerships”, as distinct from “Type I partnerships” between Member States, as central to implementation.

The UN General Assembly has been engaged with the topic explicitly since the year 2000. This was on the initiative of the government of Germany, which sought to support Kofi Annan’s Global Compact. Since then, the topic has been an established item on the General Assembly’s agenda, under the heading “Towards Global Partnerships”.

While Member States have negotiated and adopted nine resolutions on global partnerships since 2000, they have only recently squarely addressed the governance issues. Adopted in 2015, General Assembly resolution (A/RES/70/224) on partnerships called for attention to improved information disclosure, risk management and safeguard measures and action, as follows:

“To disclose the partners, contributions and matching funds for all relevant partnerships, including at the country level;

“To strengthen due diligence and risk management measures that can safeguard the reputation of the Organization and ensure confidence-building.”³⁰

The resolution addresses the UN system as a whole “to develop a common and systemic approach which places greater emphasis on transparency, coherence, impact, accountability and due diligence....”³¹

30 Cf. UN Doc. A/RES/70/224, para. 14.

31 *Ibid.*, para. 13.

At the 2016 Partnership Forum of the Economic and Social Council, the developing country grouping of the G77 and China emphasized the need for

“...action-oriented outcomes and concrete suggestions on ways to enhance Member States’ oversight of partnerships involving the UN, with a view to enabling Member States to examine and adopt guidelines to ensure coherence, impact, accountability and due diligence of the partnerships between the UN system, including the Funds and Programmes and specialized agencies and the private sector, philanthropic organizations, academia and other related stakeholders”.³²

A few Member States – mainly major contributors to the UN system – have engaged actively with the UN Foundation, primarily through the partnership modality

However, a few Member States – mainly major contributors to the UN system – have engaged actively with the UN Foundation, primarily through the partnership modality. For these Member States, multi-stakeholder partnerships are part of their approach towards development delivery and represent a marked change from the development cooperation as led by and representing agreements among states. In championing such partnerships they can demonstrate flexibility and say they are circumventing bureaucracy or cumbersome decision-making processes to respond emerging priorities; they also are able to drive programmes and policies they prioritize – another form of earmarking.

The differing positions and interests among the Member States will be at play as they grapple with their responsibilities for establishing a robust framework for UN partnerships and their oversight.

UNF and the partnership boom

Since 2010, and initially under the banner of the MDGs, the engagement of the UN in the partnership boom expanded in several directions. Then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was actively involved in the creation of several new global partnerships in the areas of health, education, nutrition and energy, including Sustainable Energy for All, Scaling up Nutrition, Global Education First and Every Woman Every Child.

The UN Foundation was one of the driving forces behind this partnership boom

The UN Foundation was one of the driving forces behind this partnership boom and is now involved in many initiatives at US and global level.³³ It has positioned itself in a variety of ways in these initiatives – as the secretariat, as fiduciary agent, or as an institutional home (see table in the Annex).

³² Cf. www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id=160331, para. 9.

³³ On the rise of partnerships and the role of the UN Foundation see for instance Bradley (2011).

Some of the UN Foundation initiatives in the USA have been high-profile. The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, for example, announced by Hillary Clinton at a Clinton Global Initiative conference in 2010, includes as founding partners the Shell Foundation, the Morgan Stanley Foundation, the WHO, UNEP, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Governments of Germany, Norway and the Netherlands. Aside from the State Department and the Environmental Protection Agency, participating US agencies include the Departments of Energy and Health and Human Services.³⁴

The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves is housed at the UN Foundation and receives funding from governments, corporations, foundations, civil society and private investors. Its ‘100 by 20’ goal calls for 100 million households in development countries to adopt clean and efficient cookstoves and fuels by 2020. According to its website:

“Donor governments currently provide the largest share of the Alliance’s annual program funding, however foundations and the private sector represent a growing share of the Initiative’s grant and investment resources. In addition, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, multilateral agencies, and the private sector also play a major role in supporting the Alliance’s advocacy, research, governance, and implementation efforts.”³⁵

Family Planning 2020 (FP2020), hosted by the UN Foundation,³⁶ is an outcome of the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning where more than 20 governments pledged to address the policy, financing, delivery and socio-cultural barriers to women accessing contraceptive information, services and supplies. FP2020 works with existing mechanisms and various partners to contribute to the UN Secretary-General’s Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, *Every Woman, Every Child*. Core partners include the UK Government, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in close cooperation with the UN Foundation. They were also co-hosts of the 2017 Family Planning Summit in London.³⁷

FP2020 is governed by a Reference Group composed of representatives of multilateral organizations, civil society, developing countries, donor governments and the private sector. The current Co-Chairs are Chris Elias, President of Global Development at the Gates Foundation, and Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA. Kathy Calvin, President and CEO of the UN Foundation is also a member of the Reference Group.

34 Cf. www.nytimes.com/2010/09/21/science/earth/21stove.html?_r=1.

35 Cf. <http://cleancookstoves.org/about/how-we-are-funded/index.html>.

36 Cf. www.familyplanning2020.org.

37 Cf. <http://summit2017.familyplanning2020.org/>.

According to the 2016 FP2020 Annual Commitment Update Questionnaire Response, the UN Foundation “has committed to catalyzing at least US\$90,000,000 over three years with partners, including initiatives and activities on mHealth, global gender data, programming for adolescent girls, and U.S. advocacy related to achieving universal access to reproductive health care”.³⁸ A report from the 2017 Family Planning Summit, described UNFPA as receiving funding through a “Bridge Funding Mechanism”, which will help to address what the Summit called “the mismatch between the timing of donor funding and country requests for commodities”.³⁹

The UN Foundation plays different roles in the FP 2020 partnership: it provides secretariat services, raises funds, and participates in strategy building and decision making.

Some of the most noteworthy partnership initiatives launched in recent years have been in the field of data, statistics and digital development

Some of the most noteworthy partnership initiatives launched in recent years have been in the field of data, statistics and digital development. Among these initiatives are the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD), Data 2X and the Digital Impact Alliance (formerly the Mobile Hub). They were all established with active involvement of the UN Foundation.

Probably the most high-profile of these is currently the GPSDD, launched in September 2015.⁴⁰ This initiative was first proposed by UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in its report from May 2013 and later supported by the Secretary-General’s Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.⁴¹

Major funding has been provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the International Development Research Centre, the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB), the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, and the US Government.

Rather than create an entire separate entity, which would be time consuming and involve decisions by Member States, it was agreed that the Global Partnership would be hosted by an existing entity, and in November 2015 the UN Foundation was selected to serve as “institutional home for the secretariat”—in effect giving the UN Foundation considerable decision-making power over the grant-making of the Global Partnership.

38 Cf. http://ec2-54-210-230-186.compute-1.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/FP2020_2016_Annual_Commitment_Update_Questionnaire-UN_Foundation_DLC.pdf.

39 Cf. <http://summit2017.familyplanning2020.org/global-goods.html>.

40 Cf. www.data4sdgs.org/.

41 Cf. www.undatarevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/A-World-That-Counts.pdf.

The GPSDD includes a wide variety of initiatives with corporate and UN “champions”, all working to show governments how their activities – and in many cases their products – can enable the national statistical offices to collect and analyse the data needed to measure achievements towards the SDGs (see Box 3). Being a champion has many meanings and involves diverse relationships, such as advocates and conveners, funders and providers – along with recipients – of various forms of expertise.

Box 3

GPSDD “Data Champions”

GPSDD “Data Champions” include governments, corporations, civil society organizations, UN and other international organizations, academic institutions, foundations as well as official statistics and data communities. Champions include data giants such as MasterCard, IBM, and Facebook, civil society organizations like Civicus, an array of UN development entities, Global Pulse (the Secretary-General’s innovative initiative on big data), the IMF and World Bank Group and a small group of developing countries, including Colombia, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.

Closely allied with the Global Partnership is Data 2X, a “collaborative technical and advocacy platform dedicated to improving the quality, availability and use of gender data.”⁴² It was announced in July 2012 by then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and is hosted by the UN Foundation with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Data2X is also the gender data lead for the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data.

DATA2X commits to “bridge the expertise and track record of Data2X and leverage the convening power of the Global Partnership to ensure improved gender data is at the heart of our efforts to drive the data revolution for sustainable development ...” It states: “Our work will have a particular focus on private sector engagement and innovations for data collection, analysis, and use to fill persistent gender data gaps.”⁴³

The DATA 2X team includes a core secretariat housed at the UN Foundation in Washington, D.C. Data2X is on the Steering Committee for UN Women’s flagship programme initiative on gender statistics “Making Every Woman and Girl Count”, and a founding partner of Equal Measures 2030 (EM2030), a civil society and private sector partnership

42 Cf. <http://data2x.org>.

43 Cf. www.data2x.org/data2x-commitment-global-partnership-sustainable-development-data/.

focused on data-driven advocacy for accountability on SDG progress for girls and women. The Gates Foundation is the main funder of both initiatives.

The Gates Foundation is also one of the main funders of the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL, formerly the Mobile Hub).⁴⁴ DIAL is a multi-stakeholder partnership between USAID, the Gates Foundation, the Government of Sweden, and the UN Foundation which – again – acts as host of the initiative. The initiative describes its public-private partnership approach as follows:

“DIAL originated to bring the public and private sectors together to realize an inclusive digital society that connects everyone to life-enhancing and life-enabling technology. DIAL is staffed by a global team of technology researchers, developers, investors, negotiators, and policymakers. It is supported by world-class foundations and development agencies and guided by a Board of leading emerging market entrepreneurs, technologists and development experts.

“With this leadership, DIAL is uniquely positioned to serve as a neutral broker, bringing together government, industry, and other development stakeholders to promote new solutions to old problems.”⁴⁵

As such it receives donations from a wide range of players, including the World Bank. In June 2017 DIAL announced a partnership with the World Bank to support its “identification for development (ID4D) efforts”, designed to “help countries roll out robust and inclusive identification systems with multi-sectoral approaches and 21st century solutions”, including national identification systems.⁴⁶

All of these partnerships promoted by the UN Foundation have brought together a mix of stakeholders (governments, UN agencies, NGOs, academia) each with their own governance and accountability mechanisms.

The UN Foundation’s role in data collection and analysis aligns with the 2030 Agenda emphasis on SDGs and measurement, but it opens up a range of issues that should be of concern to Member States, including the questions of accountability and transparency of the decision making, as well as the murky waters of national ownership currently and over time of data and statistics to measure progress on the SDGs.

44 Cf. <https://digitalimpactalliance.org/>.

45 Cf. <https://digitalimpactalliance.org/what-we-do/>.

46 Cf. <https://digitalimpactalliance.org/digital-impact-alliance-announces-partnership-world-bank-identification-development-id4d-initiative/>.

With this new development of spearheading and housing partnerships, the UN Foundation has strengthened its role as a facilitating organization. How has this changed the reporting requirements, the attention to conflict of interest and due diligence not only of the UN Foundation but also of the United Nations itself in its engagement with the UNF and the “waiver” given to the Foundation to carry the UN name?

3. Findings and conclusions

For 20 years the UN has had a foundation that was set up to leverage funds from Ted Turner totaling US\$2 billion – US\$1 billion per decade. By the end of 2016, the UN has been the beneficiary of US\$1.44 billion, a figure made up of US\$990 million from third party or co-funders and US\$450 million from Ted Turner himself.

The money mobilized by the UN Foundation from third parties, including governments, has exceeded the total amount of Turner funds for over a decade. Where the Foundation money has gone has also changed, as non-UN third parties have also been beneficiaries. The trend over the last decade has shown an increase in funds to others and a steady decline in funds to the UN, particularly since 2011. In 2016 the contribution to the UN had fallen to US\$24 million and is projected to be even lower for 2017.

The money mobilized by the UN Foundation from third parties, including governments, has exceeded the total amount of Turner funds for over a decade

Of the contributions received by the UN, the overwhelming majority of these have been concentrated in the category of health, and the two major beneficiaries have been WHO and UNICEF, together receiving a total of US\$992 million.

Furthermore this support for the work of the UN on global health, particularly children's health, has been concentrated on eradicating measles and rubella, notably through the Measles and Rubella Initiative. Over the last four years this concentration reached the extraordinary percentage of 86 percent of all UN Foundation contributions to the UN through UNFIP.⁴⁷

This concentrated support is in line with the ability of children's health campaigns to attract a large array of partners, as recognized in the UN Office on Partnerships report in July 2011: "Over time, United Nations Foundation investments in children's health have proven to be one of the most promising avenues for attracting a wide variety of partner support for United Nations-led initiatives...."⁴⁸

Initially premised to provide coordination services as well as to match contributions to the M&RI, the UN Foundation role has evolved to that of a minor contributor, as clarified in M&RI reporting:

"To increase coordination and transparency while minimizing transaction costs for UNICEF and WHO, a unique funding mechanism

47 Cumulative sums between 2013 and 2016.

48 Cf. UN Doc. A/66/188, para 7.

was implemented in 2001 ... Initially, the UN Foundation matched donor funds and then moved to a straight contribution when donor contributions became too large to match.”⁴⁹

The UN and its causes or “UN causes”

With the shift in focus from supporting the UN system and *its* causes to including funding for more broadly defined and only loosely related ‘UN causes’, it could be argued that this provided additional donor support to the UN, especially from the USA. However, evidence is lacking, as most of the grant-making by UN Foundation that falls into this category did not involve UN programmes and does not appear to have benefitted from alignment and assessment through the UNFIP/UNOP process.

While the Foundation has provided space and opened doors, including through its own Board, its partners, including corporate partners, are not subject to impartial risk assessment in line with UN guidelines and standards. These are laid out in the *Guidelines on a principle-based approach to the Cooperation between the United Nations and the business sector*⁵⁰ as well as in the Member State-adopted *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*.⁵¹

Inadequate contributions and few donors

The failure by Member States to finance adequately the UN development activities and the overwhelming use of earmarking has been detailed in UN reports and deplored in many resolutions by Member States, recently:

“...non-core resources pose their own challenges by potentially increasing transaction costs, fragmentation, unproductive competition and overlap among entities and/or providing disincentives for pursuing system-wide priorities, strategic positioning and coherence”.⁵²

This long-standing failing has also set the scene for so-called niche and innovative financing, fostering an anything-goes approach.

More attention is beginning to be paid by the UN and Member States to ensure that the partnership approach does not divert UN staff time from core work nor contribute to the fragmentation that undermines the system-wide coordination needed to meet current challenges.

49 Cf. http://measlesrubellainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/MRI-2014-Annual-Report_FINAL.pdf.

50 <https://business.un.org/en/documents/5292>.

51 http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf.

52 Cf. UN Doc. A/RES/71/243, para 27.

The declining amount of core and flexible financing by Member States has also had programme implications, skewing decision-making away from multilateralism to the priorities of a few donors. This is seen very clearly in the health sector and particularly the WHO experience.

The donor driven dynamic and its implications have been well analysed by Chelsea Clinton (now head of the Clinton Foundation) and global health expert Devi Sridhar in a January 2017 article published in *The Lancet*. Focusing on the three top global health donors – the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the UK and the USA – the authors point out:

“By using financing and governance mechanisms within the old institutions, as well as by creating new agencies, donors can more likely achieve their goals for a few reasons. First, they have structurally aligned the objectives of global agencies with their own objectives. Individual governments (or small groups of governments and like-minded others) can use the new funding mechanisms, agencies, or initiatives as a way to define and pursue a separate mandate, for example with HIV/AIDS.”⁵³

With the high degree of voluntary specified contributions, WHO’s agenda has become shaped increasingly by the priorities of donors, public and private, a point driven home by Clinton and Sridhar:

“Over time, the rearrangement of WHO’s priorities to align with funds was inevitable, with donors earmarking 93% of voluntary funds in the 2014–15 budget. Influence is heavily concentrated among the top donors. Undeniably then, a direct link exists between financial contributions and WHO focus.”⁵⁴

While this matches very well with the priorities of the Gates Foundation, it skews even further the benefit to the UN system of having a special relationship with the UN Foundation. It concentrates the influence of existing dominant donors, public and private, rather than broadening the funding base of the UN.

Partnerships – are they win-win?

Partnerships of all kinds have been embraced to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as for example those to scale up nutrition or to support women’s empowerment. These can demonstrate value added when they support policy and civic space in UN value-led, transparent and democratic accountability. However, they can further fragment

53 Cf. Clinton/Sridhar (2017), p. 5.

54 Ibid., p. 2.

and undermine democratic governance if they provide space for the donor-driven dynamic currently at play.

Many of these partnerships are being promoted as central to the achievement of the SDGs, along with the attention to statistical indicators of progress and data to measure them.

The UN Foundation is taking the lead in promoting data partnerships as a major activity in facilitating and providing secretariat services for multi-stakeholder partnerships

The UN Foundation is taking the lead in promoting data partnerships as a major activity in facilitating and providing secretariat services for multi-stakeholder partnerships. This facilitation includes making agreements with other actors, for example with the World Bank, on behalf of the GPSDD, and is financed by a limited number of major donors. To the extent that these partnerships include UN entities, this practice carries many implications of reporting, burden- and risk-sharing, not yet spelled out or assessed, let alone made transparent to Member States. One such example is a collaboration between GPSDD and the World Bank's Development Data Group (DECDG) on data innovation in developing countries, *Collaborative Data Innovations for Sustainable Development*, which provides awards made in the form of vendor contracts (not grants) and are subject to compliance with the World Bank Group General Terms and Conditions for Consulting Services. These terms and conditions between the awardee and the World Bank Group include a number of copyright provisions such that resulting reports will be wholly owned by the World Bank under US Copyright law.⁵⁵

These new partnership initiatives raise reporting and accountability issues especially for governments and national statistical offices which are ultimately responsible for measuring their progress in achieving the SDGs.

The re-positioning and changing of the business model of the Foundation has been beneficial to the Foundation itself, as it has increasingly taken a convening role in communication and outreach activities of the UN, disproportionate to the funding provided. Its contributions have included support for the placement of special advisers to the former Secretary-General's office on high profile policy streams such as post 2015 and since then, with staffing and hosting global data partnerships. More recently the Foundation has increased its support to some civil society organizations through its convening and advocacy role.

When the UN Foundation assessed its work in its 10-year report 2007, it decided to divert some of the money pledged to the UN to establish its permanent presence. Pointing to the Foundation's success in leveraging funds in support of UN causes, the report states that "the Board and UN leadership" suggested that Turner stretch his gift over a 15-year period, and "chart a course toward a permanent Foundation":

55 Cf. www.globalpolicywatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/GPW19_2017_11_28.pdf.

“Ted Turner has honored his commitment by delivering to UN causes more than \$650 million, which the Foundation has more than matched by an additional \$700 million raised from corporate, philanthropic, government and NGO partners. The remaining \$350 million of his pledge is being used to propel the Foundation’s ongoing work and long-term sustainability.”⁵⁶

The Foundation itself has also been a financial beneficiary of its evolving relationship with the UN. In the first years of operation, its grant-making to the UN constituted the majority of its expenditures. In 2016, US\$28 million of US\$117million expenses went to the UN. Also in 2016, US\$20 million of UN Foundation expenses went to consultant fees, US\$4 million to travel expenses to global conferences and the like, including first-class accommodation for Board members and their spouses.

The UN Foundation has been a consistent advocate and facilitator for the UN to open up to private sector engagement in its funding, programme and projects. However, this type of engagement has not been accompanied by a rigorous assessment of effectiveness and without addressing issues of reporting and coherence with UN mandates.

Does this methodology contribute to strengthening the UN system capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda or contribute to the weakening of the UN programmatic activities, confronted with the donor trend to limit contributions to strict earmarking (and further, to single donor, single projects)?

If the UN has no choice but to engage any major player that shows interest in the causes it supports, then it could be said to have been a beneficiary. This is a contested narrative, as UN values become less central in driving its activities and programmes. Has UN Foundation support de facto been part of the continuing erosion of the UN system effectiveness as more and more UN operational activities are financed by earmarking or outsourced to non-UN entities?

The partnership business model has benefited donors (public and private) as it has lessened their reporting burden and multilateral obligations, made space for specific foundation players including the Gates and Hewlett Foundations as well as the corporations from which they derive their funds.

Significantly, it has also enabled donors to continue their practice of funneling support to specific programmes and projects, furthering fragmentation and competition and running counter to efforts to reform the UN

56 Cf. UN Foundation (2007), p. 3.

development system not only to coordinate its operations but to develop the integrated approach required by the 2030 Agenda.

As the UN Foundation enters the third decade of its special relationship with the UN, it has significantly evolved from its origins as a UN funder.

The anticipated income stream has had some specific benefits for contributors and recipients, but these have not been exclusively for the UN system nor well distributed within it. And in the case of UN development entities, it must be assessed whether the Foundation is generating or competing with these for Member State funds. Beyond this it must be explored how the partnerships model enhances the implementation not the diminution of the UN purpose.

While the UN Foundation has benefitted from a special relationship with the UN, the results and benefits to the UN to date do not convincingly justify a unique Relationship Agreement

While the UN Foundation has benefitted from a special relationship with the UN, the results and benefits to the UN to date do not convincingly justify a unique Relationship Agreement.

Furthermore, the UN-UNF partnership should be reviewed and assessed in the context of a UN system-wide approach to partnerships, UN business and management practices and transparent monitoring and accountability. Does the UN Foundation, as it has evolved, merit a unique relationship agreement with the United Nations?

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Abbreviations

ARC	American Red Cross
BCUN	Business Council for the United Nations
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
BWF	Better World Fund
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CNN	Cable News Network
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	Department for International Development
DIAL	Digital Impact Alliance
EM2030	Equal Measures 2030
EWEC	Every Woman Every Child
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FENSA	Framework of Engagement with non-State Actors
FP2020	Family Planning 2020
FY	Fiscal Year
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation
GC	Global Compact
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GPSDD	Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
ID4D	Identification for Development
IFFIm	International Finance Facility for Immunisation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
JICA	Japanese Agency for Development Cooperation
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LDS	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
M&RI	Measles and Rubella Initiative
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MGoS	Major Groups and other Stakeholders
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SE4All	Sustainable Energy for All
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
TFSCB	Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UK	United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNF	United Nations Foundation
UNFIP	United Nations Fund for International Partnerships
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNJIU	United Nations Joint Inspection Unit
UNOP	United Nations Office for Partnerships
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
USA	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Annex

UN Foundation – campaigns and initiatives

Name	Role of the UN Foundation	Founding date	Further information
Better World Campaign	A project of the Better World Fund, the sisterorganization of the UNF	1999	https://betterworldcampaign.org/
UNA-USA	A programme of UNF (after the dissolution of the former UNA-USA)	2010	http://unausa.org/
Business Council for the United Nations	Founded in 1958, BCUN became an official programme of the United Nations Foundation in 2010	2010	http://www.unfoundation.org/features/bcun/
Energy Future Coalition	The Energy Future Coalition works closely with the UNF, with which it is co-located. The UNF provides financial and in-kind support to the Coalition.	2002	http://energyfuturecoalition.org/home/
➔	25x25' Alliance	2004	http://www.25x25.org/
➔	Rebuilding America	2008	http://energyfuturecoalition.org/our-campaigns/energy-efficiency/rebuilding-america/
➔	Americans for a Clean Energy Grid (ACEG)	2008 (2010)	http://cleanenergytransmission.org/
Sustainable Energy for All – Energy Access Practitioner Network	An initiative hosted by the UNF. The Energy Access Practitioner Network is the UNF's contribution to the Sustainable Energy for All initiative.	2011	http://energyaccess.org/
Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves	The Alliance is hosted by the UNF.	2010	http://cleancookstoves.org/home/index.html
Nothing But Nets	A campaign of the UNF	2006	https://www.nothingbutnets.net
Girl Up	The UNF's adolescent girl campaign	2010	https://girlup.org/#sthash.2QSQc6rf.dpbs
Shot@Life	A campaign of the UNF	2011	http://shotatlife.org
Global Polio Eradication Initiative	The UNF, as part of its Shot@Life campaign, supports this initiative. The UNF is an important and long-standing partner, having contributed more than US\$ 45 million over the years.	1988	http://polioeradication.org/
Measles & Rubella Initiative	UNF coordinates the global partnership with American Red Cross and manages the funds of the Initiative through an agreement with the United Nations.	2001	http://measlesrubellainitiative.org/

Name	Role of the UN Foundation	Founding date	Further information
Every Woman Every Child	The UNF and the UN Global Compact have partnered to support the Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health and launched an Every Woman Every Child Task Force within the Global Compact LEAD./	2010	http://www.everywomaneverychild.org
Universal Access Project	The Universal Access Project, a project of the UNF		http://www.universalaccessproject.org/
Global Moms Challenge	The Global Moms Challenge is an initiative of the UNF	2011	http://www.globalmomschallenge.org/
Coalition for Adolescent Girls (CAG)	Founded by the UNF and the Nike Foundation. The secretariat is staffed by representatives from the Nike Foundation and the UNF, along with the CAG Co-Chairs and the Coordinator.	2005	http://coalitionforadolescentgirls.org/
Family Planning 2020 (FP2020)	Hosted by the UN Foundation	2012	http://www.familyplanning2020.org/
Data2X	Data2X is led by the UNF. The Data2X team is made up of a core secretariat based at the UNF.	2012	http://www.data2x.org/
➡	Making Every Woman and Girl Count	2016	http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/flagship-programmes/making-every-woman-and-girl-count
➡	Equal Measures 2030	2017	http://www.equalmeasures2030.org/
Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD)	The UN Foundation hosts and provides administrative, financial and contractual services for GPSDD.	2016	http://www.data4sdgs.org/
Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL)	Hosted by the UNF	2016	https://digitalimpactalliance.org/
Global Daily	Supported and hosted by UNF	2015	http://globaldaily.com

Notes on authors

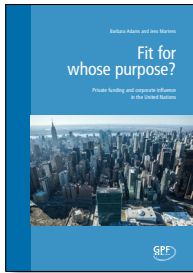


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Further publications

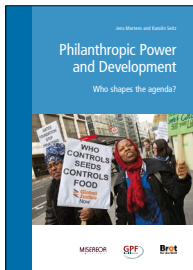


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Authors: Barbara Adams and Jens Martens

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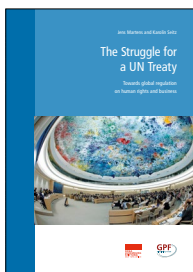
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The UN Foundation – A foundation for the UN?

The United Nations Foundation (UNF) was established two decades ago principally to champion and support the work of the United Nations.

In pursuing this aim, particularly over the last decade, the Foundation appears to have developed a business model and growth strategy that promote its own priorities, activities and expansion. In continuing to have a special relationship with the UNF, the UN must guard against the possibility that the Foundation has evolved from a net funder of the UN to a net competitor for both philanthropic and Member State funds.

The UNF's support of the UN must also be seen in context. Ted Turner and the UNF leadership have a clear vision of the way to tackle global problems and the role the UN should play, centred solidly on public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder approaches. The UNF has been among the driving forces behind the opening of the UN towards the business sector.

With the aim to explore these developments, and the trends that give rise to them, this working paper builds on the analysis elaborated in the 2015 GPF publication "Fit for Whose Purpose?" and puts it in the context of today's re-evaluation of multilateralism.

It describes the origins and the evolution of the UNF and its relationship with the UN, analyses the changing role of the UNF and the shift towards partnerships outside the UN system, examines benefits, risks and side effects of these trends, and ends with a few findings and conclusions.