

The Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation Thursday Talks

“Building Capacity to Measure Impact: A Private Foundation’s Vision”

**Andreas Hipple, Senior Program Advisor of the GHR
Foundation**



Part 1: Overview



About the Speaker:

Andreas Hipple is a seasoned international development and philanthropy professional specializing in organizational capacity building, monitoring & evaluation, faith & development, and public-private partnerships. Andreas received his M.A. from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and has significant experience working with organizations across Africa, including Benin, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, and the DRC.



Presenter Remarks:

Andreas began the talk by introducing the GHR Foundation. The GHR Foundation is a private foundation based outside Minneapolis, MN. GHR is 60 years old, and in the past few years has moved to develop more strategic initiatives. One of those strategic initiatives is to promote peaceful and cohesive societies through inter-religious development work; GHR’s Inter-Religious Action Initiative is discussed in this talk. The Inter-Religious Action Initiative aims to improve development outcomes, building lasting community connections, and advance peace by mobilizing religious leaders and communities. GHR works towards these aims in four ways:

- 1) Supporting research and implementation of inter-religious approaches.
- 2) Building the field by strengthening inter-religious platforms and disseminating knowledge of best practices.
- 3) Developing the evidence and tools that strengthen inter-religious work and demonstrate impact.
- 4) Making the case for inter-religious action to other funders.

Andreas observed that when working with inter-religious approaches, there is often a “feeling” that the work is good, without accompanying evidence to prove that the work is good.

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Building Evaluation Capacity

GHR's goal in building the evaluation capacity of faith-based partners is to help those partners demonstrate their projects' lasting impact to others. GHR recognizes that not all their partners have evaluation backgrounds, and thus GHR works to provide different resources to accommodate different partners' needs. The three capacities that GHR focuses on helping their partners develop are:

- 1) Robust independent evaluations that demonstrate the impact of projects and demonstrate sound theories of change.
- 2) Enhanced evaluative thinking internally to ask and answer if projects are having the greatest impact possible.
- 3) Long term development evaluations to track capacity and learning over time.

GHR's Approach to Evaluation

Andreas said that GHR's approach to evaluation is defined by accountability and learning, but that the emphasis is on learning. GHR holds itself and its partners accountable, but by building close relationships, GHR is able to give their partners freedom to implement projects and focus more on the learning process. The important questions are: What's going right? And how do you adjust when things are going wrong?

Andreas identified two major challenges in interreligious work:

- 1) Partners differ in evaluative capacity and it is important for the foundation to know each partner's capacity and to track how each partner is developing.
- 2) The field of inter-religious action is not strictly defined, so as GHR helps build the field, they must continue to learn and question what works.

Andreas then stated that building capacity for evaluation rests on two core principles:

- 1) Both sides (funders and partners) must foster trust and open conversations around needs and expectations.
- 2) "One size does not fit all", which is to say that funders also need to be realistic and flexible about what constitutes evidence.

Andreas stressed that honest conversations between funders and partners are important because the more understanding each side has of challenges and limitations, the more able they are to work towards co-creating solutions.

Case Studies

Andreas provided two brief case studies.

The first was Mercy Corps' Inter-Religious Peacebuilding project in Northern Nigeria. In this case, the partner (Mercy Corps) had a strong evaluation system framework, and GHR worked to support creativity and encourage knowledge sharing. Mercy Corps had worked with religious leaders internationally, but they did not have the resources to handle specific

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theological challenges. GHR was able to help by connecting Mercy Corps with resources and individuals they otherwise would not have access to.

The second case was Religions for Peace (RfP). RFP is a global network that had done significant work, but had not been able to demonstrate their impact. In this case GHR supplied with the resources to support RfPs efforts to strengthen evidence of impact.

**If you are interested in learning more about those case studies please refer to the Video.*

Myths and Fallacies

Andreas chose to address four myths that he has come across as a funder:

- 1) Myth: Good work speaks for itself.
Truth: Good work does not speak for itself, evaluations and robust data are necessary to communicate successes.
- 2) Myth: Foundations are only interested in quantitative data.
Truth: Foundations are open to conversations about different types of data.
- 3) Myth: Foundations are monoliths.
Truth: Foundations are not monoliths, foundations must demonstrate their choices to their own board, so the more honest partners are to their foundation staff, the better the foundation staff can communicate internally.
- 4) Myth: Funders know what they want.
Truth: Foundations are not fixed, many funders are open to conversations about what is possible, to balance ambition and reality.

Suggestions

Andreas gave suggestions for how to best communicate with funders. He stressed that evaluations should stimulate conversation between funders and partners, partners should not see an evaluation as the end of a process, but instead use the evaluation as an opportunity to communicate with the funder. Andreas gives four points for presenting an evaluation to a funder:

- 1) Help the funder absorb key findings.
- 2) Use the opportunity to demonstrate how you learned and adapted throughout the process.
- 3) Seek to understand your funding partner, so you can put your work in a context that they can value.
- 4) Be prepared to discuss what you don't know.

Next steps for GHR

Andreas ended his talk with an update on what GHR believes to be its critical next steps. He presented four points that GHR will continue to work on:

- 1) GHR seeks evidence showing if/when/how inter-religious action improves development and peacebuilding outcomes.
- 2) GHR will continue to engage with partners to learn and adjust strategies.
- 3) GHR invites others to evaluate their work, both the Inter Religious Action initiative and their partnerships.

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- 4) GHR will work to connect their partners to share resources.

Part 2: Question & Answer

Ricardo Wilson Grau (attendee): In light of the significant work already being done to meet the challenges for evaluating inter-religious peace-building, what else remains to be tackled?

Andreas: There still exists a significant gap in evaluating inter-religious work on collaborative issues, there is not much evidence on how collaborative inter-religious work helps build a more cohesive society. There is also a gap between peacebuilding and development fields, a gap that GHR would like to see addressed more, which we hope strong evaluation will help bridge.

Emily Delmont: Does GHR use, or recommend, any specific tools for capacity building around M&E?

Andreas: Tools for M&E vary according to what our partners are working on and where they are. We connect our partners with evaluators who have deep knowledge the specific issue they are working on. It depends on the project or the context of the partner's work. There are also tools available on the [DME for Peace site](#) that I use and return to frequently.

Natasha Lamoreaux (attendee): Can Andreas speak a bit about how the GHR Foundation encourages partners to become true learning organizations and making ongoing adjustments to learnings from evaluations?

Melanie Kawano Chiu (moderator): Additionally, how does GHR ensure that it is a true learning organization?

Andreas: We encourage partners to be learning organizations by making multi-year commitments, which signals our dedication and gives them time to develop into true learning organizations and strengthen their work. We also give additive resources to address challenges that arise. Through trust building we encourage our partners to learn and evolve.

For ourselves, we have a guiding logic model, and we recently brought in experts and asked them to critique it. For us, being open and inviting feedback and evaluating the initiative are all parts of us learning.

Annalisa Raymer (attendee): Does GHR teach potential grantees how to do Theories of Change? If so, is there a particular process that you use? Do you have good examples of proposals based on developmental evaluation? I'm interested in examples of explanatory language that speaks especially to non-evaluators to explain M&E.

As GHR often works in conflict settings, what has GHR used for complexity aware monitoring methods such as Sentinel Indicators, Stakeholder Feedback, Process Monitoring of Impacts, Most Significant Change and Outcome Harvesting? What has been GHRs impact design and specific methodologies used?

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Andreas: For theory of change we bring in consultants because we've learned that building capacity requires repeated interaction and GHR doesn't have the staff to provide that for partners, but we do have the power to connect them to experts.

To respond to the aspect of your question on outcome harvesting, we tend not to prescribe specific methods to partners. We give partners the power to find what will work best for them in their specific context.

Anonymous (attendee): What is a minimum or basic timeline for successfully implementing M&E?

Andreas: It depends. Our basic approach is that we encourage partners to integrate M&E into project planning, to be a part of the process throughout, not just a thought at the end.

Diana Chigas (attendee): What have you found to be special considerations in evaluating inter-religious action, as opposed to development or peacebuilding interventions that do not have an inter-religious dimension?

Andreas: We are teasing out how specifically working with religious leaders and working on interreligious issues contributes to social cohesion. We are working to learn under what circumstances and with what levels of interaction does inter-religious action contribute to development and peacebuilding.

There is an interreligious circuit of organizations that have done faith-based work, but too much of the conversation assumes that they are doing good work rather than providing evidence. Important conversations need to be had to convince faith leaders how evaluations can benefit them, and to help them understand that they can strengthen their impact by engaging with evaluation norms.

[If you have any follow-up questions, please post them on the Thursday Talk Discussion Forum here.](#)