

FundWell

A Swift Summary of Wellbeing Stuff for Funders

November's edition of FundWell is curated by

Corey Oser, Senior Vice President of Programs at [Global Fund for Children](#) and Co-Chair of the [Funders + Wellbeing Learning Group](#)

Trust-Based Philanthropy Isn't Just Good Practice—It's Good for Wellbeing

When we at the Global Fund for Children (GFC) embarked on our Global Impact Study, we knew we'd learn about how our funding model affects partner organizations. What we didn't fully anticipate was just how profoundly trust-based philanthropy impacts wellbeing—often in ways that ripple far beyond what traditional metrics capture.

Researchers spoke with staff and leaders from 49 partner organizations across 27 countries. What emerged was a compelling story about how the way we fund can either drain or sustain the people doing this critical work.

What Trust Actually Does

When partners experienced a trusting relationship with us—one where they felt respected, supported, and believed in—their wellbeing improved at both personal and organizational levels. One partner told us that organizational morale had been low, but GFC's support was "almost therapeutic," helping mend relationships within their team. Another shared how our trusting approach created a "breathing space" for leadership to better support frontline staff.

Specific practices made the difference. Light-touch reporting was "stress-free" compared to other funders. Flexible funding meant partners could pay staff on time and adequately—one organization noted this improved their staff's motivation and sense of being valued. Genuine care from GFC staff created space for vulnerability, with one partner noting: "I can name them on one finger, the times that a funder has called me and asked, 'how are things?'"

Perhaps most powerful was when partners learned about prioritizing wellbeing by watching us do it. One partner's most significant change was how they now viewed organizational mental health, allocating wellbeing funding for staff working with traumatized communities after our workshops.

The evidence is clear: trust-based practices aren't soft or optional. They're essential infrastructure for sustainable social change. When people feel trusted and supported, they don't just do better work—they're healthier, more creative, and more resilient.

Corey Oser

Senior Vice President of Programs

[Global Fund for Children](#)



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Key Findings

- Experiencing a trusting and supportive relationship helped partners gain confidence and security, which enabled them to focus on developing and growing their organisations.
- Almost all partners mentioned that they could make their own decisions around their own priorities, determining the vision of their own organisation.
- Partners' leaders modelled the trusting dynamic with their own staff members and shifted towards more trust-based collaborative ways of working.

FundWell Essentials

- Global Fund for Children's** Global Impact Study explores how their funding approach affects partners worldwide and reveals the connection between trust-based practices and grantee wellbeing. <https://globalfundforchildren.org/global-impact-study/>
- Trust-Based Philanthropy Project** is main hub for resources, principles, and practices of trust-based philanthropy and includes case studies and tools for implementation: (<https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/>)
- "Trust-Based Philanthropy and Strategic Philanthropy Are Not Mutually Exclusive"** The article emphasizes that trustful relationships create space for leaders to share their concerns and challenges—and even their failures—fostering a learning environment that allows for more meaningful and supportive funder engagement: <https://ssir.org/articles/entry/trust-based-philanthropy-strategic>

Talking Points: pick one and start a conversation!



What might we learn if we examined our reporting requirements through a wellbeing lens? Choose one report and explore with your team: What does this tell us? Is there a lighter-touch way to gather what we need?



How might our relationships shift if we made space to check in on people, not just progress? What would it look like to add a simple "how are you doing?" to the beginning of a call, and really listen? These moments of genuine connection often reveal insights no formal report could capture.



What wellbeing practices from our organization might be worth sharing with grantees? If policies or practices support our team's sustainability—flexible schedules, mental health resources, or something else—how might we make these visible or available to organizations we fund?

Words on Wellbeing

"Trust is earned in the smallest of moments. It is earned not through heroic deeds, or even highly visible actions, but through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection."

- Brené Brown

Looking to go deeper? Explore our [Philanthropy x Wellbeing Hub](#).

How does your funding organisation define wellbeing? Does it support wellbeing for its stakeholders? [Reflect and share here, in the Funders + Wellbeing Survey.](#)

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