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## PHILANTHROPY

# Community Foundations Take Root in South Africa

WRITTEN BY ANNE EIGEMAN CREATED ON THURSDAY, 30 AUGUST 2012 13:36

August 21, 2012; Source: [Mott Foundation News](#)

A recent essay by the Mott Foundation examines the impact that community foundations in South Africa are having as leaders of grassroots social change. The essay focuses on the Cape Town-based [Community Development Foundation Western Cape](#) (CDF WCape), a community foundation that launched in 2007 and has since spun-off two newer grantmaking affiliates within the country. Jenny Hodgson, executive director of Johannesburg-based [Global Fund for Community Foundations](#), has described CDF WCape as “a field leader in the country, the continent and globally.” As one of seven community foundations in the country, CDF WCape has already gained recognition for the active role it has taken in assisting grassroots groups to assess community needs and the assets that funders and NGOs have to respond to them.

Like many in the philanthropic field, Beulah Fredericks, executive director of CDF WCape, stepped into her role as community foundation leader after leading an NGO. According to the essay, Fredericks’ vantage point as an NGO leader of a preschool enabled her to see a gap between the province’s rich and poor. Her community-based work also heightened her awareness to concerns that extended beyond the education field. For example, she “saw firsthand the interconnectedness between social issues such as inadequate systems for health care, housing, education, and water and sanitation.” According to Hodgson, this “holistic” approach to grantmaking is a typical feature of newer community foundations. In this way, she explains, community foundations like CDF WCape “have the potential both to serve as stewards of the community’s resources and, in the long term, to offer locally funded alternatives to typical, externally funded NGOs.”

With an emphasis on “purposeful grantmaking” (a term that refers to the type of support that CDF WCape provides to NGOs along with support that the community foundation itself gets from funders like the [Charles Stewart Mott Foundation](#)), the essay highlights a recent example of community support from its youth civic engagement program. CDF WCape has had strong interest in a photography program called [PhotoSpeak](#). The program instructs students about citizens’ legal rights and then provides opportunities for travel throughout their community “snapping photographs that illustrate how residents’ basic human rights are—or are not—being protected.”

As an indication of the organization’s growing international leadership role, representatives from CDF WCape will travel to Cairo later in the year to participate in the Arab Foundations Forum. Reflecting on the of community foundations within her country and African philanthropy more broadly, [CDF WCape’s 2012 Annual Report](#) explains, “The international discourse on Africa is showing a positive economic change toward afro-optimism and the call for resourcefulness and innovation should not be ignored.” —Anne Eigeman

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