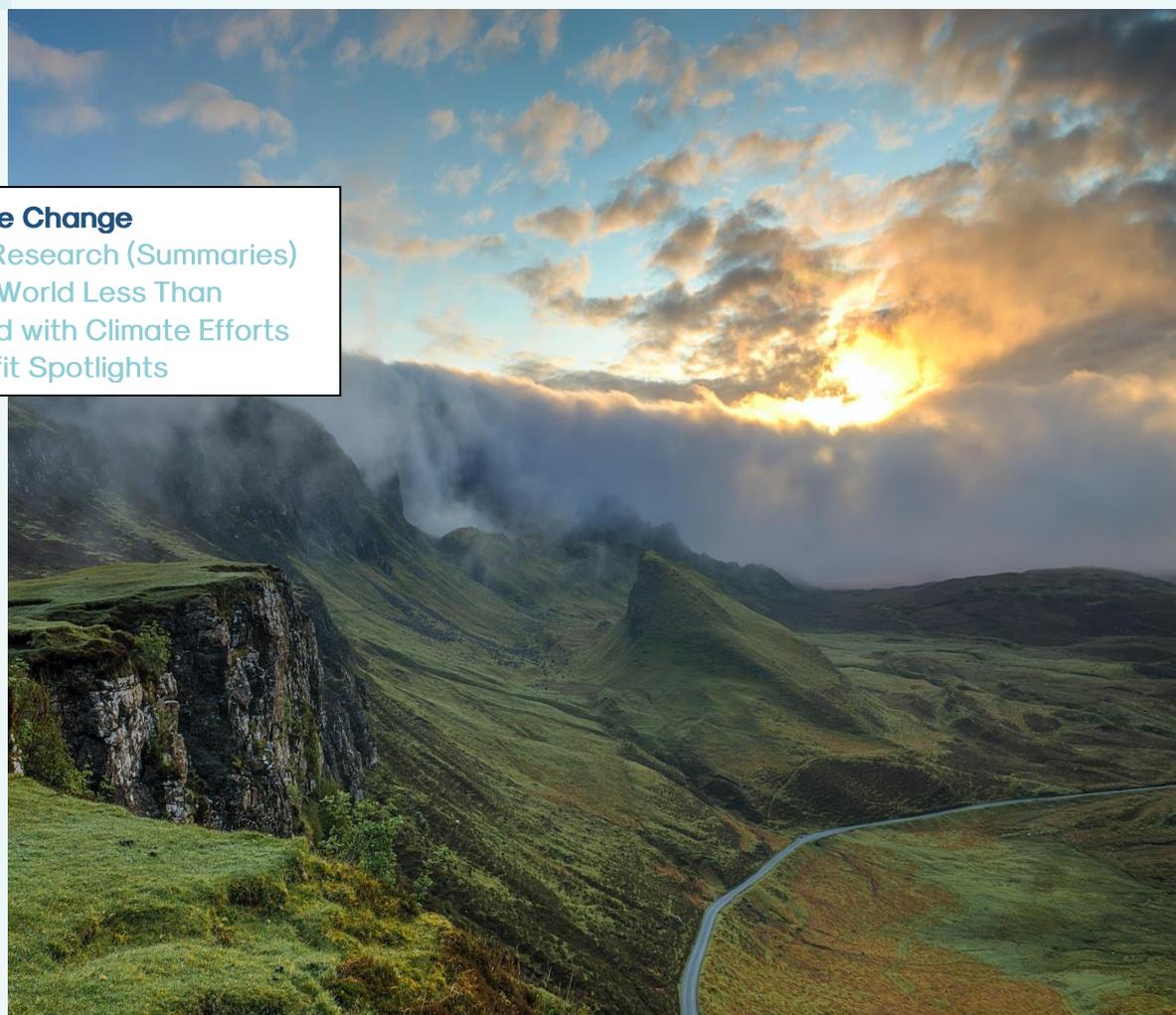


The Journal of Nonprofit Innovation

An Online Journal for Academic Research and
Thought Papers on Community and Global Issues

Edition: Climate Change

- Latest Research (Summaries)
- Article: World Less Than Satisfied with Climate Efforts
- Nonprofit Spotlights



WikiCharities
CONNECT. VALIDATE. COLLABORATE.



Acknowledgments

Editorial Board Lead

Angie Holzer, EdD
CEO/Founder, WikiCharities

Professional Review Board

Hannah Cheng, MS
Heather Hammond Cruz, MBA
Beverli DeWalt
Rachel George, PhD
Angie Holzer, EdD
Jane Mitchell, JD
Patrick Panos, PhD
Ria Roy, PhD

Chief Editor

Marianna Richardson, PhD

Associate Editor

Seth Martinez, PhD

Student Chief Editor

Erica Bassett

Student Editorial Team

Erica Bassett
Lindsay Harper
Mandie Carter
Scott Harrington
Nahari Leija

The Journal for Nonprofit Innovation is a publication of WikiCharities, a 501c3 nonprofit. JoNI is published in partnership with Brigham Young University.

© 2023 WikiCharities. All rights reserved.

info@wikicharities.org
wikicharities.org
Bountiful, UT, USA

All images pulled from Unsplash and Pixabay.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT JONI	4
LATEST RESEARCH (SUMMARIES)	5
SUMMARY 1: CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH AND THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS: RETHINKING INTERDISCIPLINARITY	6
SUMMARY 2: IMPORTANCE OF FOOD-DEMAND MANAGEMENT FOR CLIMATE MITIGATION.....	7
SUMMARY 3: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY-BASED WILDLIFE CONSERVATION	8
SUMMARY 4: ENVIRONMENTAL NONPROFIT CAMPAIGNS AND STATE COMPETITION: INFLUENCES ON CLIMATE POLICY IN CALIFORNIA	9
SUMMARY 5: A REVIEW ON THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON FOOD SECURITY AND MALNUTRITION IN THE SAHEL REGION OF CAMEROON.....	11
RESEARCH AND THOUGHT PAPERS	12
WORLD LESS THAN SATISFIED WITH CLIMATE EFFORTS	13
DECENTRALIZATION AND CENTRALIZATION IN SOCIOCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS: DYNAMICS, COMBINATIONS, AND HYBRID SOLUTIONS	18
A CASE STUDY: DO BOARD CONSULTANTS AND FUNDERS HAVE IT WRONG?	26
NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHTS.....	32
THE HYDROUS	33
DAYS FOR GIRLS INTERNATIONAL.....	35
TECHCHARITIES	36
ISSUE TOPICS AND SUBMISSION DETAILS	38



Submissions

For more information on how to get involved or how to submit pieces for upcoming issues, contact us at submissions@journalofnonprofitinnovation.org or visit us online at journalofnonprofitinnovation.org or <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/joni>.



Who We Are

The Journal of Nonprofit Innovation (JoNI) is a publication of WikiCharities, a U.S.-based 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to nonprofit transparency and collaboration. JoNI is an online journal for academic research summaries and thought papers on community and global issues. We exist to bridge the gap between academic research and nonprofit leaders on the ground. Academics can share their latest research on topics relating to the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit leaders can access the latest research and share their experiences on what they have found to work on the ground.

Our Mission

To provide an academic journal that helps bridge the gap between academic research and the practices of nonprofit practitioners on the ground.

Our Vision

Promoting best practices through an online, open-access journal that highlights the latest research, thought papers, and nonprofit spotlights that address innovative approaches to community and global issues.

Latest Research (Summaries)



Edition: Climate Change

JoNI
Journal of
Nonprofit
Innovation

Latest Research: Summary 1

Climate Change Research and the Search for Solutions: Rethinking Interdisciplinarity

From Lisa Schipper, Navroz Dubash, and Yacob Mulugetta *Climatic Change* Vol. 168, Iss. 3-4, (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-021-03237-3>. See article for in-text citations.

Context

After the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on 1.5C in 2018, the escalated pressure to act on climate change has urged scientists to move past providing information regarding climate change and to helping define solutions. The growing need for solutions has put a spotlight on how different disciplines collaborate through interdisciplinary research approaches.

This paper highlights new ways of generating and communicating knowledge about climate change, through interdisciplinarity. This paper proposes four interconnected mechanisms researchers can use moving forward.

4 Better Ways to Generate and Communicate Knowledge on Climate Change

1. Change the Objective of Research
 2. Pull Knowledge from Diverse Resources
 3. Invest in Qualitative Research of Human Behavior
 4. Broaden the Body of Knowledge for Active, Relevant Decision Making
-

Four Mechanisms

1. Change the objective of research. The old objective, which the paper defines as a quest for a singular vision of past, present, and future, should evolve to plural and co-existing perspectives. "Diverse simultaneous narratives provide greater opportunity for political creativity" (Schipper et al., 2021).
2. Pull knowledge from more diverse sources. Researchers can ask and answer questions from various perspectives and cultures. Diverse perspectives and worldviews can aid researchers in asking and answering climate-change questions.
3. Invest in more qualitative research of human behavior. To provide effective solutions to climate change, researchers and practitioners need to also consider how people respond to climate change. This lens requires social science and humanity research in the political, sociological, and institutional factors of populations to see if and how potential solutions can be implemented.
4. Broaden the body of knowledge for active, relevant decision making. Allowing flexibility as new research and developments emerge can provide needed course corrections over time, rather than encouraging a more mechanistic approach of set targets.

Application

Solutions to climate change require inputs from all disciplines as well as reframing questions and approaches. This change requires welcoming several narratives, understanding human behavior, including multiple disciplinary perspectives, and searching for solutions that allow for an adaptive course of action.

Latest Research: Summary 2

Importance of Food-Demand Management for Climate Mitigation

From Bojana Bajzelj, Keith Richards, Julian Allwood, Pete Smith, John Dennis et al., *Nature Climate Change*, Vol. 4 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1021/es400399h>.

Context

As the global population rises, demand for food increases across the globe. This demand simultaneously expands unsustainable agriculture practices, which contribute significant amounts of carbon emissions to the atmosphere, primarily through the increase in the number of livestock and production of livestock feed.



Much of current research on climate change focuses on energy supply and increasing efficiency, but relatively few papers have considered reducing demand, particularly in food and land-use scenarios. This new insight may be necessary given expected increases in population and food demand by 2050.

A strategy for reducing demand for animal products and other energy-rich foods (like sugars and saturated fats) is through encouraging large-scale dietary changes, which also reduce food waste. Consumption of energy-rich foods, waste

from agricultural processes, and food waste are all significant contributors to the issue of climate change and inefficient food production. The adoption of “healthy diets” with fewer animal products, specifically in heavily industrialized regions or countries where greater wealth is concentrated and more energy-rich foods are consumed, can greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared to strategies focused on closing crop yield gaps.

Key Takeaways

- Current food yields are not enough to meet global demand in 2050, requiring more intensive agricultural expansion. Because agricultural expansion is the main driver of losses of biodiversity and a major contributor to climate change, expanding current agricultural practices to meet growing demand is not ideal.
- Current strategies focus on closing crop yield gaps, but closing these gaps is not enough to combat climate change and deforestation if combined with increasingly higher use of crop and pastureland for energy-rich but inefficient foods, such as livestock.

Application

Organizations interested in reducing demand for energy-rich foods can consider several strategies. First, they can educate the public about healthier diet options that require less land and resources to produce, such as wheat, beans, and nuts.

Second, organizations can lobby local governments to include healthier and more efficient food options in schools and other publicly funded institutions and events.

Finally, organizations can provide tools, training, and funding to those interested in transitioning to more sustainable forms of food production that rely less on livestock and livestock feed.

Latest Research: Summary 3

Exploring the Impact of Climate Change on the Future of Community-Based Wildlife Conservation

From Stefan Carpenter, *Conservation Science and Practice*, Vol. 4, Iss. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.585>.

Context

Rural populations with local, small-scale agricultural economies across southern and eastern Africa have adopted community-based conservation (CBC) as their wildlife governance approach. This approach is based on the idea that communities will sustainably govern their wildlife resources when they “receive an enduring interest in and are able control and profit from those resources” (p. 1). The key to the success of this approach is the people within those communities need to believe that the benefit from CBC outweighs the costs associated with living with human-wildlife conflicts (HWC). Human-wildlife conflicts include killing of crops or livestock, destruction of infrastructure, and human injuries or fatalities.

However, with rising global temperatures, these communities are projected to experience prolonged drought. Will change in the region’s climate impact the positive opinion of the CBC approach within these communities?

To answer this question, Carpenter asked questions of residents in four CBC areas: Puros, Anabeb, Sesfontein, and Omatendeka. Carpenter then analyzed their responses using logistic regression, which shows the relationship between certain variables and whether the area embraced CBC.



Key Takeaways

- Over 90% of surveyed residents voiced that in the past 5 years there had been an increase in HWCs.
- Over 75% of surveyed community members responded that the wildlife benefits did not match the costs of HWCs.
- A majority (52.66%) of surveyed participants believe their conservancy made life better.
 - 45.16% stated the conservancy made life worse.
 - 13.44% said the conservancy had not changed their life (p. 4).

Results

The findings concluded that participants felt both that HWC had increased during the period of the drought and the benefits of the conservancy did not adequately compensate for the cost of these HWCs. As the foundation of the CBC programs are to provide economic gains in the event of HWC, the outcome of this research shows that long-term success of these programs is threatened.

To create CBC success, there needs to be investment in additional research to help understand and predict possible economic impacts from HWC as a result of climate change. Additional research can also help determine other sources of income such as direct payments that can be positively linked to CBC. These efforts, alongside nonprofits working to decrease HWCs, will help promote tolerance of wildlife.

Latest Research: Summary 4

Environmental Nonprofit Campaigns and State Competition: Influences on Climate Policy in California

From Nina Hall and Ros Taplin, *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, Vol. 21 (2010), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i27928192>.

Context

In the last three decades, nonprofit organizations have tried to address climate change through specific climate campaigns that are aimed at influencing US government policy. Hall and Taplin (2010) dive into the relationship between nonprofits, levels of US government, and relevant policy.



In order to understand this relationship, they examine how six nonprofits in California were able to influence public opinion and climate-change policy in the state. These six nonprofits are the Sierra Club, the Union of Concerned Scientists, Greenpeace USA, the Bluewater Network, the Vote Solar Initiative, and the Apollo Alliance.

Through interviews with representatives from these nonprofits, Hall and Taplin learned more about their campaign activities, their perception of their campaigns' success in influencing policy,

and their general thoughts about the political context of the day.

Key Takeaways

- These nonprofits were most successful when they campaigned with local and state governments, rather than with the federal government. In turn, these local and state governments implemented policies that later influenced the federal government. Nonprofits could focus on grassroots initiatives to push solutions forward.
- These nonprofits played an active role in lobbying for the California government's new climate policies. For example, their campaigns helped pass AB1493, a bill that sought to reduce vehicle emissions in the state. Without their active lobbying, AB1493 and other bills most likely would not have passed.
- These nonprofits were successful because they created coalitions with diverse organizations, including unions, for-profits, and other nonprofits. Despite their differences, these organizations helped the state government recognize the need for policy initiatives by simply working together.
- These nonprofits were most successful when they brought ideas and solutions to state governments, rather than just telling state governments that climate change is a problem.

Application

Nonprofit professionals can be more intentional about coalition building, policy influence, and messaging.

Coalition Building

Nonprofits who seek out partnerships with other organizations can help drive public interest in their chosen topic. For instance, a unified voice for addressing climate change can provide the incentive for new government policies.

Organizations do not have to align on all values or objectives in order to form a coalition. Nonprofit professionals could seek out these opportunities.

Policy Influence

While many social issues have a far-reaching impact, nonprofits could focus their efforts on grassroots initiatives—working with local and state officials, who can then go on to influence the federal government and other key actors. Nonprofits do not need to take on policy change by themselves.



Influencing local and state policy depends on several factors, not just how passionate nonprofit professionals are. For instance, nonprofits can have more success influencing policy when they have the right “traction.” In this sense, “traction” is the surrounding political and structural context, the policy’s long-term strategy, the nature of the problem, and the strength and competence of actors. For instance, Hall and Taplin note that the then-governor of California was open to progressive climate-change policies such as carbon pricing, and the state itself has a history of climate-centered legislation. These factors helped nonprofits in their efforts to address climate change.

Messaging

When working with officials, nonprofits can focus on “urgency” messaging rather than “fear” messaging. “Urgency” messaging highlights the nature of the problem while offering potential

solutions or recommendations, whereas “fear” messaging focuses solely on the frightening aspects of climate change. Nonprofits could better encourage policy change if they focus on solutions and next steps rather than the social issue’s detrimental effects.

The Journal for Nonprofit Innovation is a publication of WikiCharities, a 501c3 nonprofit. JoNI is published in partnership with Brigham Young University.

© 2023 WikiCharities. All rights reserved.

info@wikicharities.org

wikicharities.org

Bountiful, UT, USA

All images pulled from Unsplash and Pixabay.



Do you want to submit an article to the Journal of Nonprofit Innovation? We are looking for the latest research directly related to the nonprofit sector and thought papers from nonprofit leaders. We want to hear from you.

Submit to: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/joni>

Latest Research: Summary 5

A Review on the Impact of Climate Change on Food Security and Malnutrition in the Sahel Region of Cameroon

From Elvis Chabejong Nkwetta, *Climate Change and Health: Improving Resilience and Reducing Risks*, 2016. See article for in-text citations.

Context

Climate change has direct and indirect impacts on human health. One indirect impact is food insecurity, which can lead to malnutrition. In the Sahel region of Cameroon, the population regularly experiences high levels of malnutrition, because harsh climate conditions (including extreme drought) have a negative influence on agriculture. In particular, the extreme drought conditions lead to a reduction in agricultural production, an important parameter of food security.

This paper assesses the impact of climate change on food security and, subsequently, an increase in malnutrition in this region. The paper suggests ways to raise awareness on climate change, food security, and malnutrition.

Key Takeaways

The Sahel region has limited varieties of food crops; cereal, the most cultivated crop, has faced a deficit in the last decades. Researchers have attributed this deficit to irregular rainfall, an increase in temperature, frequent drought, deforestation, desertification over population, and technology (Kenga et al, 2005; Epule et al, 2009; Epule et al, 2011; Epule, Changhui, Lepage, & Chen, 2013; Molua & Lambi, 2006). The lack of



storage facilities during harvest is also a significant factor contributing to food insecurity in the Sahel region (Heather, Lea, & Ford, 2010).

Malnutrition can have a lifelong impact on health and development; malnutrition can impair growth, resistance to diseases, pregnancy, physical work, and learning ability. Malnutrition also makes a population more vulnerable to malaria and diarrheal diseases (Niang et al., 2014). This heightened vulnerability could be the reason why the Sahel region has frequent outbreaks.

Application

This article raises awareness on climate change, particularly its effect on food security and malnutrition. This study demonstrates how unreliable rainfall and increasing temperature affect crop yield and malnutrition in the Sahel region. However, climate change is not the sole cause of malnutrition. Overall, efforts to alleviate climate change and its effects could also improve other challenges, including international public health issues.



Research and Thought Papers



Edition: Climate Change



Article: Thought Paper

Journal of Nonprofit Innovation

TITLE

World Less than Satisfied with
Climate Efforts

AUTHOR

Julie Ray and Mary C. Evans

TOPICS

Climate Summit,
Preservation, Attitudes, Paris
Agreement, Public Opinion,
Public Policy



World Less than Satisfied with Climate Efforts

Julie Ray and Mary C. Evans

Overview: At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) summit that took place in Egypt from November 6 to 18, 2022, nearly 200 nations rushed to seek deals to keep climate goals moving forward. The summit ended with minimal progress and many criticisms that more needs to be done.

To measure how people feel about their country's efforts to preserve the environment, the Gallup World Poll asks people worldwide if they felt satisfied or dissatisfied with those efforts. Below, we explore the global data from this question and dive into the trend on this question in the United States (U.S.) from 2006 to 2022.

environment and about as many—48%—are dissatisfied (Gallup, 2021 & 2022).

Methods

Results are based on surveys of cross-sectional, nationally representative, probability-based samples of adults aged 15 and older in over 120 countries and territories in 2021 and 2022. At the time of this analysis, the World Poll survey—which is conducted on an annual basis—was in the field in dozens of countries. Whenever possible, 2022 data were used if already available.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine Gallup’s most recent public opinion data on how people feel about their country’s efforts to preserve the environment in the larger context of the annual event of COP27.

In English, the binary survey question that Gallup asks is: “In this country, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment?” Gallup translates this and all other questions that it asks in its World Poll survey into more than 140 languages. Surveys are offered to respondents in the most common languages spoken in their country. This question is asked to be inclusive of many different aspects of the environment, and not specific aspects such as carbon emissions, global warming, or climate change.

To further explore the hypothesized political differences in Americans’ attitudes about the environment, Gallup researchers used another World Poll question, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way the leader/head/President of this country is handling his/her job as leader/head/President?” In the U.S., the name of the president at the time of the survey is used.

The surveys are nationally representative of each country. Gallup conducts surveys via telephone or face to face with approximately 1,000 adults in each of these countries or territories (Gallup, 2021 & 2022). For telephones numbers are selected

About the Authors: Julie Ray is a writer and managing editor for World News at Gallup. Mary Claire Evans is a research consultant at Gallup.

Introduction

At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) summit that took place in Egypt from November 6 to 18, 2022, nearly 200 nations rushed to seek deals to keep climate goals moving forward. The summit ended with minimal progress and many criticisms that more needs to be done. This likely disappointed but did not surprise much of the world’s population that Gallup data show was already dissatisfied with current efforts to safeguard the environment.

Events such as the COP27 bring leaders together to agree on policies and make pledges for future action for their countries, but many past COP agreements have failed to turn into real action. For example, all countries agreed at the COP26 summit to set tougher climate targets, but by the time of the 2022 conference, only about 30 had. Further, global CO2 emissions are projected to rise this year.

To measure how people feel about their country’s efforts to preserve the environment, the Gallup World Poll asks people worldwide if they felt satisfied or dissatisfied with those efforts. Below, we explore the global data from this question and dive into the trend on this question in the United States (U.S.) from 2006 to 2022.

Against this backdrop, the world is as divided as its leaders and highly skeptical: A median of 49% of adults across 123 countries surveyed in 2021 and 2022 (which, at the time of this writing was the latest data available for the World Poll) are satisfied with their country’s efforts to preserve the

randomly and Gallup employs dual-frame computer-assisted telephone interviewing, and in countries where the survey is conducted face-to-face the survey employs an area-frame design to interview randomly selected households.

For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of sampling error ranges from ±2.0 to ±5.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level (Gallup, 2021 & 2022). The margin of error reflects the influence of data weighting. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Findings

At the country-level, in 66 countries out of the total 123, less than half of people report being satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the environment.

Satisfaction With Efforts to Preserve the Environment			
By % Satisfied			
The 10 countries below represent the largest cumulative carbon emitters (1750 - 2020)			
Geography	Survey conducted	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
China	2021	89%	11%
India	2021	78%	20%
United Kingdom	2022	52%	48%
Canada	2022	50%	50%
Germany	2021	49%	50%
United States	2022	48%	52%
France	2022	47%	50%
Japan	2022	46%	45%
Russian Federation	2021	35%	65%
Ukraine	2022	30%	66%

Carbon emissions from 2021 OVID Global Carbon Project experts (Andrew, R. M., & Peters, G. P.). Highest cumulative emissions are used as a measurement as carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions are essentially cumulative.

Get the data • Download image

Table 1 Satisfaction with Efforts to Preserve the Environment

This list of 66 countries includes many, but not all, of the world's cumulative top emitters of carbon dioxide, which is linked to global warming. For example, while less than half of adults in one of the countries with the largest amount of carbon emissions—the U.S.—are satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the environment, strong majorities in other big emitters such as China (89%) and India (78%) are satisfied (Gallup, 2021 & 2022).

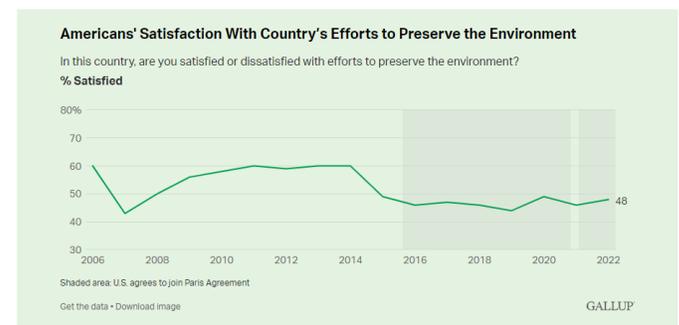
United States' Climate History More Complicated Since the Paris Agreement

From 1750 to 2020, the U.S. is estimated to have emitted 417 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide. The U.S. is the largest emitter of CO2 across that period—about twice that of the next highest country during the same time, China, at 236 billion tons (Gallup, 2021 & 2022). This cumulative measurement helps to show the long-standing environmental impact over time by different countries, as carbon emissions themselves are essentially cumulative.

The 48% of Americans who are satisfied in 2022 is characteristic of the relatively lower satisfaction levels of Americans since the U.S. first agreed to join the Paris Agreement in 2015 (Gallup, 2021 & 2022).

This question has been asked in the United States since 2006 (Graph 1). From 2006 to 2014, most Americans were satisfied with U.S. efforts to preserve the environment. Satisfaction mostly remained between 50% and 60%, with one outlier in 2007 when 43% of Americans said they were satisfied (Gallup, 2021 & 2022).

In 2015, 49% of Americans were satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the environment (Saad, 2022). This marked the beginning of a trend in which Americans' satisfaction failed to crack 50%. This period (2015) also aligns with when the U.S. joined the Paris Agreement (which it briefly left under President Donald Trump in 2020 and returned when President Joe Biden took office).



Graph 1 Americans' Satisfaction with Country's Efforts to Preserve the Environment

The 107 days between the U.S. withdrawing from/rejoining the Paris climate accord represents an ongoing trend of partisan polarization between worry about the environment, climate change and global warming in the U.S. To further explore the partisan differences in opinions, researchers compared the difference between satisfaction with efforts to preserve the environment and leadership approval.

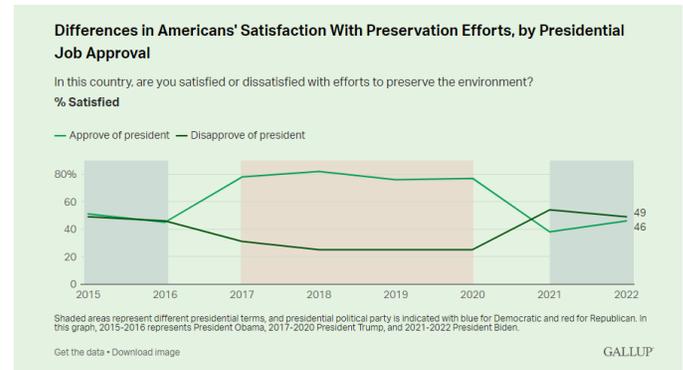
Approval of their country's leader did not factor into whether Americans were satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the environment in 2015 and 2016, with President Barack Obama in office. This changed between 2017 and 2020, under Trump, when there was about a 50-percentage-point difference in satisfaction with efforts to preserve the environment between those who approved and those who disapproved of Trump's overall job performance (Saad, 2022).

This difference in attitudes toward the environment by presidential approval is only apparent from 2017 to 2020, during the Trump administration, which rolled back many environmental actions taken by previous administrations. The Brookings Institution counted 74 actions in August of 2020 that Trump had taken to weaken environmental protection (Gross, 2021).

While environmental satisfaction rates remained below 50% between 2017 and 2020, adults who approved of Trump were between 47 and 57 points more satisfied with efforts to preserve the environment than individuals who did not approve of the job Trump was doing. This flipped in 2021 when Biden took office. Those who approved of Biden were 16 points less likely to be satisfied than those who disapproved (Saad, 2022). These divides largely disappeared in 2022.

When Biden addressed COP27, he explained actions that the United States had been trying to take in the last two years to address the environment. His major plans included increasing clean energy and investment in new technologies

as well as decreasing production and consumption of greenhouse gases. He also mentioned the Inflation Reduction Act, an ambitious policy setting the country's emissions toward the goal of half of 2005 levels by 2030 (The White House, 2022).



Graph 2 Differences in Americans' Satisfaction with Preservation Efforts, by Presidential Job Approval

Bottom Line

At the opening of the COP27 climate summit, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated the stakes of reaching a deal on climate change: "We are in the fight of our lives—and we are losing."

In the U.S, the world's largest emitter over time of carbon dioxide, the relationship between public opinion and political policy is complex. Americans have taken a somewhat dim view of efforts to preserve the environment since 2015—most recently 48% are satisfied, and 52% are dissatisfied (Gallup, 2021 & 2022). During Trump's presidency (notably 2017-2020) there were gulfs in opinions between people who did and did not approve of the country's leadership. These swings illustrate the political polarization between perceptions about the environment and country wide policies that seek to enact change for that same topic.

The polarization of opinion, particularly between 2017 and 2020 suggests that Americans' perceptions about the environment may be more politically driven than based on policy alone. There is almost a rally effect among Americans who approve of their president that artificially

changes the score regardless of the political policy on the environment that the country is enacting.

References

Friedlingstein, P., O'Sullivan, M., Jones, M. W., Andrew, R. M., Gregor, L., Hauck, J., Le Quéré, C., Luijkx, I. T., Olsen, A., Peters, G. P., Peters, W., Pongratz, J., Schwingshackl, C., Sitch, S., Canadell, J. G., Ciais, P., Jackson, R. B., Alin, S. R., Alkama, R., Arneeth, A., Arora, V. K., Bates, N. R., Becker, M., Bellouin, N., Bittig, H. C., Bopp, L., Chevallier, F., Chini, L. P., Cronin, M., Evans, W., Falk, S., Feely, R. A., Gasser, T., Gehlen, M., Gkritzalis, T., Gloege, L., Grassi, G., Gruber, N., Gürses, Ö., Harris, I., Hefner, M., Houghton, R. A., Hurtt, G. C., Iida, Y., Ilyina, T., Jain, A. K., Jersild, A., Kadono, K., Kato, E., Kennedy, D., Klein Goldewijk, K., Knauer, J., Korsbakken, J. I., Landschützer, P., Lefèvre, N., Lindsay, K., Liu, J., Liu, Z., Marland, G., Mayot, N., McGrath, M. J., Metzl, N., Monacci, N. M., Munro, D. R., Nakaoka, S.-I., Niwa, Y., O'Brien, K., Ono, T., Palmer, P. I., Pan, N., Pierrot, D., Pocock, K., Poulter, B., Resplandy, L., Robertson, E., Rödenbeck, C., Rodriguez, C., Rosan, T. M., Schwinger, J., Séférian, R., Shutler, J. D., Skjelvan, I., Steinhoff, T., Sun, Q., Sutton, A. J., Sweeney, C., Takao, S., Tanhua, T., Tans, P. P., Tian, X., Tian, H., Tilbrook, B., Tsujino, H., Tubiello, F., van der Werf, G. R., Walker, A. P., Wanninkhof, R., Whitehead, C., Willstrand Wranne, A., Wright, R., Yuan, W., Yue, C., Yue, X., Zaehle, S., Zeng, J., and Zheng, B.: Global Carbon Budget 2022, *Earth Syst. Sci. Data*, 14, 4811-4900, <https://doi.org/10.5194/essd-14-4811-2022>, 2022.

Funk, C., & Kennedy, B. (2016). *The politics of climate change in the United States*. Washington, DC.

Gallup. (2021 & 2022). Gallup World Poll. [Data file]. Washington, D.C.: Gallup.

Gross, Samantha. "What Is the Trump Administration's Track Record on the Environment?" Brookings, Brookings, 16 June 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/what-is-the-trump-administrations-track-record-on-the-environment>.

"Remarks by President Biden at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27)." The White House, The United States Government, 11 Nov. 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/11/11/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-27th-conference-of-the-parties-to-the-framework-convention-on-climate-change-cop27-sharm-el-sheikh-egypt/>.

Saad, L. "A Seven-Year Stretch of Elevated Environmental Concern." Gallup.com, Gallup, 21 Sept. 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/391547/seven-year-stretch-elevated-environmental-concern.aspx>.

Taylor, C. "'We Are on a Highway to Climate Hell,' Un Chief Warns." *Fortune*, Fortune, 16 Nov. 2022, <https://fortune.com/2022/11/07/cop27-un-chief-warns-world-on-a-highway-to-climate-hell/>.

Weber, E. U., & Stern, P. C. (2011). Public understanding of climate change in the United States. *American Psychologist*, 66(4), 315.



Article: Thought Paper

Journal of Nonprofit Innovation

TITLE

Decentralization and
Centralization in Sociocratic
Organizations—Dynamics,
Combinations, and Hybrid
Solutions

AUTHOR

Ted Rau, PhD

TOPICS

Self-Governance, Leadership,
Decision Making, SoFA,,
Budget, Strategy, Information



Decentralization and Centralization in Sociocratic Organizations—Dynamics, Combinations, and Hybrid Solutions

Ted Rau, PhD

Overview: The article discusses the interplay between decentralized and centralized aspects of governance in the context of decentralized self-governance and shares learnings from Sociocracy For All's (SoFA) experience, including that decentralization is an active process that requires preparation, budget, strategy, and information can act as centralizing forces, and decentralization requires different ways of thinking about responsibility and leadership. SoFA is a young membership organization founded in 2016 promoting sociocracy, a governance system with consent-based decision-making in small groups, in nonprofits and other organizations.

About the Author: Ted is an advocate, trainer, and consultant for self-governance. His main focus is sociocracy. After his PhD in linguistics and work in academia, he co-founded [Sociocracy For All](#) and spends his days consulting, teaching and leading the member organization as executive director. Ted identifies as a transgender man; he has 5 children between 9 and 18. A German citizen, he has lived in Massachusetts since 2010. He is co-author of two books on self-governance, [Many Voices One Song](#) (2018) and [Who Decides Who Decides](#) (2021).

Introduction

New forms of collaboration are needed to address the complex and interdependent issues in our societies. There has been a significant amount of innovation in new forms of organizing over the past decades, but grassroots organizations and nonprofits still resort to top-down, hierarchical models.

To give broader access to effective self-governance tools working more horizontally, Sociocracy For All (SoFA) was founded in 2016 and specializes in sociocracy (Endenburg, 1998), a governance system with consent-based decision-making in small groups that can be applied to nonprofits as well (King et al., 2020). SoFA's mission is to provide more choice in organizational governance outside of top-down hierarchy by providing resources, training, coaching and networking around consent-based, circle-based governance. Six years into its life as a membership organization, SoFA has become not only a well-known advocate and enabler for self-governance but also an innovation lab. Among an estimated number of several hundred sociocratic organizations worldwide, SoFA has a unique position because of its size and because all of its approximately 190 members are all experienced users of sociocracy, priming SoFA to be a social lab for consent-based, decentralized self-governance.

From among the many learnings, this article shares our insights on the interplay between decentralized and centralized aspects of

governance in the context of decentralized self-governance. *Centralized* aspects are decisions that are made in one place and regulate activities in the whole organization, for example, if a work-from-home policy is made by the leadership and enforced throughout the whole organization. With a *decentralized* system, work-from-home policies would be made locally, with each team setting its own rules. In this article, we will show how a system can effectively use both strategies at once.

This article first describes how decision-making works in SoFA in general; it then illustrates the difference between centralization and decentralization with examples. Further, we share our learnings that make decentralized decision-making possible.

- Decentralization is an active process that requires preparation.
- Budget, strategy, and information as centralizing forces.
- Decentralization requires different ways of thinking about responsibility and leadership.

How SoFA Runs Using Sociocracy

To work with a concrete example, look at how SoFA works. Working members (volunteer or paid) join one or more of the ever-changing small work teams, called circles. Each circle has an aim, a description of the team's responsibilities, and a domain that spells out what the members of the circle are empowered to decide together. That way, each part of the organization is decided in a circle, in a decentralized fashion. For example, decisions about fundraising, outreach, certification, website, or non-English training programs are each made in self-organized circles that hold those decision areas in their domain.

To keep all the efforts aligned, each circle has two members (called links) who are members of the

circle but also of the next-“higher” circle, passing on information in both directions.

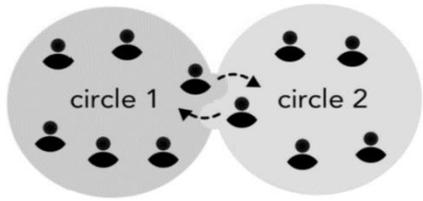
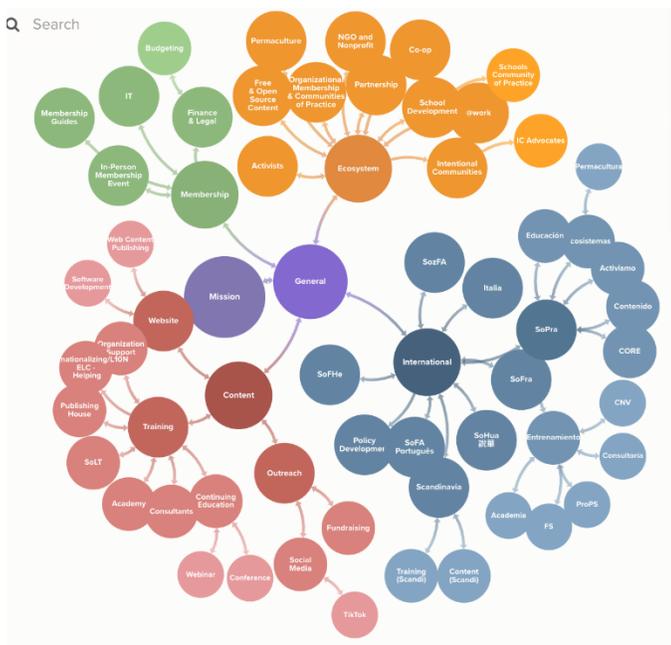


Image 1 From Many Voices One Song. Shared power with sociocracy, 2018

In the center is the General Circle, which ensures all topics have a place where they can be decided, and that all aims and domains are up to date. This way, alignment and empowerment are ensured by a decentralized, fractal pattern of defined authority and responsibility.



This decentralized way of giving full authority to circles to make decisions in a domain instead of having the “leadership” decide gives a significant level of authority to a large number of groups. While they can ask for feedback from others in the organization (advice process), circles and people in roles are expected to wrestle even with difficult decisions and come to a shared decision as a circle. As is standard practice in sociocracy, each circle makes decisions in their domain by consent. That means a proposal only passes when no circle member has an objection. This also extends to links, the people connecting two circles, who are selected by consent of their circles, forming a

high-trust and high-information network *while* being decentralized.

Learning from Practice: The Role of Decentralization and Centralization in Sociocracy For All

Decentralization is often celebrated as a purpose in itself (e.g., in Decentralized Autonomous Organizations = DAOs). Yet, our experience shows that it makes sense to combine carefully selected places for decentralization and centralization, and even clever hybrids.

To start, let us look at examples of both design patterns within Sociocracy For All:

- Decentralization:** Hiring decisions are made in a decentralized manner by the circles where the paid roles belong. While there is a list of items circles are asked to take into consideration (for example living costs in different areas), they are completely free to choose. Circles even determine the pay rate for their peers. If a paid role is approved for an existing circle member, that circle member has consent rights on their pay rate. To allow for comparability between the circles, we aim for high transparency by having full salary transparency as well as meeting minutes of all circles are public to everyone in the organization.
- Centralization:** The most centralized aspects of Sociocracy For All are the shared overall purpose and the governance “rulebook”. Another centralized system is that every circle needs to submit its budget and financial information in a certain format, set by the Budgeting Circle. (Note that the financial decisions are decentralized; just the *format* is centralized to allow for comparability and better transparency.)

There is also a parameter of time. Many of these decisions have gone from more decentralized to more centralized (like the budgeting format), or from more centralized to more decentralized (hiring decisions) over time due to growth. The general direction of SFA’s growth has been towards decentralization. For example, there is a biweekly newsletter updating members on the

latest news from each circle. This newsletter used to be written by a member of General Circle reporting on everything. Now there is a forum allowing for many-to-many communication, and a newsletter format where each circle can submit things they want to be featured.

Lessons

Decentralization is a proactive process that requires centralized effort.

Decentralization is not a passive approach—quite the opposite. It requires ongoing and proactive effort to empower people to make decisions in a decentralized way. In the budget example, members need budget data visualization, frameworks, and workflows to make it easy for each circle to understand the implications of their individual budget decisions. Providing those requires either effort in many places, each circle doing its own visualization, or a more centralized data visualization for everyone.

The same is true for hiring decisions. In order to empower circles to make their own hiring decisions, structures need to be created and maintained to make the process smooth and easy. A vacuum—“just do it yourself in whatever way you want”—is often not seen as supportive but as leaving groups hanging in a situation where every circle is burdened to figure out all the processes needed in addition to the regular operations of the circle. For example, budgeting, HR, conflict resolution, decision-making, and information management.

The unique solution that SoFA has devised is the concept of a Help Desk. A Help Desk circle is a circle that has a two-fold aim: firstly, to provide the service/product it is responsible for. Secondly, to provide support to other circles in the organization so they can provide the service themselves. It serves as “glue” and “catch-all” between the decentralized efforts.

It’s easiest to explain this with examples.

Let us say a circle that provides networking for sociocratic nonprofits—Nonprofit Networking Circle—wants to put on a conference for people

from the nonprofit sector. In a purely *decentralized* approach, they would do the whole event planning themselves, set up an event page, invite speakers and participants, and host the event. In a *centralized* approach, there would be one Conference Circle that provides that central service of conference planning to all circles like the Nonprofit Networking Circle. Which strategy is better?

In our experience, we need both. That’s why we made the Conference Circle a Help Desk Circle. That means it has two aims: putting on conferences *and* supporting other circles in putting on conferences. In that way, for each event, the hosting circle—in this case Nonprofit Networking Circle—and Conference Circle make an agreement on what parts of the work can be performed in a decentralized manner, and which are better done in a centralized way by the Conference Circle as the experts on conference planning. That way, we can create a level of decentralization that feels empowering to the Nonprofit Networking Circle, while providing the needed support. The decision of how much to decentralize is a local decision between the two circles. The Conference Circle—as a Help Desk circle—still puts on events but mostly invests in building expertise on the event platform, ticketing solutions, or by producing templates for marketing videos. It’s a perfect hybrid allowing for easy cross-collaboration.

Another example is publishing content on the website. For obvious reasons, this requires some expertise and central planning. Yet, we also want individual circles—like the Conference Circle or the Training Circle—to be able to manage and change content on their respective website pages. That’s why we created a Web Content Publishing Circle as a Help Desk circle, which, again, means its aim is to publish content on the website *and* support other circles in publishing their content as independently as possible.

In most cases, circles can also choose to do things autonomously, yet mostly they are grateful to have a place of support, and the help desk design principle has been very productive. More examples:

- Outreach Circle engages in marketing *and* supports other circles in getting the word out about their respective activities.
- Publishing House Circle holds the intellectual property of the organization, manages book sales, *and* supports non-English circles in translating materials into other languages or working with local publishers.
- Grants Circle applies for grants for the organization *and* supports other circles in applying for local or more specialized grants.

Fascinatingly, that interplay of help desks and autonomous circles turns the organization into a network of internal services and support-while protecting the sovereignty of each circle. Any cross-collaboration is defined and yet voluntary. A good Help Desk is just too useful to ignore!

Budget, strategy, and information are commons that require an interplay of centralized and decentralized solutions.

While activities and their corresponding decision-making can be decentralized into autonomous teams, some decisions remain a more centralized nature because members are deciding about a shared resource where their choices are interdependent. Here are the three areas that I've identified that cannot, or only in parts, be decentralized.

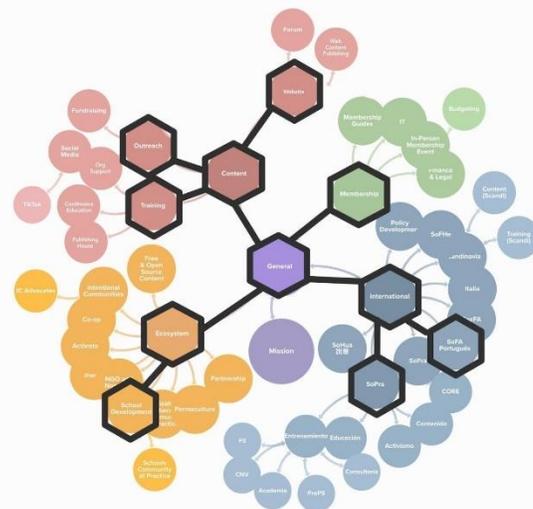
Budget

In our organization, all revenue goes into one common pool that then gets distributed according to the fractally nested, more and more decentralized budget decisions. For obvious reasons, the combined spending of these circles cannot exceed the total available budget available to the organization. This means circle budget decisions are interdependent, as each dollar can only be spent once. While individual budget decisions can be decentralized - each circle deciding its expenses-the *overall* budget still remains one shared budget.

How do we allocate which circle gets how much? In small organizations, it's often possible to approve the budget in the General Circle where all the nested departments come together. Yet,

with a larger organization and more activities, even with a 3-month rolling budget cycle, circles sometimes had to wait for budget decisions, which slowed them down. To unleash circles more, SoFA moved towards a more *decentralized budgeting process where each circle approves the budget for its sub-circles*. That way, budget decisions could be made locally.

While this solves some of the issues, new problems arise. The biggest issue is that with a decentralized budget, many more people need to be trained on the budgeting system requiring a more central training effort. With our Help Desk model, the Budgeting Circle works to provide the information to empower others to make their own decisions. To keep the effort low, our current compromise is, for now, to shift budget decisions into only a subset of circles, called fiscal nodes. Fiscal nodes hold the financial responsibility, with administrative support from the Budgeting Circle.



Yet, there is another, more arduous, issue. A group of 4 circles will likely be able to make a mutually agreeable decision because they can still be part of the same conversation. Yet, if there are 50 circles in the system in 4 layers going down to a sub-sub-sub-circle level, it gets more difficult to compare budget requests. How does \$5000 in one sub-sub-circle compare to a competing request of another, in a completely different area of the organization? This is the struggle often described in Decentralized Autonomous

Organizations (DAOs) where budget allocation happens in a participatory, token-based voting process. Yet, who knows enough about each of the activities and contexts to give a meaningful vote on a proposal? And what if the votes of those who do not have enough insight outnumber those who do? In a consent-based system, outnumbering is impossible, but it remains an issue because generally, the more circles and layers there are, the more removed we are from decisions, making the decision feel arbitrary and less grounded in an understanding of the work done and its context.

Without a top-down structure to make budget decisions, we needed a way to decide based on agreed-upon criteria and prioritization. So in order to decentralize budget decisions, we had to have more conversations about our *strategy* to co-own the narrative that underpins those decisions. This leads to the next topic.

Sense-Making/Strategy

The more the theory of change and strategy of an organization are clearly articulated and agreed upon, the more alignment there will be in the independent budget decisions. This strategy provides the “through-lines.”

Communication strategies also require alignment on a strategic level. Solving how to “do strategy” in a participatory way is an issue I see many organizations struggle with. In a climate organization with a strong emphasis on decentralization, a chapter decided to form a “strategy working group” that would design the strategy for the whole chapter. Unfortunately, because of inner tensions, no perfect alignment could be found, and the working group had to make choices. While it had been empowered to do so, the legitimacy of that working group was questioned by its members. The lesson here is clear: even if we decide to centralize strategy, the strategy group needs to set up good communication systems.

In a word, shared sensemaking and strategy-related thinking need to interweave centralized and decentralized threads. Ideally, this includes input from decentralized places while carefully

and iteratively synthesizing and curating into a more centralized document that can then be the basis for decisions everywhere. It becomes a game of asking “down” and “up” the chain of nested circles to come to a shared narrative that includes the wisdom and experience from all levels. We are experimenting with looking at our Mission Circle—the advisory board—as a Help Desk that provides both long-term thinking for the organization *and* supports circles in having strategic conversations feeding their information back into the organization and the Mission Circle. It’s no longer the circle that sets the strategy; it is the circle that stewards the strategy and the conversations about strategy in the whole organization.

A similar path is implemented in a self-organized company in Canada. Among their 200 employees, one person holds the role of the strategy steward who serves in a similar role to the Mission Circle as a Help Desk, by being the intermediary that draws strategy ideas from the organization on its different levels, curates and summarizes them, and plays them back into the organization, creating an interwoven top-down and bottom-up approach that still results in a coherent, cohesive strategy.

Information

Relevant information gets produced on all levels of the organization. The decentralized nature of decision-making means that sometimes very fundamental decisions might be made on a “far-away” level of the organization. For example, in SoFA, the decisions on what grants to apply for—with big implications on funding as well as our strategic direction—are made in the Grant Writing Circle which is a subcircle of the Budgeting Circle which is a subcircle of the Membership Circle. This circle works with a lot of feedback and input from the wider system, and yet, it begs the question of how information is curated, distributed, and received.

Other decentralized organizations use messaging boards or curated newsletters, and yet, the disparity between those who have deeper information and those who do not remains hard to bridge.

Information management has been the biggest struggle for us as well. While people in linking positions can carry information from one circle to another directly, it can be unpredictable whether and where relevant information might be located. People's bandwidth both for curating and taking in information is limited. This may be one of the most important bottlenecks in our organization. The solution for us will likely have the same ingredients of centralization, decentralization, and a Help Desk function to design a central system that takes in information from decentralized places, and feeds back into decentralized places. The metaphor I have been using is of hormones in the body. Several places can produce "messages," and many places have receptors for certain kinds of messages, allowing for a many-to-many information exchange without information overload. Importantly, any technical solution needs to factor in the human-machine interface—too often, the information is out there, but just doesn't get searched or found.

Decentralization requires unlearning and re-learning responsibility.

Nothing prepares for a decentralized, consent-based organization like living it—one can't *think* one's way into it. New members sometimes struggle with their unfamiliar freedom—more is possible; one just has to propose it; if there's consent in the circle, that's the only green light needed. Instead of the hierarchy, people find that their own mental beliefs become a barrier.

Being co-responsible comes with its own set of questions and struggles—for example, everyone needs to watch their own workload. A relatable way to describe it: in high school, when a bio teacher schedules a test the same week an English paper is due, different roles in different circles fluctuate in their workload. It is on each individual to set their boundaries, with no central authority to complain to.

As the Executive Director of this organization, I have been lucky to be in the thick of learning. For most of my week, I am a worker bee, performing in operational roles in different circles like everyone. Another role I hold is the leader of the General Circle (aka Executive Director),

accounting for only 5-10% of my time since leadership is decentralized and so much is stewarded by other people. But in this position, I get to learn what it means to be in a leadership role of an organization where *everyone* is a decision-maker somewhere, and, most importantly, where neither the Executive Director nor the General Circle has the power to override a circle's decision in their domain.

So what does leadership mean in this kind of context? Supporting a system of interdependent, decentralized decision-makers requires a new set of skills and mindsets. It is more of a servant leadership role, making connections, being a sounding board, or giving impulses and preparing proposals that support the General Circle or the Mission Circle in thinking about the bigger picture. Because of the level of decentralization, I see my role as a curator of existing thinking, helping the organization see where everyone is going, and mirroring back gaps that do not receive enough attention.

Sometimes I think that most of my learning in the last 7 years has been an act of *un-learning*. We're so used to being told what to do or working around the red tape in our organizations, it is deeply ingrained in what we expect and how we act. I have worked with other leaders in decentralized organizations that say similar things, describing how it was their own learning that made all the difference for the organization.

I remember many years ago when we decided to add a Mission Circle to the young project. I was terrified—in my imagination, the board would give me as Executive Director busy work or demand writing empty strategy documents. For days, I prepared mental speeches defending myself until I finally opened up about my concerns to my co-founder. He quickly reminded me that as the leader of the General Circle, sociocracy gives me consent rights on the board, rendering it impossible that the board would decide anything I would object to. We would always be able to work as equal partners. And that is what happened.

Concluding Thoughts

Centralization and decentralization are only means to an end of working towards a purpose. In our experience, decentralized organizing principles are a great way to start that allows autonomy and local decision-making. Yet, the picture is incomplete without consideration of the shared central aspects, like the overall budget, organization-wide information, and transparency and strategy. Help Desks are a useful hybrid to enable targeted cross-collaboration while remaining in a choice-based system.

Often, a hierarchical organization is a means to support clarity, alignment, and efficiency in an organization. Yet, our example suggests clarity in decision-making can be reached without top-down directives. Then alignment can be supported by allowing those to communicate who have a stake in the matter or relevant information to contribute.

To grow and adapt, an organization needs to be able to adapt to its current needs, determining what level of decentralization or centralization is useful in what part of the organization. There is neither a one-size-fits-all approach nor can we expect an organization to maintain the same mix of (de)centralization throughout its evolution.

Understanding the possible choices, their implementation, and implications will support all willing organizations to find better strategies to reach their mission.

References

Endenburg, Gerard (1998). Sociocracy: the Organization of Decision Making. "No objection" as the Principle of sociocracy. Eburon, Rotterdam.

King, Daniel, Griffin, Martyn, and Simon Pek (2020). Governing for the Common Good: The Possibilities of Dynamic Governance for Nonprofit Organizations. Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings 2020(1):11691

Do you want to submit an article to the Journal of Nonprofit Innovation? We are looking for the latest research directly related to the nonprofit sector and thought papers from nonprofit leaders. We want to hear from you.

Submit to: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/joni>



Article: Case Study

Journal of Nonprofit Innovation

TITLE

A Case Study: Do Board
Consultants and Funders
Have It Wrong?

AUTHOR

Mike Burns

TOPICS

Nonprofit Board and
Executive Director
Partnership, Building,
Funding, Case Study,
Governance



A Case Study: Do Board Consultants and Funders Have It Wrong?

Mike Burns

Overview: The following case, a moment in time for a 25+ year-old nonprofit, features a smart, committed, driven, savvy, and uber persuasive nonprofit founder/executive who decided it was time to expand the building. Also featured: a board that has never been more than a figurehead to the executive and the public. This case is intended to highlight that the popular thinking about board and executive as partners may be no more than a false narrative throughout the nonprofit sector that should in-fact be rewritten to reflect more of a reality. As a subplot, this case acknowledges that when a board cannot or will not support the executive as desired, the executive gains the freedom to both govern and manage.

About the Author: Mike Burns is an adjunct professor at the University of New Haven, Marketing Department and Nonprofit Certificate Program.

One of the most striking and prominent features on any old ship is the ship figurehead. A carved figure displayed prominently on the bow; these ornamental displays are iconic. Their origins stretch back further than some might think. And their meaning and purpose is multi-fold. These figureheads were symbolic, hence the name. But they were also thought to bring power and luck in battle, and to ward off danger. They could intimidate the enemy or protect the crew depending on the beliefs of the ship makers at the time. Chris Riley, Boat Safe.

(<https://www.boatsafe.com/term-figure-head-come/>)

The following case, a moment in time for a 25+ year-old nonprofit, features a smart, committed, driven, savvy, and uber persuasive nonprofit founder/executive who decided it was time to expand the building. Also featured: a board that has never been more than a figurehead to the executive and the public. This case is intended to highlight that the popular thinking about board and executive as partners may be no more than a false narrative throughout the nonprofit sector that should in-fact be rewritten to reflect more of a reality. As a subplot, this case acknowledges that when a board cannot or will not support the executive as desired, the executive gains the freedom to both govern and manage.

It is really up to the board if this reality is undesired.

If this story resonates so well throughout the nonprofit sector, is it more appropriate for technical advisors and funders, particularly to boards, to just accept the reality that the job of a board is to “stand by their executive” and not portend that they, the board, are in-charge?

Background

Everything about this nonprofit reflects the vision of an executive who is also the founder. The Executive describes the nonprofit’s services as “unique and outstanding” in the field of child welfare and credits the consistency in funding by the state as evidence of the success of staff.

Testimonials have been offered by service beneficiaries. Additionally, there have been a smattering of one-off principally mission-related services offered over the years generating a bit of income and expanding organizational reach into the community.

For the majority of years since its founding, the operating budget has been at a bit less than one-million dollars annually. Ninety percent of these funds have been derived from a single state agency. With the exception of one community foundation, the majority of contributions are made by a network of individuals personally connected to the executive. There are a few major donors, again, acquaintances of the Executive. While there have been multiple attempts at small fundraising events, there has been minimal success in broadening this base of donors. And, the original 4300 square foot single-story building was built without fundraising, principally with state bond funds obtained through a typical political process conducted personally by the Executive.

The board of directors has ranged in size from between five and fifteen members. Throughout the life of the organization the Executive has recruited board members. In the earliest years, there was little change in composition. Members were primarily individuals with knowledge of child welfare. Over time, many have left the board, some because they were leaving the city, many, as they stated, no longer found purpose for their board service. Many did not stay long enough to finish their terms.

A Plan

Fast forward 25+ years since the nonprofit’s birth. The founding Executive has a vision to create a “unique” program that will also require an

expansion of the original building - specifically adding two floors. Toward the pursuit of this vision the first task was to "guide" the board to understand that the primary source of dollars to build the addition would come from a state bond. The Executive acknowledged that the board's approval for the building plan was necessary because the state said it was required versus because the board had a vision or saw a need.

A state bond was ideal as it literally would not require extensive fundraising efforts. Plus, the organization's experience with small friend-raisers and its annual mail appeal indicated there just wasn't a strong history in raising money despite the fact that there were a few major gift givers and a modicum of Executive-connected annual donors. Individual board members had few resources or access to resources and would only be able to raise a few additional dollars. The organization had fewer than one hundred annual donors and literally only a handful of major gift donors. These facts would have suggested limited prospects for a successful capital campaign.

Challenges to the Proposed Building

But timing is everything. As part of its strategic planning process, the board acknowledged that the organization's budget had remained relatively unchanged since the completion of its current building (about 5 years after the organization was founded). Programs were paid for by one source and there was no indicator that revenue would be increased anytime soon despite a "build it and they will come" argument. Events and annual appeals just had not produced a substantive enough level of revenue to support expanding programs. The proposed program that made the case for a new building was absent a market analysis and revenue generating plan while bearing a hefty price tag. Additionally, the organization has competitors who were doing quite well in raising money, expanding services, and even building their own buildings. The board's conclusion: merge with another organization to ensure continuance of mission into the future. A vote to begin exploring merger

options was scheduled for the next month, November.

A Counter Plan

Meanwhile, and perhaps informed by the planning process, the Executive had determined but had yet to communicate to the board that an expanded building would be THE means to grow mission, program, and budget. To pay for an expanded building and unbeknownst to the board, the Executive had already set in motion the process for securing a state bond. The Executive, as noted earlier, needed board approval for a state bond while the board had committed to and already put in motion the steps to explore merger opportunities.

At the board meeting scheduled to vote on committing to a merger process, the Executive made an offer. The Executive asked that the board suspend its focus on a merger. As part of the offer, the Executive formally revealed a plan to expand the building at a cost of four million dollars; pursue program expansion; and advise that the bond request was in progress. The Executive offered that if the bond was not approved, the board could then continue with pursuit of a merger or alternately, if the bond was approved, the Executive would build the building and no merger would be sought.

Lo and behold, the bond was approved, and the board withdrew its plan for a merger. While not clear on all the details but based on executive assurances, the board believed and asserted it would not - nor did it have the ability to - raise the additional \$2 million of a \$4 million proposed building cost. It did however sign-off on the bond and agreed that it would support the Executive in "making this happen."

The Next Stage

One of the Executive's first steps following the board's "go" was the recruitment of a firm to assess how much money the nonprofit's 100+ annual donors might contribute toward the

required \$2 million. The firm was also tasked with conducting a board education program. Not long after, two realities were confirmed: the nonprofit had very little visibility among external prospective donors and both current and previous board members were short of personal resources and not connected to funding. These realities meant that raising approximately \$2 million within a three-year period would prove a challenge.

Nonetheless, the Executive was undaunted and committed to complete the board education program and use every board meeting to focus on getting board members to “step-up” and play a more active role in pursuing needed funds. During the same period, the Executive had lined-up an architect and completed the bidding process for the general contractor. The Executive had decided that an important cost-saving step would be to serve as the general manager of the construction, continue as principal fundraiser and manage the construction budget. Much of the day-to-day duties were transferred to the assistant director and time at board meetings shifted away from regular finances and program activities to what was the progress with building construction.

What Happened Next

Throughout the following year, the Executive continued to simultaneously oversee construction and run the fundraising campaign. But while the board was asking for more information about the finances of the construction, the Executive was asking more about what the board could do to raise funds. What was not always clear to board members was the precise nature of how fundraising and the particular cost of construction were proceeding. Board members were instead being reminded that the building campaign was “theirs” and they had committed, in their vote to “go,” to giving or getting. Meetings frequently turned into board training sessions to “dig” up who board members knew and would link to for the benefit of the campaign. A couple members even held small house parties or related small

scale public events to reach out into the community and generate both interest and funds. Results on all counts were not substantial in terms of generated revenue.

However, there was good news. One donor committed \$200,000; a foundation approved \$200,000 and a well-connected community leader promised to raise \$500,000. That offer was later withdrawn due to competing demands facing the prospective donor. And there were a number of \$1-10,000 gifts.



The Board Takes—or Tries to Take—Action

But the board, having now lost half of its members since construction began (it was down to six members) and being constantly reminded how they, the board, were individually and collectively failing, began questioning reports about progress on the campaign and the building.

Using executive-supplied financial reports from which inconsistent information seemed the constant, they determined they knew far too little and particularly what if any shortfall they would face when the building was completed, and final payments were due.

The current board chair called a “special” Executive session which resulted in members formally agreeing they had no capacity to raise any monies. They also agreed they could not see how the organization could afford any debt given the tight margins with which the organization was already operating. They believed that now was the time to clarify what indeed would be the balance due if construction continued and based

on that, also consider limiting what construction would go forward, especially if it resulted in debt.

Out of the meeting the chair was asked to get answers to their questions as well as facts and convene again but in a called board meeting not in an Executive session. They wanted these facts prepared by the Executive and to discuss what was really going to be the costs, how much income was promised or in-hand and/or committed, and what was the strategy for completing the building if the difference in retained funds was less than that which could assuredly be raised. The board concluded that they, the Executive, and the developer needed a conversation to review what remained necessary for going forward or if they would be required to halt construction.

A New Chair, Smaller Board, Continued Construction, Borrowing, Evaluation, Retirement

The Executive was anything but pleased upon receiving the board chair's report of the board's concerns and desires for both facts and a deeper conversation about the status and future of the building project. Instead of complying with what was requested, the Executive declared that the project was too far along to accept the board's conclusions. And as a "reward" for attempting to lead an insurrection and failing to trust the Executive, the Executive in-turn managed the chair's resignation and recruited a newly recruited board member to become chair.

At the time construction was restarted, the Executive was able to identify and secure unexpended state bond money and, using her political savvy, managed to produce additional funds to help close the gap in needed construction funds, the totals of which remained fully unclear to the board.

The Executive continued to remind the board with variable "facts" that they had committed to the project and were responsible for raising the balance of needed remaining funds in addition to furniture, interior lighting, and the like. But, not relying on the board, the Executive also discovered, applied for, and received newly available federal loan funds. The loan was large enough to retire bridge loans borrowed for the

project, likely complete construction gaps and provide funds for the Executive's severance.

While retirement had been the subject of a conversation held with the board just about the same time as the construction was begun, the Executive pointed out that the original employment contract contained a severance amount for which no monies had been raised or put aside over the years. The employment contract was up for renewal one year ahead of the construction's completion and the Executive wanted to be retained for at least a year after completion to ensure all went according to plan programmatically.

Closure?

In considering retirement and severance board members agreed that a performance appraisal would be helpful. This would actually be the first appraisal of the Executive, and as the Executive put it: "After 20+ years and building and then expanding a building and annually generating a \$1 million dollar budget—now the board wants to evaluate me?" Getting an agreement as to what the job description was, and performance measurements consumed six months of time between the board task force and the Executive. Getting to an understanding of what a "fair" severance might be was another conversation. And how any severance would be paid for was a conversation that ran parallel to the concept. While an agreement was reached, it's been a year and little more has been moved on this subject.

The building has been completed - nine months behind plan for multiple reasons. The Executive has recruited three new board members so now there are seven in total. No additional funds have been raised but the Executive successfully got a bank to donate enough furniture to fill the building following consolidation of branches. The board continues to request numbers for the total expenditures, the debt incurred and so on - without success. Two open houses are being planned by the Executive with requests for the board's support for these events. Oh, and the board has asked specifically for what the programs in the building will be including revenue projections. The answer to this question has been offered in very broad and vague terms.

Conclusion

Popular thinking on these matters posits that a board and its executive are partners. The former, the board, defines mission, a Theory of Change and depending on its stage development, considers progress and provides direction for fiduciary (fiscal and legal) and strategic purposes. The latter, the executive, ensures that at minimum, mission is pursued and that resources are used efficiently and effectively with the best outcome.

But as illustrated by this case, the reality of figurehead boards and driven if not entrenched executives produces a different outcome in terms of who or what is the board in relation to the executive. It may be time to recognize that boards, under the aegis of executives they frequently recruit, cannot live up to the calling to be a nonprofit's surrogate owner on behalf of the public's interest.

Instead, executives may in fact more often than not be the true owners and operators of the nonprofits which they are charged to manage. Perhaps then governance should not be left in the hands of boards but in the hands of executives. Acceptance of this principle would then result in enabling executives to recruit the boards that best serve them not the other way around. And perhaps in retrospect this practice would be more representative of what is reality among nonprofits versus what is suggested as the way nonprofit governance should be.

The case is intended to highlight that the so-called partnership between executive and board may be no more than a false narrative throughout the nonprofit sector and should in-fact be rewritten to reflect more of a reality. For many, particularly founders, there is no partnership, just expectations by the founder that the board will comply with their wishes. When a board cannot or will not support the executive as desired, the executive gains the freedom to both govern and manage.

It is really up to boards if this reality is undesired.

Selected Questions for Further Study

- If an individual starts and grows a nonprofit and selects every board member, will that board ever govern and in essence "own" and lead the organization?
- Just what does it take for an executive to ensure the board governs?
- When and if should a nonprofit board exert itself as leader in order to fulfill its fiduciary duty?
- Is there and what is that point when a founder should be replaced?
- Can or should a board just surrender the nonprofit to the executive?
- If not the board, who and what intervention can be used to hold an executive accountable?

Do you want to submit an article to the Journal of Nonprofit Innovation? We are looking for the latest research directly related to the nonprofit sector and thought papers from nonprofit leaders. We want to hear from you.

Submit to: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/joni>



Nonprofit Spotlights



Nonprofit Spotlight 1

The Hydrous



HQ: San Francisco, CA

Operating In: State of California, USA

Mission

The mission of the Hydrous is to create “open access oceans” so that all people may explore, understand, and engage with marine environments, which are severely threatened by climate change and human impacts.

Program

We offer ocean science engagement and education by providing open access digital content (e.g., 3D coral models, immersive virtual reality ocean experiences) and hands-on ocean science curriculum. Our target audience is U.S.-based youth (10 to 18 years old) and the ripple effects of our impact has reached a global audience of all ages.

Partnerships

Hydrous partners with many organizations outside the community:

- National Geographic Education: to reach a broader audience of learners,
- The Virtual Human Interaction Lab at Stanford University: to conduct research on the effects of immersive virtual experiences on ocean science learning,
- Meridian Treehouse: to produce synchronized virtual dive events,
- Meta: to support technological innovation for immersive education,
- Adobe: to use 3D art and augmented reality to connect learners to coral reefs,

- The Smithsonian (National Museum of Natural History & Digitization Program Office) to digitize and curate open access collections of back-of-house marine specimens,

Current Project

Coral Reefs: a Hydrous Learning Expedition

The Decade of Ocean Empathy (an official program partner of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science)



Current Needs

Assistance with fundraising

Our Story

Now is a crucial time for our ocean health, which is declining rapidly from the combined effects of climate change and direct human impacts. Experiential learning is key to bridging barriers, and extended reality (XR) technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) have the potential to “bring” people to places they can’t go—whether it’s the ocean or outer space—due to constraints like distance, cost, safety, or feasibility.

Scalable technologies like immersive VR might increase engagement, presence, and empathy and decrease psychological distance between people and the ocean. By triggering presence and empathy, evidence suggests these tools offer a way for people who cannot swim, dive, or travel to coastlines to have vivid experiences of marine habitats. However, ocean-related content and research into XR for marine education remains

scarce, despite a global push to restore the health of the ocean.



A core goal of our work at The Hydrous is to improve global ocean literacy. To sustainably manage ocean ecosystems, it is essential that the general public is ocean literate, meaning they understand the ocean's influence on us and our influence on the ocean. Further, marine science is not prioritized in formal learning settings and ocean literacy levels are low around the world, as many people have limited marine understanding, hold misconceptions about the ocean, or know little about marine protection.

In addition to raising rates of ocean literacy, we seek to generate more ocean empathy, or human connections, to the ocean. This work is aligned with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which launched in 2021. The 10th and final challenge for collective impact of the Ocean Decade is to "Change humanity's relationship with the ocean." By overcoming this challenge, we "ensure that the multiple values and services of the ocean for human wellbeing, culture, and sustainable development are widely understood, and identify and overcome barriers to behavior change required for a step change in humanity's relationship with the ocean." Further, the 7th (out of 7) target Outcomes of the Ocean Decade is to create "An inspiring and engaging ocean where society understands and values the ocean in relation to human wellbeing and sustainable development."

The Hydrous is leading an official program of the UN Decade of Ocean Science, The Decade of Ocean Empathy, which addresses Challenge 10 and Outcome 7 through immersive experiences and science-based storytelling. Our theory of

change is that vivid ocean experiences increase engagement, reduce psychological distance, and increase human connection and ocean literacy, which leads to ocean conservation and sustainable management of marine resources.

Innovation

Work by The Hydrous incorporates proven methodologies in marine science education with immersive technologies to foster the next generation of ocean champions. Led by a marine biologist, The Hydrous uses cutting-edge science and immersive media to increase ocean literacy, ocean empathy, and desire for marine protection among a broad audience.

Visit: <https://thehydro.us/>

WikiCharities Profile:

<https://www.wikicharities.org/nonprofit/USA/46-5112972>



Does your nonprofit want to be spotlighted in the Journal of Nonprofit Innovation? Become WikiCharities validated and then submit your request to submissions@journalofnonprofitinnovation.org.

Claim your FREE profile page on WikiCharities by going to www.wikicharities.org.

Nonprofit Spotlight 2

Days for Girls International



HQ: Mount Vernon, WA

Year Founded: 2012

Mission

At Days for Girls International (DfG) we are turning periods into pathways. We increase access to menstrual care and education by developing global partnerships, cultivating social enterprises, mobilizing volunteers, and innovating sustainable solutions that shatter stigma and limitations for women and girls.

By combining innovative menstrual health solutions and education with Social Entrepreneurs and volunteers we advance locally driven policy and advocacy to create long-lasting impact.

Program

Days for Girls is turning periods into pathways. They increase access to menstrual care and education by developing global partnerships, cultivating Social Entrepreneurs, mobilizing volunteers, and innovating sustainable solutions that shatter stigma and limitations for women and girls.

Focus Areas

1. **Increase Access to Menstrual Supplies.**
Cost-effective, safe, sustainable, and contextually relevant products help women and girls manage their periods and engage in livelihood activities.
2. **Shatter Stigma through Education.**
Access to timely, factual information about

puberty and menstruation can lead to increased body literacy, a healthy public perception of menstruation and decreased stigma and shame.

3. **Elevate Menstrual Health.** Menstrual health and hygiene are critical factors in improving education opportunities and livelihood outcomes for menstruators worldwide.
4. **Advocate for Global Policy Change.** Lasting change occurs when menstrual health is prioritized and integrated into regional, national, and international policy goals.

Countries of Operation

Days for Girls International currently operates in Guatemala, United States of America, Jordan, Cambodia, Lebanon, Nepal, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland, South Africa, and Uganda.

Partnerships

- DoTerra Healing Hands Foundation
- Starbucks Foundation
- AARP
- Rotary International
- Murdock Charitable Trust
- Mite

Impact Data

Days for Girls International has impacted the lives of 2.7 million women, girls, and people with periods in 145 countries and counting.

Our Story

In 2019, Days for Girls began a strategic partnership with the Cambodian Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, with the goal of developing and implementing age-appropriate and culturally sensitive puberty and Menstrual Health education lessons for fifth-grade students throughout the country.

This is the first time Days for Girls has engaged with a country's Ministry of Education and developed both a curriculum to train teachers and student lessons to this degree of specialty. Due to our advocacy efforts, the Ministry initiated a three-

year partnership with Days for Girls for this project.

The project consists of two parts: 1) Days for Girls' teacher training and 2) the teachers' delivery of Menstrual Health lessons to the students.

So far Days for Girls has trained 28 teachers and educated 471 students throughout three provinces.

Visit: <https://www.daysforgirls.org/>

WikiCharities Profile:

<https://www.wikicharities.org/nonprofit/USA/45-3934671>

Nonprofit Spotlight 3

TechCharities
(Applied Technology Foundation)



HQ: Salt Lake City, UT

Year Founded: 2013

Mission

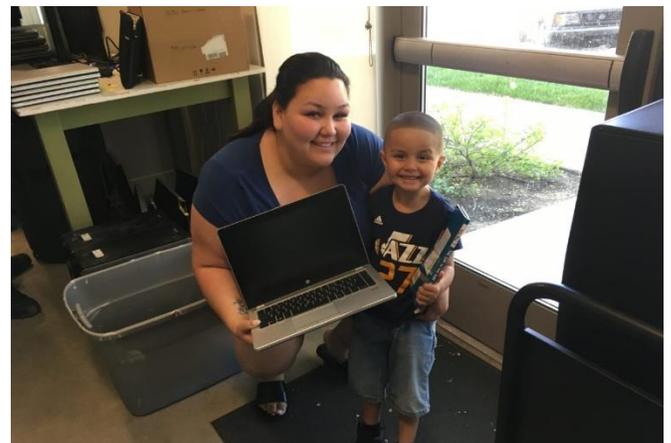
The mission of TechCharities is to help low-income families build technical skills and confidence by providing computer resources and basic technical training as they move toward self-reliance.

Program

Applied Technology Foundation, aka TechCharities, is a nonprofit organization with 501(c) status dedicated to helping low-income families and students improve their quality of life

by providing inexpensive desktops, laptops, and Chromebooks to those in need. Since 2013, we have distributed thousands of computers with over 2500 computers being distributed in 2022 alone.

Families, businesses, and other organizations regularly upgrade their computers, and they often look for ways to safely erase and discard them. This provides a consistent supply of computers that may be used for families and individuals in need. Volunteer technicians are trained and certified to pick-up donated computers, erase the hard drive, re-load public software, inventory, and distribute them for use. TechCharities.org partners with existing NGOs to provide additional computer resources, training, and technical support as requested.



Countries of Operation

TechCharities currently operates in the United States of America, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Liberia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Moldova.

Partnerships

- Sorenson Legacy Foundation
- Brigham Young University
- BYU Pathway
- Derrick and Rebecca Porter Foundation
- Booksmarts Accounting
- Spencer and Kristine Eccles Family
- Catholic Community Services
- The Asian Association
- The Good Samaritan

- International Rescue Committee
- Weber Adult Education
- Utah Department of Corrections
- Columbus School
- Holy Cross Ministries
- Refugee Support Services
- The Lords Hands
- Help Start Education Foundation
- Work Force Services

Short-Term Goals

1. Provide computers and technical support
2. Teach computer skills
3. Partner with community agencies
4. Recycle old computers

Long-Term Goals

1. Develop a plan and find ways to acquire more used laptops from local firms.
2. Simplify and improve the process of shipping computers to Africa. (Cost, security, tracking, TSA compliance, and feedback from end user).
3. Develop a more organized process for the end-user to receive basic computer training and to ask questions, as needed.



Successes

TechCharities can give free or nearly free computers to those in need because of the generous donations, support, and volunteer labor of others. In October of 2021, TechCharities established a working relationship with a nonprofit agency in Africa called The Lord's Hands. TechCharities plans to continue shipping 40 laptops to Africa each month.

Funders

Financial funding for computers comes from grants and administrative fees paid by clients. Example of significant funders include Sorenson Legacy Foundation Derick and Rebecca Porter.

Challenges

Providing better support for clients is a major focus in 2022/23. Volunteers are needed to help with this important phase of training. It has been difficult to keep up with the demand for laptops.

Visit: <https://techcharities.org/>

WikiCharities Profile:

<https://www.wikicharities.org/nonprofit/USA/46-3605622>



Does your nonprofit want to be spotlighted in the Journal of Nonprofit Innovation? Become WikiCharities validated and then submit your request to submissions@journalofnonprofitinnovation.org.

Claim your FREE profile page on WikiCharities by going to www.wikicharities.org.

The Journal for Nonprofit Innovation is a publication of WikiCharities, a 501c3 nonprofit. JoNI is published in partnership with Brigham Young University.

© 2023 WikiCharities. All rights reserved.

Submissions

Upcoming Issues

April/May 2023: Refugees & Migrants

July/August 2023: Online Protection of Children

October/November 2023: Food Inequality/Insecurity

Call for Submissions

We are currently accepting articles, thought papers, and potential nonprofit spotlights for our journal. All submissions should be sent through <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/joni/>

Article Summaries

We are looking for articles that use innovative thinking and approaches to community and global issues. Have you done research in a specific area? Are you an expert in a certain field? We want to hear from you!

Thought Papers

We are looking for thought pieces from nonprofit leaders that have first-hand experience with community and global issues. Share your experiences and give us your thoughts on a specific topic!

Nonprofit Spotlights

Is your nonprofit doing noteworthy things that you want others to know about? Spotlight your nonprofit in our journal! Note: To spotlight your nonprofit, you must be [WikiCharities validated](#).

Submission Deadlines

Visit our Submission page for exact deadlines.

www.journalofnonprofitinnovation.org/call-for-submissions