Sustainable Investment in Local Capacity for Democracy and Peace

A GLOBAL EVALUATION OF PARTNERS FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE
NOVEMBER 2013

ABBREVIATED REPORT

By Nike Carstarphen, Ph.D.
This evaluation would not have been possible without the participation and support of many people. My deepest appreciation and admiration go to the Center directors who were instrumental in shaping the evaluation design, supported data collection, completed a lengthy survey, participated in meetings and interviews, provided feedback on draft results, shared many wonderful stories and demonstrated significant contributions to democratic change and conflict management. I sincerely thank the following recent and current directors: Sylvia Aguilera, Gabriela Asmar, Olivia Baciu, Éva Deák, Colonel Birame Diop, Oscar Gaitan, Shukrie Gashi, Mara Hernandez, Raja Hiyari, Juliana Hoxha, Pablo Lumerman, Rumen Minkovsky, May Nasr, Blažo Nedić, Dušan Ondrušek, Dana Rabiňáková, Carlos Salazar, Sofiko Shubladze, Maciej Tański, and Ana Vasilache. I also thank the many Center staff who helped provide input into the evaluation design, compiled information, translated surveys and provided other support.

I would like to express my very great appreciation to Julia Roig, President, Partners for Democratic Change, who accompanied me throughout the evaluation process and whose leadership, rich stories, ongoing advice, feedback and friendship made this all possible and enriched the journey and results. A special thanks also goes to Nick Oatley, Chief Operating Officer, who brought fresh eyes and insights and made critical contributions to the final report.

My thanks are extended to the entire Partners staff, fellows and interns who provided much needed information, advice, translation, data collection, feedback and other support throughout the process. A special thanks goes to Teresa Crawford, Dina Dukhqan, Laina Levy and Lelia Mooney for sharing their rich experience and insights, to Conner Purcell, Matt Schwab and Nilanka Seneviratne for providing significant management, technical and other support at key points, to Aprille Knox and Samad Sadri for data collection help, and to Gul Mescioglu Gur for her research and analysis assistance.

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I also thank Partners’ Board of Directors, especially Chair Jonathan Davidson, for their valuable recommendations for the evaluation design, feedback on preliminary results and advice for the final report.

A note of thanks goes to Partners’ friends and colleagues for their participation in the evaluation design, including Lisa Bingham, Andrew Blum, Michael Gadbaw, Frank Mantero, Peter Muhlberger and Richard Reuben.

Gratitude and special thanks goes to Raymond Shonholtz (1943-2012), founder of Partners for Democratic Change, whose legacy lives on through the work of Partners and the organizations he helped build.

The evaluation was made possible by the generous support of the General Electric Foundation.
Methodology
The evaluation design was developed through a participatory process that included the Board and staff of Partners for Democratic Change (Partners), the directors of Partners’ 18 affiliate Centers, the director of the network, Partners for Democratic Change International (PDCI) in Brussels, the Centers’ organizational partners, funders, and three external academic advisors. The evaluation analyzed four broad categories of questions:

- What has been Partners’ model of sustainable impact investing in organizations for democratic change and conflict management and with what results? What would make the model effective in the future?
- What were the Centers’ stages of development, key milestones and paths from start-up to maturity and sustainability? What was Partners’ role in helping build sustainable local Centers?
- What role has the PDCI network and PDCI office in Brussels played in supporting the Centers? How could the PDCI network and PDCI office in Brussels be strengthened in the future?
- What has been the Centers’ contribution to democratic change and conflict management?

The primary data collection method was an extensive questionnaire completed by the Centers. This was augmented by informal individual and group interviews with Partners’ staff, the director of PDCI in Brussels, and the Center directors, questionnaires completed by the Centers’ and Partners’ funders and partner organizations about their experiences working with the Centers and Partners, and a desk review of key documents. To answer the question about the Centers’ contribution to democratic change and conflict management, the Centers submitted 55 stories of ‘most significant change.’ An analysis of these stories is presented in this report. In addition, six of the ‘most significant change’ stories were selected for in-depth case studies. These case studies are reported separately.

Limitations
There were three primary limitations to the research. One is that two of the current 18 Centers did not complete the questionnaire and one completed only part of the questionnaire. This is likely due to their being relatively new and short-staffed. However, their Center directors participated in informal interviews and other sources of information were used to supplement missing data. A second limitation was the lack of exhaustive surveying or random sampling of the Centers’ partner organizations and funders. Therefore, the responses might be skewed in a positive direction. A third limitation is the analysis of the Centers’ stories of ‘most significant change.’ The stories were submitted by the Centers and it was beyond the scope of this research to seek corroboration from participants or other people with knowledge of these stories and the outcomes achieved. Conducting in-depth case studies on six of the stories was designed, in part, to address this weakness. The results of the case studies corroborate the Centers’ accounts of the stories they submitted and their outcomes and significance. Nevertheless, these limitations should be kept in mind while reading the report.

Structure of the Report
The report begins with a summary of Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia’s participation in the OK ‘98 election campaign that strengthened democratic rule at a critical juncture in the country’s democratic transition. The case illustrates Partners’ founding mission to build sustainable capacity to advance civil society and a culture of change and conflict management worldwide. The report then proceeds in seven sections. The first three sections (A-C) provide a brief overview of Partners’ founding in the wake of monumental changes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, an introduction to Partners’ Model of Sustainable Impact Investing, and the theories of change and methodologies that underlie its work and the work of the Centers. Section D presents the Centers’ contributions to democratic change and how the theories of change and methodologies inform their work. Section E discusses Partners’ model of sustainable impact investing in more depth including how Partners adapted its model according to changing contexts and needs. Section F presents the Centers’ path to organizational maturity and sustainability and the effectiveness of how Partners invested in the Centers.

Overall, there were many successes as well as some failures and deficiencies, which led to the overall conclusions and recommendations presented in the final section. Partners’ Board and staff, the Center directors and director of PDCI Brussels had multiple opportunities to comment on presentations of preliminary results and earlier drafts of the final report, which greatly strengthened the data analysis and writing of this report.
Citizens Finalize ‘Velvet Revolution’ in Slovakia:

Amid the transformational events occurring amongst newly post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the peaceful “Velvet Revolution” in 1989 swept the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia from power and inaugurated a return to democratic rule and a market economy. On January 1, 1993, the country underwent a peaceful “Velvet Divorce” into its two national components, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Despite these achievements, Slovakia struggled during its democratic transition process, with the majority of citizens distrustful of the government and parliament due to their undemocratic practices. Many feared the majority ruling party in government, led by Vladimír Mečiar might manipulate the 1998 parliamentary elections and subvert the true intentions of citizens nationwide, possibly leading the country back in the direction of one party rule and dictatorial tendencies.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) felt strongly that strengthening citizen participation in the process would ensure fair elections. Committed to this outcome, Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia (PDCS) joined a coalition of 11 NGOs in a large-scale, nationwide civic campaign for free and fair elections. The Obcianska Kampán (Civic Campaign), or OK ‘98, as it was called, coalesced in January 1998 with three broad goals: to inform voters; increase voter turnout; and monitor the election. The coalition reached an early consensus to run a positive campaign and be ‘publicly-political but non-partisan’ in their activities. Both decisions were crucial for obtaining media and citizen support for the Campaign.

PDCS was deeply involved in all aspects of OK ‘98. In a series of “Pre-Election Roundtables,” Center staff trained members of other NGOs and helped organize and moderate over 40 pre-election forums enabling over 4,000 citizens to voice their opinions. The roundtables also provided opportunities for NGO leaders to interface with candidates from diverse political parties. In addition, PDCS facilitated and mediated the meetings of OK ‘98 organizers, coordinated citizen activities related to the election, and trained lecturers from the European Law Students Association on the importance of young voter participation in the elections. Finally, PDCS facilitated a series of seminars for the Election Crisis Network, a network of NGOs that dispatched approximately 1,750 election monitors to prevent manipulation during the two-day election process.

Two million posters, thousands of leaflets and publications, hundreds of video spots and political debates, and 13 rock concerts later, the NGOs participating in OK ‘98 declared victory. Voter turnout reached a record 84% – higher than that of any neighboring country. Eight out of 10 voters cast a ballot for the first time and their widespread hopes for change were fulfilled. As the last ballots from September 26 were tallied, a coalition of opposition parties had won 93 out of 150 parliamentary seats. Mečiar was voted out of office along with his party. Most significantly, through OK ‘98, Slovakian civil society succeeded in opening the flow of communication between the government and its citizens – a vibrant testimony that an active, organized civil society can significantly influence political processes in former authoritarian-ruled countries.

On the heels of their success, PDCS and other leaders of OK ‘98 led several workshops, titled “Sharing the OK ‘98 Experience,” for NGO leaders from formerly communist countries with upcoming elections. The response was overwhelming – over 60 NGO leaders from Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Baltics and Russia attended this event, each perhaps renewing their hope that change is truly possible through an authentic democratic process. Since then, PDCS has led a variety of civic initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic governance and has used their OK ‘98 experience to train others in Serbia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Egypt.

A. Background

In the eyes of many people throughout Central and Eastern Europe, Slovakia’s Velvet Revolution, which began in 1989 with a return to democratic rule, came to a successful conclusion with the parliamentary elections in 1998. Many lessons have been learned from the successful Obcianska Kampan (Civic Campaign), or OK ’98. One is that democracy is an ongoing process, not an event that ends with the first election. Another is that change should come from within a country, and that civil society leaders who understand the culture and context of their country are necessary to advance democratic change. Third, that ‘outsiders’ can play a supportive role by sharing their experience and helping build local capacity and connections. Raymond Shonholtz (1943-2012), an experienced and accomplished conflict management specialist, already knew these lessons when he founded Partners for Democratic Change (Partners) in 1989.

Responding to the monumental changes in Central and Eastern Europe in the wake of the dissolving Soviet Union, Shonholtz established Partners as an international organization with a founding mission to build sustainable capacity to advance civil society and a culture of change and conflict management worldwide. While on a visit to Eastern Europe on a Fulbright Scholarship, Shonholtz “was struck by how the region, while facing enormous social, economic, environmental, and political problems after decades of communism, had highly corrupt and ineffective legal institutions and virtually no mechanisms to deal constructively with conflict.”

He understood that democratic change and civil society building required new skills and methods for developing democratic practices and a culture of peaceful conflict management. The inter-relationship between democracy, transition and conflict was the conceptual underpinning of Partners’ work in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the rush to help post-communist Europe, international donors and organizations poured into the region. The dominant model of technical assistance was to fund short-term, outside (Western) consultants to train local people using Western methods and tools. However, when they left, there was little local capacity to sustain change. In contrast, a distinguishing feature of Partners’ approach from the outset was its commitment to building long-term, sustainable capacity that was locally-led rather than foreign-led, based on the belief that change comes from sustainable efforts led by local people, organizations and institutions invested in their own long-term future. Shonholtz called Partners’ approach to local capacity building ‘sustainable impact investing,’ which builds the capacity of in-country organizations to deliver systemic change over an extended period of time.

B. Partners’ Model of Sustainable Impact Investing

Between 1989 and 2011, Partners invested in 22 Centers for Change and Conflict Management (Centers), first in Central and Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation, then expanding into Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Latin America, and the Middle East as countries in these regions struggled with their own democratic development, exhibiting highly polarized political climates, weak civil societies, ethnic and social conflicts or post-war transitions.

Partners’ model of sustainable impact investing seeks a triple bottom line that includes sustainable Centers (profit), democracy building and conflict management (social impact) and balancing economic development with environmental sustainability (sustainable development). Partners invests in building the individual capacity of local leaders as well as building an institutional home (the Centers) to serve as a hub for long-term democracy-building and peaceful conflict management with the ability to achieve sectoral results, such as improved governance, strengthened civil society and improved human security. This approach applies the con-

Mission

Partners for Democratic Change works through a global network to support local leaders and create partnerships that transform conflict, strengthen democratic institutions, and achieve sustainable development.

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3 Kinga Goncz and Raymond Shonholtz. “Improving the Practice: Applying Collaborative Processes in Former Communist Countries,” The International Association for Public Participation (First Quarter 2000).
cept of social entrepreneurship – investing in social entrepreneurs to initiate systemic change – and extends this to the dimension of organizational sustainability. Partners’ model of sustainable impact investing and triple bottom line is reflected in its new mission statement refreshed in 2013: Partners for Democratic Change works through a global network to support local leaders and create partnerships that transform conflict, strengthen democratic institutions, and achieve sustainable development.

Partners’ approach to systemic change to achieve social impact is based on the belief that the most pressing development challenges facing the world need to be addressed in a participatory manner with the input and shared commitment of government, businesses and civil society, which requires that local leaders have sophisticated change and conflict management skills. In addition, Partners believes the work of local social entrepreneurs to make a difference in their own countries is strengthened and legitimated by technical and relational support from an international network of like-minded professionals facing similar challenges. This belief culminated in the formal establishment of Partners for Democratic Change International (PDCI) in 2006 as an international network, with a secretariat in Brussels, to support the Centers and their work.

Partners’ investment in 22 Centers has resulted in 18 Centers that survive and thrive today, a success rate of 82%, which exceeds the ‘survival rate’ of nonprofits in the U.S. and around the world, as well as the for-profit service industry rate. This in itself is seen as a sign of success by Partners, the Centers and their donors and partner organizations. How this was accomplished is a story of adaption, innovation and dedication by the directors and staff of Partners and the Centers.

In 2011, with support from the General Electric (GE) Foundation, Partners embarked on an extensive evaluation initiative to assess: (1) Partners’ model of sustainable impact investing in local Centers; and (2) the Centers’ contribution to advancing democratic change and conflict management in their respective countries. The following report presents the findings of this two-and-a-half-year, external evaluation. The next section presents Partners’ and the Centers’ theories of change and methodologies for advancing democratic change. The following section presents the Centers’ contribution to democratic change and how these results are connected to their theories and methodologies.

C. Partners’ and the Centers’ Theories of Change and Methodologies

As social entrepreneurs, the local leaders of the Centers for Change and Conflict Management have developed their respective goals, programs and services to meet the specific contexts and needs of their societies, and according to their passions and the niches they have carved out over time. The common thread in the diversity of Centers’ work is a shared belief with Partners in a certain way of doing work that is inclusive, participatory and collaborative. The Centers share a common set of core process skills and methodologies, which they have applied to a wide variety of issues and venues that meet their unique contexts and needs, with the common goal of supporting peaceful social change and building democratic societies.

The Centers share a common set of core process skills and methodologies, which they have applied to a wide variety of issues and venues that meet their unique contexts and needs, with the common goal of supporting peaceful social change and building democratic societies. Partners’ belief is that the ongoing modeling and facilitating of others to adopt the “Partners way” is in itself a key result of its investment in the Centers and their work, with the underlying assumption that good process leads to good outcomes. Through education and training, building mediating structures, facilitating dialogue and consensus-building processes and most importantly, building relationships – constantly reaching out to civil society, government and business to come together to address

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4 Current Centers included in the evaluation are located in: Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Jordan, Kosovo, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Yemen. A Center in El Salvador was added in 2013.

Pressing needs – the Centers advance civil society, good governance and a culture of change and conflict management worldwide. This is not an easy or quick journey. Rather, as Julia Roig, President of Partners, describes PDCI’s work, it is “the slow slog of democracy building.”

To date there has been no unified theory of change among PDCI members. This is to be expected given their different context, needs and programmatic aims. However, embedded in Partners’ and the Centers’ missions and approaches is an **underlying theory of change that focuses on the interplay of changing social structures and social agents**. Anthony Giddens, in his seminal book, The Constitution of Society, proposed the ‘theory of structuration,’ which argues the inseparable intersection of social structures and agents. Giddens suggests, “human agency and social structure are in a relationship with each other, and it is the repetition of the acts of individual agents which reproduces the structure. This means that there is a social structure – traditions, institutions, moral codes, and established ways of doing things; but it also means that these can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently.” Though the theory has received much criticism, it remains a pillar of contemporary sociological theory. Similarly, participants of the Collaborative for Development Action’s (CDA) Reflecting on Peace Practice program (RPP) found that the most impactful efforts to create change, for our purposes, ‘democratic change,’ link change at the individual-personal level (social agents) with change at the socio-political level (social structures). They further distinguish between social agents who are ‘key people’ – those who are influential and necessary for sustainable peace and democracy building – and social agents who comprise the broader public (‘many people’). Former Partners employee, Ilana Shapiro, describes a framework for social change that adds ‘changing relationships’ as a meso-level change strategy that aims to affect both social agents and social structures.

To examine the results of using the ‘Partners way,’ the Centers were asked to provide up to five stories (cases) about the most significant changes (outcomes) their organization has contributed towards advancing democratic change. 15 Centers submitted one to five stories each for a total of 55 stories. An analysis of these stories reveals that the majority of the Centers’ best work explicitly connects individual-personal change with socio-political change (91% of the 55 stories). Analysis of these stories further reveals specific patterns that suggest some broad overall theories of change within the PDCI network. Each of the **theories of change** involves some mix of:

**If we change attitudes** (e.g., towards Roma), **build skills** (e.g., conflict management, deliberation, dialogue), **bring people together to form relationships** (e.g., coalitions, networks, partnerships, working groups, committees), and **provide participatory and collaborative platforms** (e.g., dialogue forums, participatory budgeting processes, joint analysis and cooperative planning workshops) in which people can use their skills, or set up **structures** (e.g., mediation centers and systems, conciliation commissions) for decision making and conflict management, then change towards [goal] will occur.

What is most common in the Centers’ specific theories of change and core practices is the belief that **‘process matters’** and that impartial, skilled facilitators, mediators and trainers with change and conflict management expertise have an important role to play in the change process.

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8 RPP is focused on ‘peace writ large,’ which they define has two basic goals: stopping violence and destructive conflict and building just and sustainable peace, addressing the political, economic and social factors that may be driving conflict. Their framework is being tested for use with Partners’ democratic change efforts.
The Centers are ‘process experts’ who provide the following services:

- **Training leaders** from civil society, government and private sectors in effective change and conflict management skills, such as negotiation, mediation, facilitation, cooperative problem solving, cooperative planning, and other advanced skills;
- **Training trainers** in a broad range of change and conflict management skills, enabling a multiplier effect of skills dissemination;
- **Applying change and conflict management processes**, such as mediation, facilitation, cooperative problem solving, and cooperative planning, to help diverse groups achieve consensus on real issues;
- Promoting public policies that recognize and legitimate the use of **participatory processes** for decision making and the use of **mediation processes** to address specific disputes;
- **Cooperative Advocacy** with local and national government to change public institutions, policies and practices;
- **Research and publishing** to share cutting-edge learning on democratic change and conflict management, ‘best practices’ and ‘how-to’ guides;
- **Assessing** conflicts and needs, designing better programs and monitoring and evaluating projects to increase effectiveness and results.

### D. Centers’ Contributions to Democratic Change: Most Significant Outcomes

The 55 stories of most significant change submitted by the Centers showed they are achieving important results in seven thematic aims, with over 200 outcomes that advance democratic change:11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Aims</th>
<th>Outcomes as Percentage of Cases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting civil society development</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting civil society participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting good governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing/resolving disputes and conflicts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting inclusive societies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving people's lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhancing sustainability</td>
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**Civil Society Development and Participation**

The most common outcome was civil society development through education, training, mentoring, coaching, partnerships and coalition building, organizational development and capacity building, and creating an enabling environment that supports civil society development, such as passing NGO laws. A key PDCI strategy is linking civil society and marginalized groups with government to promote good governance and achieve socio-political change. In fact, a high majority of the projects also promoted participation of civil society in shaping public policy and decisions that affect their lives, such as through elections and election monitoring, influencing political agendas and priorities, dialoguing with governmental representatives on various issues and public policies (e.g., anti-corruption, human rights, municipal budgets, ethnic integration, school curriculum, climate change, resource management, use of public spaces, socio-economic development and international development).

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10 In Cooperative Advocacy, a coalition of civil society groups engages decision-makers in a collaborative, outcome-oriented and sustained process to advance a specific agenda for social change. It differs from the adversarial approach common in traditional advocacy.

11 Percentages reflect the percentage of stories that had outcomes in each area.

12 ‘Governance’ is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance includes government as a social actor, as well as civil society and corporate actors. For this section, the focus is on good governance in government.
Good Governance
A high majority of cases advanced good governance. Most of these outcomes were influenced by the participation of civil society working with government on the issues described above. Specific outcomes included free and fair elections, human rights protection, increased accountability, equity, inclusion and responsiveness to the needs of citizens and marginalized and vulnerable groups (such as children, women, ethnic minority groups), increased access to justice and new dispute and conflict resolution mechanisms (such as mediation or conciliation commissions) in prisons, schools, the criminal justice system, and business sector, increased transparency, accountability and reduced corruption, and more effective and efficient resource management.

Conflict Management and Access to Justice
Nearly half of the cases contributed to increasing access to justice and managing/resolving disputes and conflicts. These all overlapped with improved governance (e.g., as part of government institutions) or strengthened civil society (e.g., extra-judicial/government processes, such as family mediation or community-based conflict resolution). Outcomes included new or expanded structures, policies and practices, such as mediation, conciliation and other processes aimed at addressing specific issues, disputes and conflicts (both formal and informal arrangements), and promoting reconciliation between antagonistic or majority-minority groups.

Centers applied mediation and conciliation in diverse arenas – families, schools, communities, court systems, prisons – to address a wide variety of issues and conflicts – interpersonal, divorce, labor conflicts, criminal cases, land and property disputes, youth violence and delinquency, ethnic tensions, inter-tribal conflicts (e.g., prevention of revenge killings), and conflicts related to extractive industries and resource management. Building structures to address disputes and conflicts enables the projects to achieve results far into the future, thereby potentially changing the social norms towards peaceful and cooperative approaches to dealing with conflict.

Inclusive Societies
A high number of cases promoted more inclusive societies, such as improved majority-minority relations, increased capacity, participation and protection of marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities (especially Roma), indigenous communities, women, youth, children, and other groups that feel excluded from the mainstream of society. Many of these cases increased the leadership capacity and inclusion of women and youth in decision-making and as agents of social change or increased their economic opportunities.

Improved Lives
More than a third of the cases improved people’s lives in socio-economic indicators, such as improved health, education or economic status of individuals and families, especially among marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as Roma, women, and children. While these outcomes did not all lead to structural change in addressing inequality, they nevertheless contributed to the betterment of people’s lives at the local level. For example, Fundacja Partners Polska (the Center in Poland) conducted a project in six schools (reaching 2,800 students and teachers) in the Mathare slum in Nairobi, Kenya that improved the schools’ infrastructure to provide safe and sanitary conditions for students and teachers (e.g., renovated toilets) and provided the schools’ science teachers with mobile laboratories and new skills and methodologies to lead interactive science lessons on how to protect their health and life from the risk of infections and parasites.

Economic and Environmental Sustainability
A small percentage of stories showed improvements towards economic and environmental sustainability, through the development of actions, policies and practices that balance economic development with protection of the environment. Five cases were reported with these outcomes, all from Centers in Latin America, where natural resource management has developed as a stronger niche within the network. These cases led to increased public awareness, new policies and practices addressing climate change, responsible mining, resource management of national parks and bays, and transport and mobility issues. For example, Centro de Colaboración Cívica (the Center in Mexico) conducted a project to promote national legislation on climate change through consensus building in 2008-2009, which led to increased dialogue between legislators and civil society on climate change, pushed the issue higher on the legislative agenda, positively influenced political agreements across party lines, and contributed to passage of a law on renewable energy and final passage of the General Climate Change Law in 2012.
Geographic Reach of Change
The 55 cases showed they had broad geographic reach, with the majority contributing to change at multiple levels: 78% local level; 62% national level; 13% regional level; and 4% multinational level. The results also show a strong link between working at the local level and bridging that with the national, regional and multinational levels. Of the 43 cases with local level outcomes, 53% were connected with outcomes at the national level, 16% at the regional level and 5% at the multinational level.

New Structures
In addition to the changes identified in the 55 ‘most significant change’ stories discussed above, the Centers have created new and lasting social structures that support ongoing conflict management and access to justice at the socio-political level:

- Six fee-based mediation businesses or services as part of the Centers’ financial sustainability strategy – for example, Partners-Kosova and a network of 45 external mediators they trained have settled over 200 cases involving more than 12,000 people in Kosovo;
- More than 40 conciliation commissions and mediation centers – for example, Partners-Yemen established 10 conciliation missions in tribal areas of Yemen;
- Hundreds of court affiliated and workplace alternative dispute resolution programs – for example, Partners Hungary Alapítvány (the Center in Hungary) set up a mediation system for the criminal justice system nationwide and resolved 15,000 cases in 5 years (2006-2011);
- Over 50 peer mediation programs in schools and universities, resolving hundreds of conflicts per year.

An Illustrative Example of the Theory of Change in Practice: Mexico

The following case submitted by Centro de Colaboración Cívica (CCC) in Mexico was ‘mapped’ using the RPP framework as an illustrative example to explore the link between activities, outcomes and a program goal and to demonstrate how Centers link individual-personal change (social agents) with socio-political change (social structures), and link ‘many people’ with ‘key people’ to achieve democratic change. The case concerns the project, Dialogue to Construct a Legislative Agenda on Public Security with a Focus on Human Rights (2010-2011). CCC initiated the project to foster dialogue and consensus on public security and human rights, two subjects that create very polarizing debates in Mexico, in order to break down traditional barriers between the diverse groups of civil society organizations (CSOs) focused on these issues and oblige them to recognize the complexity of the situation in Mexico and work together to achieve mutual goals. CCC’s underlying theory of change was: If key civil society actors in the fields of public security and human rights are enabled with skills in negotiation and dialogue and are given a platform in which to dialogue and collaborate around mutual interests, they will reach consensus on priority issues and become a strong coalition, which will enable them to exert influence and reach agreements with federal legislators on how to improve public security and human rights. The ultimate goal was to implement legitimate and stable agreements to reduce levels of insecurity and improve public policy with a comprehensive vision that ensures respect for human rights and makes public security actions more effective.
CCC facilitated the construction of a joint agenda first among civil society organizations and then between civil society and the Federal Legislative Branch. To achieve this, CCC first built a plural convening group (CG) of civil society organizations focused on public security and on human rights for victims of violence, and other organizations with high impact on domestic public opinion. This in itself was an achievement given the history of acrimony between many of these organizations. CCC and the CG developed a ‘map of actors’ to better understand the interests and concerns of the various stakeholders (civil society, Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches) and their points of convergence and divergence. The resulting document served as the basis for the agenda for dialogue among a larger group of civil society organizations.

During the dialogue, CCC and the CG shared the map of actors with participants and engaged them in joint knowledge sharing and analysis of the issues. The collaborative process increased understanding and trust as well as built relationships among former adversaries in civil society. Through consensus building the participants reached agreement in six themes and developed a proposal document entitled Propuesta Ciudadana para la Elaboración de una Política de Seguridad Integral, Democrática y con Enfoque de Derechos Humanos (Citizen Proposal for the Elaboration of a Comprehensive Democratic Security Policy with a Focus on Human Rights) that was signed by 400 people from 164 organizations and presented to the Public Security Commission.

CCC then facilitated two small meetings between CG/CSO representatives and the two legislators from the Public Security Commission who had observed the dialogue to discuss the proposal and plan for the next phase – dialogues between legislators and civil society organizations. At the same time, CCC implemented a multi-pronged media strategy that contributed to three outcomes: greater public awareness and understanding of the process, issues and proposal; greater pressure on legislators to dialogue with civil society organizations and address public safety issues and human rights in a complementary way; and the attention of the Legislative Branch, which invited CCC and other CSO leaders to meet and discuss the proposal. The latter was an unexpected and welcome outcome.

Over a period of several months, CCC and civil society leaders met three times with high-level staff of the Executive Branch. CCC and the CG facilitated three multi-stakeholder dialogues with civil society and legislators to draft legislation on the different priority issues, and followed up by lobbying legislators to support various legislation. Among the legislative achievements is the General Law of Victims, which was approved April 30, 2012.

The flowchart below summarizes the program goal, activities and associated outcomes. This successful project exemplifies the Centers’ comprehensive and integrated approaches to applying participatory change and conflict management methodologies and processes to achieve individual-personal change, relational change and socio-political change among many people and key people, all with the aim of contributing to democratic change and conflict management.

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13 This is an abbreviated description of the project to illustrate the key activities and outcomes leading up to the General Law of Victims (one of several goals). Further, it must be noted that some of the ‘steps’ were overlapping and non-linear.
**PROGRAM GOAL:** Contribute to public security and the protection of human rights by building legitimate, effective, and sustainable legislative agreements that reflect a broad consensus of civil society organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>RESULTING CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Build plural convening group (CG) of CSOs focused on public security and on human rights for victims of violence, among others with high impact on domestic public opinion.</td>
<td>Plural CSO Convening Group built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Map the actors to understand the interests and concerns of the various stakeholders (civil society, Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches) and develop a document that identifies the points of convergence and differences and priority issues to form the agenda for dialogue.</td>
<td>Increased understanding and a Map of Actors joint document and agenda for dialogue produced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The RPP framework is originally mapped on a four-cell matrix. It was adapted here to more easily show the chronological order of activities and changes.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>RESULTING CHANGE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 <strong>Train</strong> 20 people from civil society organizations to build capacities for dialogue and negotiation.</td>
<td>Cadre of individuals with skills to facilitate dialogue and negotiation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 <strong>Facilitate dialogues with civil society</strong> – public safety and human/victims’ rights CSOs, national and international experts, two legislators (observers), and media. Engage in joint knowledge sharing, analysis and development of agreements/proposals to present to Federal Legislators.</td>
<td>Agreement in six themes and document of proposals signed by 400 people from 164 organizations; and increased understanding, trust and relationships. Proposal presented to Public Security Commission in Chamber of Deputies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 <strong>Facilitated meetings (2)</strong> with key legislators in Public Security Commission.</td>
<td>Design and plan for dialogue process between CSOs and Legislators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Implement <strong>media strategy</strong> at multiple points to raise public awareness and increase pressure on legislators to act.</td>
<td>Greater public and government awareness of issues and proposal. Dialogue with Legislators. Executive branch invites CCC/CSOs to meet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 <strong>Meetings with Executive Branch (3)</strong> – high level meetings to discuss proposals.</td>
<td>General Law of Victims approved April 30, 2012 – a legitimate legislative agreement that reflects public input and consensus. Contribution to Goal: Increased public security and human rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 <strong>Facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues (3)</strong> with Legislators to discuss proposals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 <strong>Lobby legislators</strong> with support of all organizations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partners adapted its approach to sustainable impact investing in new Centers based on lessons learned and in response to shifting local needs and donor interests. Partners has used three strategies: the University Model (1991-1993), NGO Model (1994-2006), and the Sustainable Leadership Program (SLP) Model (2008-2011). Partners first initiated Centers housed in major local universities in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (affiliates in Bratislava and Prague before the peaceful separation in 1993), Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. They focused on graduate and post-graduate curricula, mostly negotiation and some mediation, and introduced conflict resolution curricula into primary, secondary and university levels. They also trained national leaders in negotiation and conflict resolution skills and processes and provided capacity building to strengthen and create new institutions in civil society to engage conflict constructively.

Funding during this time supported project-based work and Partners used this funding to underwrite the cost of Center development. However, funding for Center organizational capacity building was small and most staff worked part-time, including most of the directors, who had other university responsibilities. The university structure also posed bureaucratic constraints on Center development, fundraising, and programming, which hindered their growth and ability to be entrepreneurial and become financially independent and sustainable. Partners adapted its model and began investing in NGOs as a new platform that would enable Centers to be entrepreneurial. Partners first worked with existing university-based Center directors, in whom they had invested heavily, and offered them the opportunity to be the directors of new autonomous, locally registered NGOs. About half the directors accepted Partners’ offer. The other directors continued to advance change and conflict management through their respective universities. Partners also began to branch out to other regions in the world. Between 1995 and 2006, Partners invested in additional new Centers in Albania, Argentina, Croatia, Georgia, Jordan, Kosovo, Mexico, Peru, and Romania. This brought the total number of Centers established to 16 (including Czech Republic and Slovakia as two independent countries) for an average of one new Center per year.

In order for the Centers to achieve all these substantive outcomes, Partners first invested in these Centers to become strong local institutions. The next section focuses on Partners’ model of sustainable impact investing and Partners’ role in building successful Centers for Change and Conflict Management.

**E. Three Approaches to Sustainable Impact Investing**

Partners adapted its approach to sustainable impact investing in new Centers based on lessons learned and in response to shifting local needs and donor interests. Partners has used three strategies: the University Model (1991-1993), NGO Model (1994-2006), and the Sustainable Leadership Program (SLP) Model (2008-2011). Partners first initiated Centers housed in major local universities in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (affiliates in Bratislava and Prague before the peaceful separation in 1993), Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. They focused on graduate and post-graduate curricula, mostly negotiation and some mediation, and introduced conflict resolution curricula into primary, secondary and university levels. They also trained national leaders in negotiation and conflict resolution skills and processes and provided capacity building to strengthen and create new institutions in civil society to engage conflict constructively.

In order for the Centers to achieve all these substantive outcomes, Partners first invested in these Centers to become strong local institutions. The next section focuses on Partners’ model of sustainable impact investing and Partners’ role in building successful Centers for Change and Conflict Management.

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15 The Center in Prague became an independent NGO in 1992. The rest became NGOs in 1994 or later.
Fortuitously, by the mid-1990s donors were interested in funding new institutions. Partners was able to raise guaranteed funding for two to three years of start-up for operational expenses as well as some project work. Directors of Centers established during this model view their guaranteed base of operational funding and support as key to their successful launch and their ability to lay a strong foundation for their Centers’ growth and sustainability.

This approach worked well until 2007 when donors were less interested in building new institutions. However, they continued to seek existing local institutions with innovative or proven programs to support and acknowledged the need for the types of services and support a Partners Center would provide. Partners adapted again and together with funding from the GE Foundation developed the Sustainable Leadership Program (SLP) in 2008. The SLP provided a two-year stipend for new directors. Partners provided a month-long training on a range of organizational skills and practices for a cohort of new directors, three in 2008 (Colombia, Serbia, Yemen) and three in 2009 (Brazil, Senegal, Indonesia), followed by technical assistance and support. The goal was to scale up the process of opening new Centers and enable them to become established and to operate as a self-financing, locally registered, independent entity within two years. A 2011 internal evaluation of the SLP found the program needed greater funding, similar to the NGO model, to enable more capacity building, training and technical assistance with the Centers after the initial training month in Washington, DC; however five of the six SLP Centers continue to thrive today.16

In summary, Partners helped establish 22 Centers between 1989 and 2011, adapting its model over time. Four Centers left the PDCI network or closed, Russia (1993-1996), Lithuania (1993-2007), Croatia (1998-2001), and Indonesia (2009-2011). Partners learned important lessons from these Centers, including the importance of selecting the right leaders as directors, selecting the right countries at the right time for new Center development, and having sufficient funding and donor interest to build organizational capacity and sustainability.

The timeline below traces the establishment of the Centers for Change and Conflict Management, showing all those that were launched and those that operate as NGOs today.17

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16 The evaluation of the SLP program was part of the global evaluation funded by GE Foundation.
17 The Center in Romania was established in 1994 by local leaders and became affiliated with Partners in 1997. El Salvador opened in 2013 after the evaluation was nearly complete, therefore not included in the evaluation.
F. Centers’ Path to Organizational Maturity and Sustainability and the Role of Partners’ Investing in Local Centers

The research literature on the life cycle of non-profit organizations describes many models; however, there are five basic stages of development: (1) incubation and start-up; (2) growth; (3) maturity and sustainability; and (4) stagnation and reinvention; or (5) stagnation with decline and shut-down (which would happen if the Center didn’t reinvigorate and reinvent itself). As of 2012, three of the five remaining SLP Centers were in the incubation stage and two were in the growth stage. 11 of the older Centers were in the maturity stage, and two had been in the maturity stage and were in the stagnation and reinvention stage. Thus, 13 of 18 Centers have reached the maturity stage. It took an average of eight years (from five to 15 years) for these Centers to move through start-up and growth to reach maturity. These figures are comparable to research that suggests the length of time to reach maturity is from three to 12 years.\(^\text{18}\)

Several Centers also reported they had swung back and forth between stages as various crises threatened their survival (e.g., loss of leader, human resource problems and financial set-backs). The fact that they have not stagnated, declined and shut-down is due partly to the strong organizational foundation that Partners helped to lay and their ongoing support to Centers, and largely due to the Centers’ continual innovation, versatility, resiliency, and longevity. The following table illustrates the progression of Centers from incubation to growth and maturity, as distinguished by key milestones in four key areas: Partners’ Role; Organizational Development and Human Resources; Financial Viability; and Programs and Services.

### Role of Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patron and Intermediary</th>
<th>Collaborative Partner</th>
<th>Authentic Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Vision and leadership</td>
<td>• Brand recognition</td>
<td>• Brand recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brand recognition</td>
<td>• Public outreach, marketing, new business development</td>
<td>• Public outreach, marketing, new business development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Core financial support (administrative, key project funding)</td>
<td>• Training on new methodologies</td>
<td>• Collaboration on programs / regional initiatives; sub-contracting Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public outreach, marketing, new business development</td>
<td>• Collaboration on programs / regional initiatives; sub-contracting Centers</td>
<td>• Friendship and moral support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Training in: Partners’ participatory methodologies (basic, advanced); and organizational development and management</td>
<td>• Technical assistance, accompaniment</td>
<td>• PDCI Network Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mentoring, technical assistance</td>
<td>• PDCI Network Leadership</td>
<td>• ‘Emergency Fund’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to PDCI Network (training, mentoring)</td>
<td>• ‘Emergency Fund’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organizational Development and Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dreaming</th>
<th>Professionalizing</th>
<th>Committed, Efficient, Effective Experts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Vision and mission articulated and aligned with Partners and PDCI</td>
<td>• Bigger office, staff, roster of consultants</td>
<td>• Professional, experienced, devoted staff / consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Locally registered</td>
<td>• Professionalization and specialization of staff / consultants in diverse areas</td>
<td>• Long-term strategic planning – consolidating / finding new programmatic opportunities and niche areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board established and functional</td>
<td>• New and more ‘bureaucratized’ organizational structures, systems, policies</td>
<td>• PDCI network – collaborate on joint projects (regional, substantive affinity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business plan, Strategic plan</td>
<td>• Revised Business / Strategic plans</td>
<td>• Succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Marketing/promotional materials</td>
<td>• Expanded strategic partnerships</td>
<td>• Challenges, Crisis and Resiliency – loss of leader, loss of funding → adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Office set up</td>
<td>• Marketing – leveraging success, external evaluations, media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Small initial staff / consultants hired and trained (program and administrative) → hiring key staff with specific experience</td>
<td>• PDCI network – joint projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategic partnerships established</td>
<td>• Growing Pains, Challenges, Crisis and Resiliency – loss of leader, loss of key staff, loss of funding → adaptation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PDCI network – full membership; independent relationships among Centers</td>
<td>• Financial independence, sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Financial Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Self-Sufficient</th>
<th>Sustainable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Financial dependence on Partners for most to all funding → partial dependence → independence</td>
<td>• Partial dependence on Partners → independence</td>
<td>• Financial independence, sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multi-year funding / multi-year project</td>
<td>• Diversify funding streams – grants, contracts, fees</td>
<td>• Diversified funding stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business plan</td>
<td>• Establish for-profit business / fee-for-services</td>
<td>• Reserve funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High to full financial independence</td>
<td>• Efficient use of resources (e.g., contract labor, shared resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Direct funders - greater diversity, number</td>
<td>• Long-term financial planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Programs and Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acculturating</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
<th>Institutionalizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Adopting and acculturating “western” methodologies, tools</td>
<td>• Inventing training tools, methodologies, programs</td>
<td>• More comprehensive, strategic programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Training and Training-of-Trainers in basic skills, advanced skills</td>
<td>• Less training, more intervention; training as part of larger multi-stakeholder collaborative processes</td>
<td>• Diffusion and Institutionalization of change and conflict management culture/structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mediating disputes / ethnic conciliation</td>
<td>• Public policy issues</td>
<td>• Creative use of multi-media; media strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating mediation / conciliation mechanisms</td>
<td>• NGO capacity building – OD for other organizations</td>
<td>• Adapting to challenges and new opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating platforms, facilitating dialogues, collaborative planning / problem solving</td>
<td>• Finding or strengthening niche areas</td>
<td>• Local → national → regional / international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Testing: Doing it all → finding a niche, OR, Narrow range of programs / services → broader focus</td>
<td>• Scaling up, leveraging success</td>
<td>• Greater visibility, reputation, publishing → sought out as expert, recognition, awards → replication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local; some national level work</td>
<td>• Adapting to challenges and new opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local → national → regional / international</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Visibility, reputation → sought out, recognition, awards → replication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partners’ donors and partner organizations view its model of sustainable impact investing to build autonomous centers as both unusual and superior to the traditional model of the ‘headquarters-field office’ relationship. Also significant is how Partners provides this support and how its relationship with the Centers evolves over time from the typical ‘patron-client’ relationship more towards what Alan F. Fowler calls ‘authentic partnership’ – trust-based, mutually enabling, equitable relationships between organizations.

Fowler argues that for international development NGOs to forge real partnerships, they must rethink their roles from being intermediaries in a funding chain to facilitators of international cooperation between diverse groups that comprise civil society. Partners’ approach to supporting local leaders and building autonomous organizations exemplifies the shift from patron and intermediary towards being authentic partners as its role changes with the Centers’ stages of development. Partners has contributed to building authentic partnerships and supporting the Centers on their path to maturity and sustainability in seven key ways:

1. Selecting the ‘Right’ Social Entrepreneur as Center Director

Partners learned important lessons from Centers that failed, especially the importance of selecting the right leaders as directors – leaders who are social entrepreneurs with a commitment and passion for Partners’ and their individual Center’s mission and methodologies. Key characteristics include:

- **Personal leadership style** – ‘social entrepreneur,’ clear vision, integrity, resilience, optimistic, proactive, creative, adaptive, open-minded, collaborative, assertive, personable, reflective;
- **Organizational and staff management skills** – NGO/organizational management, financial management, team building, effective communication, transparent, democratic, good implementer;
- **Donor relationships** – pre-existing connections and networks, positive and credible reputation, ability to build and manage relationships and partnerships, fundraising experience, ability to attract new programs and opportunities;
- **Technical skills** – knowledge of democratic change and conflict management theory and practice, relevant educational background, expertise in core methodologies (conflict resolution/management, facilitation, cooperative planning), analysis and evaluation, fluent in English.

2. Global Brand Recognition, Credibility, and Legitimacy

Brand recognition and the credibility and legitimacy that come with PDCI membership was especially important during the incubation stage as Centers sought to establish themselves. Centers also see brand recognition as an ongoing benefit and cite their membership in PDCI on their websites and marketing materials. Donors credited Partners with giving them the confidence to invest in the Centers, especially during their early start-up years. The Centers being part of a global network was also seen as an added bonus that gave donors greater confidence in the Center’s ability to succeed. While the Centers benefit from the Partners brand, Partners and the PDCI network as a whole also benefit and gain credibility and legitimacy from the work and successes of each Center. In fact, Partners’ most important marketing tool is the Centers and their success. This is one way the relationship between Partners and the Centers becomes mutually enabling and more ‘authentic’ within the PDCI network.
Financial Resources, Marketing, and Business Development

Partners provided start-up funding to launch the Centers, including funding for institution building (e.g., salaries, staff training, rent, office equipment and supplies) and programmatic work. Experience shows that the best situation is when new Centers have two to three years of guaranteed funding sufficient for start-up operating costs, as well as implementing some projects. Centers that had this said the funding enabled them to develop strategically, based on needs assessments and planning, and gave them the opportunity to be creative, take risks, test out their skills and strategies, and develop their niche. The most successful start-up funding was when Partners won large multi-year, multi-donor, and multi-country grants, which ensured a diverse and stable financial platform for organization development as well as programmatic work and opportunities for Center-to-Center interaction.

Partners' most significant support was coaching and supporting successful outreach to donors and clients. One of the benefits for local NGOs belonging to an international network with strong connections to Washington, DC and Brussels is the access to information, contacts and marketing opportunities to donors and other organizations. Partners provided critical support towards self-sufficiency and sustainability in a variety of ways:

- **Identifying opportunities** through Grants.gov, FedBizOps, EU funding announcements (also provided by the PDCI Brussels office), business development forecasts, smaller foundations, and governments.
- **Leveraging existing Center and Partners relationships with prime contractors and donors** to create additional opportunities for new projects and expand opportunities to additional Centers.
- **Forging new relationships** with prime contractors and donors to work with Partners and Centers.
- **Training and technical assistance** with organizational development, such as strategic planning, business planning, proposal development, and grant writing, including writing or contributing to full proposals and editing/advising/sending materials to strengthen proposals written by the Centers. In addition, Partners helped staff set up sound financial management systems.
- **Accompanying** Center staff to meetings with donors and organizations and supporting proposal development afterwards.
- **Negotiating complex Center awards** when Centers lacked the experience to do so on their own.
- **Leveraging the PDCI Network**: Matchmaking with other Centers Partners knew were interested in opportunities for collaboration or had relevant programs such as an Organization of American States proposal for Mexico and Brazil.
- **Ongoing marketing of PDCI and individual Centers** to donors and other organizations.
- **Ongoing networking with US-based organizations** through Partners' sponsoring of conferences and meetings, for example, the Partners 20th Anniversary Seminar Series and Conference in November 2009.

Partners has also provided a financial safety net when Centers experienced serious financial hardship, including loans to fill in funding gaps, sub-contracting Centers for work on projects, and through targeted business development to find grant funding.

As the Centers became self-sufficient, their relationship with Partners changed from dependence to independence, equalizing the relationship and enabling a more 'authentic partnership.'
Training and Capacity Building

Partners provided the Centers with technical training on change and conflict management (e.g., training-for-trainers, mediation, facilitation, cooperative planning, cooperative advocacy, monitoring and evaluation), as well as training to support organizational development and management (e.g., financial management, proposal writing). This technical training is part of the ‘glue’ that binds the Centers together as all have been provided training in similar methodologies and tools to become organizations that advance peaceful change and conflict management. Partners provided training and capacity building through training, co-training and coaching, during start-up and maturation as Partners developed new or advanced methodologies. When many Centers were first becoming established and introducing new ideas and ways of addressing problems in their countries, having international support helped them achieve a certain level of credibility and legitimacy that helped bolster their early work.

Partners conducted most training for Centers as joint trainings with staff from several Centers. These trainings provided common skills and gave Center staff the opportunity to share experiences and learn from one another, as well as learn and share experiences with American colleagues, thereby broadening their networks. Many Centers especially appreciated Center-to-Center training, especially from other Centers in their region. It was a crucial added benefit to have training from a Center with similar cultural/political context. In addition, Partners’ sub-contracting of Center staff to provide training for other network members also provided these Centers with an additional funding stream and greater international exposure.

Jointly Managing Programs and Working on Regional Initiatives

The Centers cited jointly managed programs with Partners and other Centers as a strong contributor to their success. These programs provided new opportunities, contributed to capacity building and growth into new programmatic or geographic areas, or deepened existing work, and provided additional revenues. Joint work on regional initiatives enabled Centers to share best practices and lessons learned to improve their work addressing common issues.

Networking, Bridge Building and Catalyst for Collaboration

Partners was credited with being a bridge builder and increasing the Centers’ opportunities for collaboration within the network and externally by introducing members to donors and other organizations. Centers value the PDCI network – especially the access to other Centers’ expertise, the opportunity to work jointly on regional programs and international consulting opportunities. In surveys, donors and organizations that have worked with Partners also agree that Partners (and PDCI) has played an important role encouraging collaboration within PDCI as well as building bridges between other institutions in the public, private, and civil society sector. Partners is credited for its leadership role in the network.

Accompaniment

Ultimately, the main dividend of Partners’ role in building 18 sustainable Centers is the ongoing relationships it has built with Centers. Partners accompanies the Centers throughout their journey from start-up to growth and maturity, as well as through difficult times. While the nature of the relationships changes over time, they are enduring. For Partners, building Centers is not a project, rather, it is a commitment to a life-long partnership.

The collaboration and support provided by Partners that was seen as most important by Centers evolved over their life cycle. During a Center’s start-up (first three years), Partners’ most important support was capacity building with Center staff in organizational development and management, training staff in change and conflict skills and processes, and funding and soliciting grants for the Centers. The Centers also valued the training in change and conflict management and coaching provided by other Centers, especially during their first six years (start-up and growth stage). During the Centers’ 4th – 10th year (growth stage and early maturity), Partners’ most important contribution was working collegially with the Centers on joint projects, from proposal development and securing funding through implementation. Similar to the relationships with Partners, the Centers also developed more equal partnerships with each other over time. After the initial 10 years (during the maturity stage), the Centers most valued their joint work with other Centers, surpassing their joint work with Partners. However, they continue to value Partners’ ongoing relationship, opportunities for collaboration, leadership in PDCI, advice and moral support. The lesson learned is that Partners’ role will necessarily shift over time as Centers grow and mature, enabling both to become authentic partners.
2. Centers’ Organizational Development and Human Resources

As the chart above indicates, the Centers’ path to maturity and sustainability was marked by key milestones, successes, strategies and adaptations along the way in three interrelated areas: organizational development and human resources; financial strategies; and programs and services and their impact. The organizational development and human resources dimension includes several key factors and strategies on the path to maturity:

Leadership and Governance
The successful Centers demonstrate effective leadership and governance, including a clear vision and vital mission, a passionate and committed leader, an engaged, diverse and representative board of directors/advisors, a strategic plan to guide decision making, and legal registration to operate. By having a ‘process driven’ mission, supported by strong leadership and periodic needs assessments, the Centers have been able to adapt and apply their process expertise to address evolving needs and promote democratic change and conflict management through a wide variety of strategies.

An area that needs strengthening is the role of the Centers’ board of directors/advisors. Only three of the Centers’ boards provide any support with fundraising efforts. For the Centers who have ongoing financial concerns, this might be an area in which to strengthen support from their board.

Human Resources
The Centers are successful in recruiting and maintaining a highly qualified and experienced workforce who are committed to the organization. In mid-2012, Centers employed approximately 276 staff and consultants (about 170 full-time staff), averaging about 15 employees/contractors each, plus an average of two volunteers each (28 total) bringing the total human resources in the Centers to over 300. The majority of full-time staff (60%) and nearly half of the part-time staff have been employed three or more years, with 18% employed six-10 years and 12% employed 11 or more years. Almost all Centers offer their staff professional development, with the majority offering one or more training opportunities per year.

As the Centers grew in staff size, they focused more on delineating roles and responsibilities and job specialization, hiring people in key organizational areas (e.g., grant/proposal writing to increase business development, finance manager) or specialists in technical areas needed for growth (e.g., mediation, training, or other area). Targeted hiring and the increasing level of *professionalization and specialization* of staff not only were in response to growth, but also fueled growth. One lesson learned from the more recent SLP Centers, especially those that grew very rapidly while still in their incubation period, is the importance of hiring very good administrative and financial staff early on to manage large projects and funding. The professionalism of staff was cited by donors and other organizations as a key strength in PDCI, making ‘repeat business’ more likely.

The Centers’ commitment to diversity contributes to their ability to be sensitive to cultural nuances and increases their credibility and legitimacy. It is recommended that all Centers ensure they have staff/consultants that reflect the diversity of the communities with which they work.

Developing Robust Infrastructure to Manage and Fuel Growth
After a period of growth, the Centers implemented new policies, procedures and systems to ensure accountability, efficiency and effectiveness (e.g., financial management systems, IT systems and administrative infrastructure). This also helped further growth by increasing their capacities to manage larger and more complicated grants and contracts. Large donors, such as USAID, are hesitant to fund organizations without the necessary infrastructure in place. While Partners helped fill this void for many Centers during their incubation stage, it was important for the Centers to develop this capacity and implement infrastructure in order to manage and fuel growth.
**Engaging in Networks and Establishing Strategic Partnerships**

NGOs tend to be stronger when part of a network. A distinguishing feature of Partners’ work is the establishment of the PDCI network and office in Brussels in 2006. One indicator of network strength is the quantity and quality of collaboration. The data suggests frequent, and in many cases, ongoing collaboration between network members. Initial collaboration is in the form of start-up support, graduating to cross-training and collaboration on projects as Centers grow and mature. The technical and relational support provided by Centers helped establish new Centers in different countries that were able to leverage the expertise of the network to develop programs tailored to meet their unique needs and interests.

The number and quality of ‘external partnerships’ is another indicator of organizational capacity and sustainability. 15 Centers reported a total of 668 organizations with whom they collaborate across civil society, government and the private sector (an average of 45 each). Centers’ strategic alliances with large donors enabled them to engage in long-term programs that also contributed to their growth and maturation. In addition, surveys with organizations that work with the Centers showed they have high-quality relationships with the Centers. The key conclusion is that the Centers have built a wide variety of cross-sector partnerships, which was important for increasing their connections, growth and visibility, as well as increasing impact.

**Marketing and Leverage Success**

An effective marketing tool during start-up for many Centers was providing training, facilitation and mediation services for free, which enabled them to demonstrate their programs and services, reach a wide audience and establish a positive reputation. A key driver of growth was the Centers’ ability to market themselves effectively and leverage their successes with donors, other organizations and the communities and sectors with whom they wanted to work. However, this has not always been easy and represents an opportunity for further sharing and cross-training within the PDCI network.

**Media Strategies and Publishing**

Several Centers established relationships with the media to gain publicity about their projects. Media attention supported their programmatic goals, raised public awareness on important issues, and increased the visibility and reputation of the Centers. During the growth stage, the Centers began publishing training manuals, curricula, guides, case studies, and research for the public that they posted on their websites and shared widely. The Centers and Partners have over 168 publications, with many documents translated into multiple languages. Several Centers’ curricula have been certified by national government agencies. These publications increase the visibility and reputation of the Centers’ staff and work.

**3. Center Financial Resources and Strategies**

**Focusing on Sustainability**

After several years of growth and being in the maturity stage, Centers began focusing on quality control amidst a large volume of work, long-term sustainability (especially for those who have experienced some financial decline), and succession planning as directors started thinking about retirement and the need to secure the future of their Center.

Revenue both influences the Centers’ organizational capacity and is influenced by it. Over the lifespan of the current 18 Centers, they raised over $55 million in revenue with an average estimated annual budget of over $263,000 per Center (from $75,000 – $719,000). The Centers’ average revenue increased steadily up through their 10th year of existence during their maturity stage and then declined somewhat in some Centers, primarily due to decreases in revenue with the accession of European Centers to the EU beginning in 2004 (which made them ineligible for EU external funding).
funding) and the worldwide economic downturn beginning in 2008. The Centers’ greatest challenge has been financial stability and sustainability, which continues today. However, they have successfully used a variety of key strategies (sometimes with Partners’ support) to become financially independent and sustainable:

**Diversifying and Increasing Funders and Funding Streams**

NGO financial viability is most likely when its fundraising efforts result in: multiple/diverse sources of funding (government, corporations, foundations, NGOs, individual donations); a mix of grants, contracts and fee-for-service; lack of dependence on just one or two funders for the majority of its support; and long-term relationships with donors, which enables stable funding for multi-year programs or diverse programs over time. Overall, the Centers have done well in all these areas. In 2011, the Centers had an average of six to seven donors each. No Center received more than 65% of its funding from a single donor. In addition, all have a history of long-term relationships with at least three donors who provided funding for multi-year projects or different projects. These are all indicators of financial sustainability.

About half the Centers have either created “for-profit” businesses providing fee-for-services to individuals and businesses to supplement their non-profit business (often with shared staff between the for-profit and non-profit arm) or have added a fee-for-service funding stream within their Center. These efforts also fueled growth, provided additional funding streams, and helped these Centers achieve financial self-sufficiency and sustainability.

**Securing Large, Multi-Year Funding**

The most successful strategy that helped the majority of Centers start-up, grow, and achieve financial stability has been securing large grants with multi-year funding (whether through Partners or directly with donors), often as part of regional initiatives implemented in multiple countries. These led to long-term donor relationships, opened the door to new donors and created opportunities for regional collaboration.

**Saving Reserve Funds**

During the maturity stage, Centers began looking to the future. Several Centers were able to set aside funds into a reserve fund, which became an important safety net when revenues decreased.

**Investing in Fixed Assets**

A few Centers bought their office space during their growth period as an investment for building financial stability and long-term sustainability, especially in the face of rising rents. However, experience shows this is done best when the Center also has saved some money in a reserve fund to avoid depleting cash resources that might be needed during financial declines.

**Increasing Cost Efficiencies**

The majority of Centers had to cut costs at one time or another to preserve financial stability and sustainability. Centers moved into smaller office space, shared office space and resources with other organizations, downsized staff and implemented other cost-cutting measures. In some cases staff volunteered their time for many months until funding increased. Such personal sacrifices are an indicator of admirable staff resiliency and commitment, which contributed to Center sustainability.

**Creating Flexible Human Resource Management Approaches**

Several Centers described changing their human resource management structure to rely less on a large permanent staff and more on a smaller core staff, with increased project-based staff hired on short-term contracts. The advantage of this scheme is its flexibility and lower fixed costs. The disadvantages are the increased difficulty of holding onto highly experienced and talented trainers, mediators and facilitators, which can negatively impact organizational capacity, effectiveness and growth. In addition, temporary consultants tend to not be as invested in building the institution, unless of course they rely on that institution for a sizable percentage of their income. The Centers that rely on contract-based labor try to mitigate these risks by securing multi-year project funding as much as possible.
4. Programs and Services: Innovation and Adaptability to Maintain Relevance

The Centers apply their process expertise to advance democratic change and conflict management through a variety of programmatic areas. There was an evolution in programs and services the Centers focused on over time as the Centers matured, their country context and needs changed (or Centers were opened in different contexts with different needs), and as the international development field changed (e.g., increased cross-sectoral work). As ‘process experts,’ the Centers were able to adapt their programs and services to meet new needs and take advantage of new opportunities. For example, many Centers opened in an environment lacking a strong civil society. Therefore, they spent their early years working hard to build civil society, including capacity building with nascent organizations, helping draft legislation that would create an enabling environment for NGOs to operate, and providing platforms for increasing civil society participation in public policy decision-making. Once that was firmly underway, they turned their attention to other problems, such as economic development and environmental sustainability.

As ‘process experts,’ the Centers were able to adapt their programs and services to meet new needs and take advantage of new opportunities.

Similarly, as the Centers developed their process expertise, many focused less on training (as a stand-alone activity) and conflict management services (such as mediation) and focused more on facilitating complex multi-stakeholder processes, as well as increased work on project design, monitoring and evaluation, conflict assessments and policy research. All Centers introduced new programs, services and participatory methodologies in their countries.

Number of Projects/Events and People Reached
The Centers have directly touched people’s lives through their programs and services, and indirectly affected the lives of countless others who live and work in the communities and countries where they work. Since 1991, the Centers have trained approximately 15,000 mediators, worked directly with over 300,000 participants, and benefitted an estimated 17.5 million people. These are conservative estimates and do not include the countless others who have been impacted by the Centers’ work as they have changed the attitudes, behaviors, relationships and social structures and institutions and contributed to new local and national policies and practices towards greater democratic change and conflict management.

Reputation and Recognition
The Centers are advancing good governance, civil society, inclusiveness, economic and environmental sustainability and conflict management at all levels of society. Through the participatory, collaborative processes the Centers use and the results they have achieved through their work, the Centers have gained positive reputations among their partner organizations and donors/clients. In addition, the majority of Centers have received media attention for their achievements and ongoing work. Many Centers and their directors and staff have been recognized for their achievements with awards and other forms of recognition.

The Centers use a variety of strategies to publicize their achievements and ongoing work, including publications and promotional materials, social media, publishing articles in journals and other media, presenting and participating at public events, media production and distribution of films and television episodes/series, and hiring a public relations firm to organize major media campaigns. In addition, many of the Centers have been interviewed for radio, television and print media and had case studies and other articles written about their work in journals and books. However, there is a wide gap in the Centers’ media coverage and visibility, with some Centers receiving very little media attention to others, such as Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia, that have 10 to 15 print articles and radio and TV interviews per year. Some partner organizations and donors-clients noted the lack of visibility of the Center they worked with and suggested increasing the visibility of the Centers and their work. This presents an opportunity for Centers to share their media strategies to help all members become more visible and recognized for their good work.

All Centers introduced new programs, services and participatory methodologies in their countries. Reading and hearing their stories, one is struck by the sheer number of ‘firsts’ the Centers brought to their countries. These are presented in the following table according to programmatic areas. However, the majority of these ‘firsts’ actually cut-across programmatic areas:
### Innovation and Country ‘Firsts’

#### Civil Society Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Firsts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1st academic course on ADR in University Law Departments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Albania, Jordan | 1st legislation on NGOs/NPOs  
|                | One of 1st non-profits in Georgia (1998) and who (with several others) is still active                                                                                                                     |
| Albania, Georgia | 1st Code of Ethics/Conduct for NPOs                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Czech Republic | 1st Street Law program – the only nation-wide probation program for youth, and accredited by the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Education.                                                           |
| Serbia       | 1st e-learning modules on democratic issues facing Serbia for university students                                                                                                                                               |
| Georgia      | 1st local service provider NGO working selling its services to for-profit companies                                                                                                                                 |

#### Good Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Firsts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>1st Code of Ethics for Municipal Government Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1st anti-corruption program using participatory approaches with local governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>1st regional conference on Anti-Corruption in Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1st use of cross-sector cooperative advocacy by a coalition of young scientists to engage citizens, NGOs, the municipal government and local agencies to address problems with their municipal water delivery system. The process improved water distribution and led to the financial recovery of the water company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan, Peru</td>
<td>1st time local government included citizen input into decision-making on budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1st time local governments created local socio-economic development plans through participatory processes with community engagement and the cooperation of 10 communities in a regional strategic planning effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>1st time internal election monitors had the capacity to monitor elections, which they deemed free and fair, without the need for external support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st time local governments included a gender lens, thereby improving public services to women and their families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st time citizens worked together and used advocacy skills during local elections to achieve common goals, thereby increasing the accountability of elected leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1st time CSOs engage in advocacy campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1st dialogue between civil society organizations from the public safety and human rights sector (two traditionally antagonistic groups), leading to consensus on several topics presented to the Federal Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st dialogue between civil society, the Legislative Branch and Executive Branch leading to the 1st legislation protecting victims’ rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>For the 1st time in two years, the members of the elected Mareb governorate council institution were able to meet regularly and discuss local issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st time local council members in five governorates were able to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as elected leaders due to 1st time capacity building training (e.g., strategic planning, project cycle management, participatory development, local authority law, fundraising, roles and responsibilities of local councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st time local tribal leaders, women and youth leaders dialogue with local and national officials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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20 Non-governmental organizations and non-profit organizations
### Inclusive Societies

| Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia | • 1st comprehensive ethnic integration program for Roma, including leadership development, small grants programs, new mediation/conciliation mechanisms to address local conflicts, and increased action by local/national government to increase access to medical care, education, social aid and employment. |
| Bulgaria | • 1st time children with emotional and behavioral challenges are defined as a new group of children at risk by key government ministries and institutions, and included in the country’s National Children’s Strategy (2008-2018), which led to improved public attitudes, improved approaches to working with these children, and improved care. |
| Yemen | • 1st program in the country that targeted women in rural districts of three important tribal areas that are remote and lack basic services. |

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### Conflict Management and Access to Justice

| Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Hungary, Kosovo, Brazil, Georgia, Jordan, Kosovo, Poland, Senegal, Slovakia | • 1st mediation programs in prisons |
| | • 1st mediation system for the criminal justice system nationwide |
| | • 1st mediation training (basic, advanced) for Kosovo Property Agency enabling them to speed up dispute resolution process and reduce their backlog of cases |
| | • 1st peer mediation/ADR programs in schools/universities |
| | • 1st peer mediation program at 2 universities in Jordan (and entire Arab world) |
| | • 1st mediation programs for the private sector - labor disputes (in Honduras) |
| | • 1st professional family mediation center in Warsaw |
| | • 1st mediation cases for social and commercial conflicts; collective bargaining |
| | • 1st community-based mediation/ethnic conciliation centers established to enable citizens and groups to amicably resolve their issue, thereby increase their access to justice |

| Argentina | • 1st legislation on mediation |
| Poland | • 1st Mediation Association |
| Slovakia | • 1st dialogue between Skinheads and Anarchists, which led to an agreement to end mutual violence |
| Argentina | • 1st online dialogue platform that facilitated discussions among diverse civil society actors on mining activities and conflict in Argentina and Latin America, followed by increased participation of mining companies in conflict transformation efforts |
| Argentina | • 1st dialogue that resolved conflicts between unions, Urban Recycler Cooperatives and the Municipal Solid Waste Collection of the local government in Buenos Aires |
G. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

There are many lessons learned and recommendations peppered throughout the discussion above. What follows are highlights and other recommendations not previously discussed.

1) Investing in Sustainable Impact for Democratic Change

Partners’ experience of investing in Centers for over 20 years and the Centers’ experiences in becoming mature and sustainable organizations making demonstrable contributions to democratic change and conflict management lead to several lessons learned and recommendations for sustainable impact investing:

Partners’ hypothesis for how to achieve its mission proved right – that democratic change is advanced through sustainable impact investment that recognizes: (1) the importance of investing in local partners and building their capacity to promote democratic change; (2) the most pressing development challenges facing the world need to be addressed in a participatory manner with the input and shared commitment of government, businesses and civil society, which requires local leaders with sophisticated skills in change and conflict management; and (3) the work of social entrepreneurs to make a difference in their own countries is strengthened and legitimated by technical and relational support from an international network of like-minded professionals facing similar challenges.

Impact investing is premised on the concept and application of social entrepreneurship – in Partners’ case investing in social entrepreneurs to initiate ongoing peaceful and societal change – and extending this to an investment beyond the individual to also establish a sustainable institutional platform to uphold these entrepreneurs’ vision and work.

Keys to Partners building authentic partnerships with Centers:

- Selecting the ‘Right’ Social Entrepreneur as Center Directors
- Global Brand Recognition, Credibility and Legitimacy
- Financial Resources, Marketing and Business Development
- Training and Capacity Building
- Technical and Organizational Development Assistance
- Jointly Managing Programs and Working on Regional Initiatives
- Networking, Bridge Building and Catalyst for Collaboration
- Accompaniment

Invest in Country Assessments
The country assessment phase is extremely important in order to determine whether a Partners’ Center is warranted, could develop a niche and business model, and could achieve sustainability. Such an assessment could also determine whether Partners’ best approach is to establish new Centers or work with existing institutions and bring them into the PDCI network. The latter approach worked successfully with the Center in Romania in 1997 and most recently with the newest Center in El Salvador in 2013. If a country assessment leads to the decision to invest in a new Center, the assessment results should then guide the process of selecting a Center director and ensure there is sufficient start-up funding to allow for successful incubation for at least two years.
**Invest in Institutions**

One of Partners’ most important roles is selecting the right social entrepreneur to lead a new Center. The SLP and this evaluation found that investing in a single leader was critical but not sufficient to build a successful organization. A key recommendation is to ensure enough seed capital to also invest in the local Center as an institution and its management team for long-lasting development. The shift to a greater focus on the institution beyond the individual leader is also important for ensuring that Centers continue to thrive when their founding leader leaves the organization.

**Select the Right Leaders**

Successful Center directors are passionate and committed to building a culture of change and conflict management. They also exhibit key characteristics and skills in four areas: personal leadership style; internal organizational and staff management skills; donor relationships; and technical skills. This evaluation found that the directors of the four ‘failed’ Centers lacked one or more of these characteristics and skill sets or they lacked the passion and commitment to building a culture of change and conflict management.

**Provide Two to Three Years of Guaranteed Start-up Funding**

Experience shows that the most successful model for Center start-up was when the Centers were provided with two to three years of guaranteed funding to support organizational development, operational expenses and project work. For new Centers to develop and flourish, there needs to be donor interest in the country, and preferably a diverse pool of potential funders from government, civil society and private sector, including in-country and international donors with which to partner.

**Phased Model of Center Development**

The Centers tend to go through common stages of development, from incubation and reliance on Partners, to growth and a transition period of increased independence from Partners, to maturity and sustainability. Partners should develop a phased model of Center development with a set of activities to support Centers that fits their stage of development and helps them move from incubation to growth and to maturity and sustainability. Two suggestions are offered:

- Develop a **codified curricula** covering all the organizational development modules that experience shows are important to support Center startup, incubation and growth towards independence, maturity and sustainability.
- Develop **clearer Written Agreements** between Partners and Centers that specify roles and responsibilities over time, recognizing the different stages of the relationship between Partners, PDCI and the Centers.

**Cohort Training and Tailored Training and Technical Assistance**

For new Center development under the SLP model, offer a mix of cohort training in Partners’ basics – methodologies, programs and services, organizational management and development – and tailored training and technical assistance that meets the needs of individual Centers, such as donor outreach and accompaniment, marketing and financial management, and to fill specific gaps that new directors and their staff might have.

**Consistent Presence and Coaching**

Partners plays a key role in new Center development by providing hands-on technical and organizational development assistance and coaching. However, Partners has not provided such hands-on coaching consistently. The SLP Evaluation suggested that Partners build in more time for its staff to be in the center coaching new directors, sharing strategies and approaches, asking pertinent questions, and focusing the director/leader on his/her strengths and those of the Center staff.

**Accompaniment**

Accompaniment is a form of coaching that has worked well for helping Center staff increase their capacity for business development. Partners is encouraged to intensify this support and ensure all Centers are provided this support so critical during the incubation stage.
Ensure Partners’ Value-Added Role as Centers Mature

The Centers and donors believe Partners clearly plays an important role in the initial establishment of new Centers and supporting them through the start-up phase. As the Centers become less dependent on Partners and the relationship changes towards more authentic partnerships, the challenge for Partners is to adapt the value-added it brings to the relationship. Some donors questioned Partners value-added when they no longer saw a need for the intermediary role played by Partners once the Centers were capable of working independently. However, the primary message Centers and donors had for Partners was keep doing what you’re doing and do more of it! Partners continues to play several important roles that it can strengthen to benefit individual Centers and the PDCI network as a whole:

- **Ongoing capacity building and technical assistance**: This was the most frequent request by Centers for Partners role in the future, especially among younger Centers.

- **Showcase new methodologies and cutting-edge best practices**: Similar to the first recommendation, Partners can bring the Centers the latest and greatest in new methodologies and best practices in order to remain leaders in the field of democratic change and conflict management and prevent stagnation. Partners has the largest network and research capacity to make this happen. In addition, Partners can lead or coordinate efforts within the network to identify new methodologies and best practices based on the Centers’ experiences. The working groups established in PDCI are an effort in this direction that can be strengthened through Partners’ leadership.

- **Market PDCI and individual Centers**: A key request by Centers was for Partners (and PDCI Brussels) to increase its marketing and fundraising efforts for the network and individual Centers to donors and other organizations. More aggressive marketing of publications produced by network members is another way to increase visibility and reputation.

- **Create greater opportunities for collaboration within the PDCI Network**: One of the most valued aspects of Partners’ support (and the PDCI network) is the opportunities they have provided for Centers to work with like-minded professionals toward common goals. The cross-cutting expertise and common niche areas shared by Partners and Centers are an untapped resource that Partners is uniquely able to leverage for new business development and greater impact.

- **Leading the PDCI Network**: As the primary leader of the PDCI network, Partners has the opportunity to continue building the network and helping it reach its potential to support Centers and their work for greater sustainability and impact. Given that PDCI Brussels and the Centers also have responsibility for leading and strengthening the network, areas for improvement are explored separately below. Some of these overlap with Partners’ specific role.

- **Securing and managing regional programs**: Many of the Centers reported that they appreciated the regional programs that Partners was able to secure and manage in coordination with the Centers as implementing partners. Most recently Partners has had success is convening coalitions of international and local organizations, including PDCI members in new regional initiatives, channeling both technical and financial resources and ensuring that the know-how and connections are brought back to the PDCI network.

- **Helping to represent PDCI in international platforms**: The Washington, DC based team is now operating as a formal hub together with the Brussels office to also represent the PDCI network in several international platforms, such as the Open Government Partnership and the Global Compact for Business and Human Rights. Partners is able to aggregate the experience and reach of the network to promote the “Partners’ way” as a collective civil society actor on the global stage.
Quality Control

Partners’ brand is the key intangible asset held by Partners and the Centers. The weakness of Partners’ approach is it lacks a systematic, standardized method of appraisal and of quality control measures for PDCI members, which puts the Partners brand at risk. As the PDCI network expands, a growing concern is quality control and protecting the Partners brand. Partners and the Centers need to address this issue in a way that respects and values the independence of Centers, while promoting high standards among them. Suggestions include developing a code of conduct, professional standards, and monitoring mechanisms to assess network members’ performance.

2) Strengthening the PDCI Network

The Centers, donors and partner organizations see clear benefits of the PDCI network. At the same time, several recommendations emerged from the evaluation that led to restructuring the network in 2012, especially the role of Partners in Washington, DC and the PDCI office in Brussels. Other recommendations that remain relevant include:

Improve Collaboration Among Network Members

Continue to improve collaboration among network members by strengthening working groups, joint projects and consultancies (especially regional and global initiatives), being more strategic, offering equal opportunities for members to participate in collaborative initiatives and fundraising, increasing communication through more frequent face-to-face meetings, and a joint database. A special effort has been made to respond to the recommendation that Center staff (not just directors) be included in the work of PDCI, evidenced by the first ever PDCI Summit in Washington, DC in 2012 that convened three to four staff members from each Center together for the first time.

Increase Internal Joint Capacity Building and Learning

Members recognize there is a wealth of expertise within the network and want more opportunities to learn from their peers, going deeper than hearing brief descriptions of the work members are doing to being trained and coached by their peers so they can improve existing programs and services and perhaps introduce new initiatives. Donors and other organizations familiar with PDCI also called for increased training and exposure to international best practices within PDCI through, for example, deployment of local staff from one Center to another Center. Center-to-Center training and support is often built into projects on an ad hoc basis and has been an effective way to leverage the expertise, ‘best practices,’ and successes within the network. There is a need to find resources for more systematic Center-to-Center training and support in programmatic areas that can be replicated or adapted across countries (e.g., anti-corruption programs). Similarly, there is need for more Center-to-Center training and support for organizational development (e.g., fundraising strategies, media campaigns).

While financial constraints have been one reason for less than desired face-time and opportunities for joint learning, scaling up what has already proven successful is a cost-effective means of utilizing scarce resources, while simultaneously achieving greater impact.21 Identifying which programs have the most likely opportunity, need and interest among members for being scaled up would be a good starting point (e.g., anti-corruption, mediation, working with legislators). Scaling up PDCI substantive areas would be another sound investment and perhaps an attractive reason for donors to fund PDCI capacity building.

Clear Vision, Common Goals and Platform for PDCI

Building on the previous recommendation and given the vast expertise within the network, one recommendation is to identify areas of specialization within PDCI so as to develop a clear framework for the collective thematic and methodological expertise as a network. In turn, this would boost branding and legitimacy of the network as a whole and expand marketing opportunities.

Programmatic Statements

Develop programmatic statements that set out the theory of change, approach and methodologies for each area of common work identified (e.g., good governance, inclusive societies, conflict management, sustainability).

**Evaluation Plan**

Develop an evaluation plan for each area of common work, which is tied to a theory of change and includes a set of measurable indicators. In addition, develop a plan for regularly collecting key data about activities conducted (e.g., “firsts,” trainings, mediation cases, cooperative planning processes), people reached (directly, indirectly), and results.

3) Contributing to Democratic Change

The analysis of Centers’ work and contributions to advancing democratic change shows the most significant results are achieved when the Centers work to effect change in both social agents and social structures. In addition, these efforts are most successful and far-reaching when they include changing key people – influential leaders and decision makers – as well as many people in the public at large. The Centers have successfully worked with civil society organizations to strengthen their capacity and build relationships to form networks, coalitions, and other partnerships that increase their ability to affect key people, many people and social structures. The Centers are advised to increase their focus on institutionalizing democratic change and conflict management practices in government agencies to ensure sustainability of their achievements.

This evaluation is the first attempt to identify a broad theory of change applicable to Partners’ and the Centers’ work. It is also the first attempt to use the RPP framework to describe and analyze the Centers’ work. The PDCI network will continue this endeavor in order to strengthen the network and articulate a clear conceptual and practical framework to guide its work in the future.
A special thanks to the GE Foundation for their support of the Partners’ Sustainable Leadership Program and this evaluation.