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Editorial – Associations of grantmakers: why should we care about them?

David Bonbright

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On 16-17 October 2000, some 300 leading citizens of Pakistan came together in Islamabad in a major national conference. The head of state set the stage. Government ministers, many other senior public officials, and leaders from business, media and civil society organizations conferred vigorously for two days.

At the climax of their deliberations, they launched a new national organization. What was the topic that had captured the Pakistani national imagination in late 2000? It was not Kashmir, nuclear proliferation or political democratization. It was *indigenous philanthropy* – and, specifically, indigenous philanthropy as a resource for sustainable development.

Nor is Pakistan the only developing country to take concrete action towards self-reliance in this way. Over the past decade more than two dozen countries in the developing world have established formal programmes to promote indigenous philanthropy. The fledgling Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy is but the most recent of these.

I believe that these and related events signal a major point of arrival for the organizations of civil society in the developing world. In turning to their own societies for support, civil society organizations established for public benefit – to facilitate self-help among the poor,

to educate, to promote health, to enable artistic and cultural expression – are doing far more than raising funds where they live. They are grounding themselves irrevocably in their own societies. Given the imbalances of power, wealth and cultural presence in our world today, this is a far more difficult step than one might imagine. Yet moving towards self-reliance is, paradoxically, the best way to move ahead in today's 'globalized' world.

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