



KCDF: Governance Compounding Complexity

By June 2019, Janet Mawiyoo, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF), and her executive team had reached the conclusion that it was no longer viable for the Foundation, which carried out the organisation's development activities, to be so integrally involved in the operations of the investments activities of the KCDF Trust, the latter having been established in the mid-2000s to manage and grow the assets of the Foundation. She wanted to find a way of ensuring that she could have more time to focus on her core work at the Foundation, so that the Trust's activities were managed effectively and that it could act in a decisive and timely manner to grow the Foundation's assets.

KCDF Origins

Founded in 1997, KCDF's origins lay in the vision of a number of development-conscious Kenyans^a to change the way in which community development took place in Kenya. Research conducted by the Ford Foundation in 1993 had shown that although millions of Kenyan shillings had been spent on community development in the previous 30 years, the communities in which this development had taken place were actually getting poorer.¹ The concern of KCDF's founders was that the communities themselves had not been sufficiently involved in the development process. The founders believed that the conventional project funding model that development aid institutions were using at the time simply perpetuated community dependence on aid because the model did not empower the communities or build on their indigenous and contextual knowledge. It simply sought to implement solutions identified and defined from an outside lens.²

In their view, this was not true development. They used a metaphor of the sinking of a well to illustrate their thinking. "Development is the story behind the well... most development agencies are happy to just help a community sink a well, get a water pump and say 'Hurrah, we have clean water, we have done our job'... We were arguing that just getting the well is not enough – because *that* isn't the development," said Monica Mutuku, founding director of KCDF. "The development, we were arguing, is the story behind the well; it's how you get the well that's important. Did you build local capacities? Did you change attitudes? Did you help the community to think differently? Did you help them to see that you are not going to be there to repair the well?"³

In a process that the Ford Foundation funded, the founders deliberated for more than a year before coming up with a new community foundation model that was somewhat different from the foundation model used

^a Elkanah Odembo, Aleke Dondo, Dr Joyce Malombe, Monica Mutuku, Elvina Mutua and Harry Mugwanga. [Source: KCDF (2019), "Our Team", available at: www.kcdf.or.ke/index.php/about-us/our-team/#kcdf-founders (accessed 15 November 2019).]

This case was prepared by senior lecturer Dr Bhekinkosi Moyo with research associate Claire Beswick. It is intended for classroom use only. It is not intended to demonstrate effective or ineffective handling of a business situation.