

# **FINAL REPORT**

## **EVALUATION OF THE SYNERGOS INSTITUTE PROGRAM:**

**“Enhancing the Resource Base for Development in Brazil, Mexico  
and Mozambique”**

Co-financed by USAID Office of Private Voluntary Co-operation  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Author's Note of Thanks	
List of Acronyms	
Evaluation Profile Sheet	
Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations	i
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Program Background	1
3.0 Program Effectiveness:	4
3.1 Program Approach	4
3.2 Common Issues within the Program	5
3.3 The Mozambique Program	11
3.4 The Mexico Program	25
3.5 The Brazil Program	41
3.6 The Headquarters Program, and Notes on Program Management	55
3.7 Cross-Cutting Issues:	62
Sustainability	
New Tools and Approaches	
Partnership	
4.0 Lessons Learned and Recommendations: Programming and Management	66
5.0 Conclusions	70

### ANNEXES:

Ann. I:	Note on Method, including references
Ann. II:	Table A: Program Strengths and Weaknesses (by program)
Ann. III:	Table B: Progress against DIP Results
Ann. IV:	Table C: Partnerships

## AUTHOR'S NOTE of THANKS

Evaluators require the help of a lot of people to do their work. That work requires the people and organizations involved to adjust their daily routine to accommodate the schedule and logistical requirements of the evaluator, as well as engaging with the substance of the evaluation and the inevitable followup on detail. This evaluation was no exception—indeed was more complicated than many, with its focus on programs in Mozambique, Mexico and Brazil which included dozens of organizations, as well as multiple funders, of which the largest was USAID. Over the space of nearly four months, I spoke with dozens of people in four countries, some of them several times. Their names are listed in the annexed Note on Method. Because so many people were involved in this project in diverse ways, I have not singled out individuals in this note. My work has been greatly facilitated by the welcome and support given to me by Synergos staff and by Synergos' partner organizations in all three countries, as well as by Synergos staff in the Institute's head office in New York City. The responsible officer of the USAID Office of Private Voluntary Co-operation was also very helpful with his observations about the program, and with advice on the organization of the Report. Everyone I spoke to thought carefully about the issues in their co-operation over the years, and gave generously of their time and energy to pass on their analyses, conclusions and suggestions. My task has been to synthesize and assess a wealth of information and insight, and to play back the resulting commentary, conclusions and recommendations to the participants and supporters of the program. This task has been challenging but always hugely interesting, and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to do it. It follows that any errors of judgment or misrepresentation in this Report are mine. Nevertheless, I hope both participants and supporters find the Report useful for their work now and in the future.

John Saxby  
Pretoria, South Africa  
December 15, 2005

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADC	Association for Community Development (Mozambique)
BPP	Border Partnership Program (Mexico & U.S.)
CBO	community-based organization
CDRA	Community Development Resource Association (South Africa)
CTA	Confederation of Economic Associations of Mozambique
CEMEFI	Mexican Centre for Philanthropy
CF(s)	community foundation(s)
CFG	Community Foundations Group (Mexico)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management (Netherlands)
EOP	End of Project
FIRJAN	Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)
FDC	Foundation for Community Development (Mozambique)
GIFE	Group of Institutes, Foundations and Enterprises (Brazil)
HQ	headquarters
IAF	Inter-American Foundation
MG	Matching Grant
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	non-government organization
OD	organizational development
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PVC	Office of Private Voluntary Co-operation (USAID)
PVO	private voluntary organization
SAGA	Southern Africa Grantmakers' Association
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WINGS	Worldwide Initiative for Grantmaker Support (USA)

## EVALUATION PROFILE SHEET:

**PVO Name:** The Synergos Institute,  
9 East 69<sup>th</sup> St.,  
New York, NY 10021

**Co-operative Agreement Number:** HFP-A-00-02-00015-00

**Country Program Sites:** Mozambique; Mexico; Brazil

### Names of Principal Partners:

Mozambique: Fundação para Desenvolvimento da Comunidade (FDC)  
Mexico: CEMEFI – Centro Mexicano para Filantropia; Community  
Foundations Group (CFG)  
Brazil: Grupo de Institutos, Fundações, e Empresas (GIFE); Instituto  
Rio; Fundação Abrinq

**Duration of Grant:** June 2002 – Sept. 2005, with extension for final expenditures to  
Dec. 31, 2005

### Beneficiary Populations:

Direct: Staff of partner organizations: mainly young to mid-career adults,  
approximately 300 in total. Gender ratio: not known—estimated at 50/50.

Indirect: Members of vulnerable communities served by partner organizations  
and their networks. Social profiles not constructed during this evaluation.

### Matching Grant Totals:

USAID:	US\$ 1,499,891	
Synergos match:	US\$ 1,499,891	<b>Total: \$2,999,782</b>

### Funds Disbursed to Nov 30, 2005:

USAID funds:	\$1,499,891
Synergos match:	\$1,327,501
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$2,827,392</b>

**Date DIP approved by PVC:** March 2004; revised DIP submitted in July 2003.

**Evaluation Start Date:** Aug. 6, 2005      **End Date:** Jan. 24, 2006

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### (1) Common Issues within the Program:

#### *Framing the program: the primacy of context*

The program planning documents underplay the wider socio-political and institutional contexts and their influence on capacity issues facing foundations in Mozambique, Mexico or Brazil, or their implications for Synergos' capacity development strategies. The goals and objectives for each country are similar, so that the program appears generic, rather than crafted to respond to the challenges of philanthropy in the three countries. Respondents in all programs emphasized the specifics of the environments in which they worked, marked not by homogeneity but by complexity, diversity and dynamism. The programming challenge has been to adapt to the special circumstances of time and place, people and organizations.

Synergos' work with intermediary organizations poses a key question for the Institute and its counterparts: what conditions need to be in place if a partnership is to work well? Synergos and its counterparts have built on existing relationships which offered familiarity and trust. In retrospect, both sides should have scrutinized more thoroughly their *institutional readiness* for the program.

Synergos and its partner organizations prepared for the program by studying the philanthropic environment in each country. **It is recommended** that future programs build on this practice, factoring into their rationale an analysis of the national, institutional and operational contexts so as to create a sharper setting for the program strategy and objectives. (Text, p. 7)

#### *Framing the program: acknowledging partners' roles*

A forthright examination of the main partners' expected roles in the program, especially those of Synergos, would complement the analysis of the institutional context of the program. There seem to have been mismatched expectations and/or a lack of clarity about roles within some of the key organizational relationships in the program. A deliberate negotiation and a benchmarking statement of roles at the outset might have anticipated some of these difficulties.

Synergos' multiple roles within the program—fundraiser, interlocutor with USAID and manager of donor funds; program partner to Southern organizations; networker and organizer of technical assistance—do not fit easily together. Their aggregate weight may also have unbalanced some of the program partnerships.

#### *Achievements beyond the plan: leveraging new resources*

Synergos' work in Mexico offers an example of effective leveraging of new resources. Its success in obtaining the USAID grant and related matching funds and its profile as a supporter of the community foundations network helped to secure complementary

funding to support Mexican CFs. This is a great deal larger than the original USAID grant (p. 39).

Leveraging is part of Synergos' *modus operandi*. Accordingly, **it is recommended that** USAID treat resource leveraging as part of the rationale for supporting NGOs like Synergos, acknowledging the multiplier effect on public funds.

***Achievements within the plan and beyond: organizational and individual learning***

Participants in all programs spoke highly of the personal and organizational learning that took place. It went beyond planned activities, techniques of foundation management or conventional approaches to capacity development. Examples included:

- The complexity of capacity development and the centrality of intangibles like legitimacy, confidence and commitment. These have no toolkit.
- Understanding organizational development in civil society as strengthening a culture of civic responsibility and participation.
- The necessity of developing a Mexican, Brazilian or Mozambican interpretation of the foundation “model”.
- Different methodologies of institutional development, from training workshops to tailored programs of coaching and accompaniment.
- The necessity of developing capacity within the community at large to complement capacity within foundations.

The challenge now is to systematize participants' experiences. Instructive examples already exist within the program. The most important resources in this program are its people, their knowledge, and their relationships. Organizational learning is an investment in these resources, not a cost of operating a foundation. Synergos' most valuable contribution may be its capacity to bring together the people and money to make this happen.

**(2) The Mozambique Program:**

The summary assessment of the Mozambique program can be simply stated: the long-established partnership between FDC and Synergos remained cordial during the grant period, but the partners were largely ineffective in moving forward their main agenda of strengthening FDC as a strategic grantmaking foundation.

***Conclusions and recommendations on the Mozambique program:***

*The validity of “the foundation model”:* Synergos' work with FDC rests on the “explicit assumption that the foundation model has a unique capacity.” But, Synergos' partner is a “hybrid” entity which differs from the classical philanthropic model. The tension between these two perspectives shows the need for sharper analysis of the fit between foundation “models” and organizational realities in Mozambique.

*Framing program objectives:* The three program objectives would be more useful if they were more specific, their relative importance clear, and their budgets noted. The same issue arises in the Mexico program. Accordingly, from the experience of these programs (pp. 12 and 29), **it is recommended that** Synergos and its partners ensure that:

- program objectives are tailored to the specific capacity issues and priorities of the organizations concerned;
- the relationships and priority order among the components of the program strategy, and the corresponding objectives, are clear;
- resource allocations for each program objective are clear;
- indicators are explained as markers for the program objectives. In many instances the indicators used provide interesting information about the program, but do not tap the essence of the objective.

*Risks and enabling assumptions* are essential in any program framework and should be prominent in the presentation of objectives. A summary assessment of the feasibility of each objective is required, as well the manageability and feasibility of the ensemble. Synergos staff believe these issues were not dealt with thoroughly enough before the program began. Therefore, **it is recommended that** in the design of future programs, Synergos and its partners give more comprehensive and systematic attention to risks and their mitigation strategies, and to enabling assumptions (p. 13).

*Objective #2, strengthening the Synergos/FDC partnership:* Both organizations have learned about the complexities of institutional partnership. Both want to continue their longstanding collaboration, and both can contribute to redefining their partnership. FDC is interested to exchange knowledge and experience with their program counterparts in Mexico and Brazil. **It is recommended,** therefore, that Synergos convene a face-to-face and electronic exchange among its program partners, to reflect on their work together during the USAID Matching Grant initiative and to examine future co-operation (p.14).

The two organizations could have managed their partnership better:

- Broader participation in the design of the program could have created wider knowledge within FDC about the purpose, resources and parameters of the program, and thus greater buy-in. A task-group approach would be one way of doing this.
- The program budget should be part of any future joint design and management process.
- The ownership of the program appears to have been uneven. FDC staff saw it as based within the management and governance of the Foundation. There appear to have been mismatched expectations about what was possible or desirable. At different times Synergos wanted to move the program forward, but the Foundation had other priorities, particularly a protracted strategic planning process.

*Objective #1, strengthening FDC as a strategic grantmaking organization:* Strengthening FDC “as a grantmaking foundation” was probably a premature objective. It may have been more realistic to strengthen the grantmaking *function* within FDC. Executive turnover was a factor as well. For nearly 18 months in the middle of the grant period, FDC was without a fulltime ED, a senior executive with a mandate to implement



the FDC/Synergos program. The program itself had financial targets, but included many broader OD activities. In retrospect, it seems too ambitious—it depended on an expeditious process of organizational change within FDC.

*Objective #3, Building capacity with Mozambican NGOs.* In light of their difficulties with the first two objectives, little was accomplished on this one. There is a positive suggestion from FDC staff, that Synergos establish a small team of resource persons—not necessarily within FDC—with the mandate and skill to support OD within Mozambican CSOs. **It is recommended that** Synergos explore this idea (p. 23).

*To conclude:* FDC’s protracted process of organizational change appears to have imposed real limitations on what it could achieve with Synergos. Synergos and FDC staff organized several initiatives in OD and resource mobilization which addressed key issues for FDC, and which participants said they valued highly. These activities generated ideas, skills and working relationships which are potential assets for both the individuals involved and for FDC as a whole. Realizing this potential is the challenge for FDC’s leadership

**(3) The Mexico Program:** The participants in the Mexico program can point to substantial progress achieved in the period of the USAID grant, its resources significantly augmented by others that Synergos and CEMEFI secured. Individually and collectively, the CFs are stronger than they were three years ago, although they still face a difficult road ahead. CEMEFI is more effective in providing support to the CFG than it was when the program began. As an external support organization, Synergos has a better understanding of which capacity-building methodologies are most effective in this context. There are outstanding questions to be resolved within the web of organizational relationships. An agreement on roles and the related division of labour between CEMEFI and Synergos, including the parties’ place within the CFG, would be a real asset in their future co-operation.

*Contextual factors* significantly influenced the program. Participants argued that community foundations in Mexico are part of the broader process of consolidating democracy—of building democratic institutions and a democratic political culture, and promoting active citizenship. Capacity development programming in this context means focusing on governance and co-operation between CFs and the wider community, especially civil society. *Intangibles* are critical in this process—confidence, a sense of identity and a commitment to social responsibility and civic participation, especially by people historically excluded from public life. In these circumstances, the suitability of “the foundation model” needs to be demonstrated, not asserted.

The institutional setting, secondly, is especially relevant. The core relationship between CEMEFI and Synergos co-exists with other actors, notably the Community Foundations Group. As CFs grow and mature, the environment becomes more complex, requiring good co-ordination and communication among the different actors, and transparent decisionmaking.

*Objective #2, strengthening the CEMEFI/Synergos partnership:* This partnership predates this program, and the two organizations have stated their wish to continue working together. In practice, this objective includes Synergos' co-operation with individual CFs and the CFG. Balancing these two domains of partnership has been one of the major challenges for all participants. CEMEFI and Synergos planned their work together over three-plus years, with the CFG Consultative Group an effective forum. They delivered all the items in their workplan, and worked together well to secure extra resources from bodies such as the Inter-American foundation. CFs spoke well of Synergos' readiness to adjust its capacity-building methods towards a more customized approach, relying on coaching rather than training. Senior Fellows were valued as a means of access to others' experience.

The difficulties in the partnership included a basic imbalance: Synergos, as raiser and manager of USAID funds, in effect took on part of the donor's role. CEMEFI did not bring its own financial resources to the table, so that the imbalance in control of finances also unbalanced the autonomy of each party and their accountability to each other. There was also tension between the two over Synergos' decision to work directly with CFs in the last year of the program. CEMEFI preferred that Synergos work through its channels as the national body.

*Objective #1, strengthening CEMEFI's capacity to deliver capacity-building services to Mexican foundations:* In the first part of the grant period, the partners planned and carried out a capacity building program with CFs, relying heavily on training workshops. These generated limited lasting benefit for the foundations. Synergos staff learned that if the CFs did not have their own OD agenda and an effective leadership, workshops had little developmental impact. In 2004/05, Synergos used matching funds to assist individual foundations to develop their own OD plan, and to provide technical assistance in the form of a consultant. It is unclear whether CEMEFI will buy into this approach – discussions continue. The support from CEMEFI and Synergos has been instrumental in the growth of the CF network from 6 foundations at the start of the decade to nearly 20 today, and as a membership organization CEMEFI is stronger for their presence. Differences emerged over strategies for capacity development, CEMEFI arguing that technical assistance to foundations was not the best approach.

Programming roles are at issue here: should CEMEFI as a national representative body provide OD services to its members, or should it encourage and co-ordinate others' services? A division of labour between CEMEFI and Synergos would be a better approach in principle; this may depend on the ability of the CFG to negotiate these roles with the two bodies.

*Objective #3, to strengthen the technical and financial base of 24 members of the non-profit sector:* In practice, this objective was narrowed to strengthening the 19 members of the CFG. Program participants can legitimately claim real progress on this objective: CFs are now stronger individually and collectively. CFs cited their own growth in assets, staff and programs over the grant period. They know more about each other, and have a

stronger sense of collective identity. The CFG is better organized, and in its strategic thinking engages issues like its autonomy, and the nature of a Mexican CF. At the same time, challenges remain. Individually and collectively, the CFs are still heavily dependent on external resources and friendship; local resource mobilization is imperative. The CFs are at different stages of organizational growth and maturity, so their OD assets and needs differ markedly, and devising a capacity development agenda is correspondingly complex.

**(4) The Brazil Program:** For Synergos and its counterparts, the core issue in their work in Brazil is promoting understanding and practice of a different philanthropy—a philanthropy for social change that is civic, rather than corporate or clerical. This requires working with diverse organizations that are interested in this approach, and its tools—local resource mobilization to build endowments, and investment in the form of grants to civil society at the community level in order to promote social change. Synergos has worked with diverse organizations to do so—NGOs and an association, as well as a small number of grantmaking foundations, including the first CFs in Brazil.

*Premises of the program:* The program aimed to strengthen Synergos’ partnership with GIFE, an association promoting private social investment in Brazil; to provide capacity-building services for up to 30 grantmaking foundations; and to consolidate Instituto Rio and Abrinq as model grantmakers. Key assumptions that seemed plausible when the program was designed proved in practice to be flawed. Brazilian foundations had limited interest in grantmaking to support community-level CSOs, nor in related functions like endowment development and management. In retrospect, the initial analysis overestimated the grantmaking function within the philanthropic sector, as well as the demand for Synergos’ related services. In these circumstances, a technical assistance program to promote grantmaking foundations was premature. In addition, Synergos’ working relations with key partners needed more work to cultivate the mutual confidence that would sustain a program of institutional development.

Synergos effectively re-cast the program on two axes:

- With its partners, Synergos has sought to influence the Brazilian discourse on philanthropy, introducing and promoting concepts of community foundations, mobilizing local resources for investing in civil society and social change, using tools like endowments and grantmaking.
- Synergos has provided practical support to the OD agendas of a group of diverse organization interested in new forms of philanthropy. These include NGOs, grantmakers, and the first Brazilian CFs. There is also a nascent network of grantmaking entities.

*Objectives #1 & #2, strengthening the GIFE/Synergos partnership and providing capacity-building services to grantmaking organizations:*

- GIFE and Synergos have built a solid partnership to support GIFE as a representative body (becoming a network) promoting private social investment in Brazil. GIFE aims to be a source and a forum for ideas. An example is an electronic version of

*Alliance* magazine in Portuguese, a year's production and distribution financed by Synergos.

- Synergos has broadened its partnerships to include other foundations as well as NGOs and other CSOs interested in philanthropy for social change. Not all are grantmaking entities, although Synergos has helped to create a fledgling network of grantmakers.
- Working with GIFE members and these other organizations, Synergos has organized capacity-building activities intended to introduce concepts and practices in community philanthropy, and to respond to related OD agendas—resource mobilization, endowment building and management, communications and marketing, grantmaking program design, and so on. The organizations involved have responded positively, drawing on Synergos' resources such as Senior Fellows to move on resource-mobilization and endowment-building strategies.

These programming initiatives have worked well because there exists active interest and leadership among the Brazilian organizations involved, complemented by a flexible and timely response by Synergos.

*Objective #3, strengthening Abrinq and Instituto Rio as model grantmakers.* This objective is misplaced. Abrinq is a hybrid organization, with only one of nine programs based on grantmaking. Its endowment is a contingency reserve fund for close-out. Instituto Rio, Brazil's first CF, has been preoccupied with surviving its first years. It is now established with a strong board and good executive leadership. Synergos has played a vital role in this achievement.

Synergos has nonetheless made a substantial contribution to Abrinq, a prominent and effective children's rights organization. A Senior Fellow, Nelson Colón of the Puerto Rico CF, visited Abrinq twice in 2003 and 2004, and make a seminal contribution to the its longterm strategic plan, and its action program. He did so when Abrinq was facing a leadership crisis, and helped the organization regain its sense of direction and purpose.

For Synergos, Instituto Rio is its "greatest success story" in Brazil. The Institute has brought new Board members to the foundation, has provided administrative backup and technical assistance (in the form of Senior Fellows), has maintained a regular dialogue on strategic issues and has helped Board members in making contacts with international foundations. Instituto Rio has just established Brazil's first Community Trust Fund, and has begun a program of grantmaking to community-based organizations in its tough home neighbourhood of Rio's West Zone. A program of capacity-building accompanies its grants, and the foundation is encouraging its grantees to form a network for mutual support and community organization.

## **(5) The Headquarters Program:**

Synergos' HQ program aimed to strengthen its own systems of managing and supporting field programs. The Institute revised its systems of financial administration and trained its staff in their use. The coverage of the training was complete for New York-based

staff, less so for field staff. Financial reporting had been “a vexing problem” for Synergos during the program; field staff are still frustrated by their inability to secure timely and accurate reports on their budgets from Synergos’ Finance department.

During the grant period Synergos also installed a new planning and budgeting system. This is outcomes-based, and includes a monitoring and evaluation framework.

In both areas, the structures of more effective program management systems are in place; the test will be their use in the years ahead.

One observation and three recommendations follow (pp. 57/58):

- Reasonable deadlines **for compiling monthly financial program reports** are as follows. Field offices can complete monthly reports and send them electronically to HQ within *one week* of monthend. HQ should provide draft composite program expense and performance-to-budget reports to field offices and program managers within *the month*.
- **It is recommended that** the Institute use a programmatic basis for its budgeting and financial reporting, rather than the line expenditure categories used for the USAID grant and continued in the Institute’s 2006 plan. Such a budget would allow Synergos to show how it planned to apply its various resources to its programmatic purposes in the countries where it operates, and to report on their actual expenditure.
- As part of that process, **it is recommended that** Synergos present staff costs as a *programming resource and expense*. Synergos’ staff are *the* key program resource for the organization. Its budgets should reflect this reality.
- Finally, **it is recommended** that Synergos invest at least 2.5% of its programming budget in evaluation. Evaluation is a key resource for organizational learning.

## (6) Conclusion:

*Was the grant effective?* Yes, with qualifiers. The programming supported by the USAID grant and by the independent donors’ matching funds was certainly effective in Brazil and Mexico. In Mexico, there remain some unresolved issues in the principal partnership, but these are not immobilizing, nor have they compromised the effectiveness of the support provided to the CFG. In Brazil, the scope of the program is relatively small, but its potential reach is substantial. Synergos and its counterparts are in at the ground floor in defining a new philanthropy.

The picture in Mozambique is more complicated. Although the main partnership has been ineffective in realizing most of the program objectives, Synergos has supported activities which may offer a basis for future advances in fundraising and endowment-building, for example, *if* FDC can act effectively on its own organizational-development agenda.

*Do the results represent good value?* Estimating “good value” for the various participants in the program requires that the *potential* implicit in each program be taken into account, and hence the longer-term and broader impact of the three country programs. Both the Mexico and Brazil programs have supported organizations which individually and collectively hold considerable potential, if the broader political and institutional environment remains at least non-destructive.

The answer for the Mozambique program is more contingent. The deciding variable seems to be organizational dynamics within the principal partner organization. If FDC can assemble the energy, organizational purpose, and leadership among staff and management to clarify its role and strategic directions and to strengthen its financial base, then the seeds planted during this program may take root.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

This report is organized according to the guidelines of the USAID Office for Private Voluntary Co-operation (PVC), informed by the priorities in Synergos' terms of reference for the evaluation. The latter are included in Annex I, Note on Method. The evaluation focused on the effectiveness of Synergos' programming in Mozambique, Mexico and Brazil, and this emphasis is reflected in this report. The discussion of program effectiveness thus includes a commentary on achievement of objectives in each country program and on the Synergos Headquarters program, as well as a section on issues relevant to the program as a whole. The report also examines program management within the sub-section on the Headquarters program. This topic is treated more selectively than program effectiveness. The PVC guidelines request tabular summaries of strengths and weaknesses of the program, the achievements of results noted in the DIP, and the program partnerships. These tables appear in Annexes II, III, and IV, grouped for comparative reference.

## 2.0 PROGRAM BACKGROUND:

Following is a summary of the program being evaluated, "Enhancing the Resource Base for Development in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique", managed by The Synergos Institute of New York City, in concert with its partner organizations in Mozambique, Mexico and Brazil. This summary is drawn largely from the revised DIP of July 2003.

**Origins and rationale for the program:** In all three program countries, Synergos had a working relationship with the principal partner organizations (noted in the Evaluation Profile Sheet) which predated the USAID Matching-Grant program. In the case of CEMEFI in Mexico and FDC in Mozambique, these organizational links dated from the early 1990's. Synergos' co-operation with GIFE in Brazil began in the latter part of that decade. The USAID program offered the organizations the opportunity to make their work more systematic and to expand its scale. The circumstances and opportunities differed for each organization, and these are noted in the assessment of the program. In Mexico, for example, the USAID project offered resources with which CEMEFI and Synergos could support the emergent and rapidly growing community foundation movement in that country. More generally, the application to USAID was Synergos' first foray into the world of bilateral development donor agencies, and represented an opportunity to diversify and strengthen its revenue streams. An initial proposal from Synergos to the USAID/PVC office was not approved. In 2001/02, the Institute elaborated the proposal for the current program, for which the agreement was signed on June 25, 2002.

**Baseline Analysis and Point of Departure for the Program:** The overall program goal is set out in the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP): *to strengthen a non-governmental*

*financial and technical resource base for development in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique, and to generate models for adaptation in other countries.*<sup>1</sup> In each country program, Synergos and its principal counterparts carried out a process of consultation and institutional diagnostics to establish the capacity issues, assets and priorities. These provided the basis for the objectives of each program. These are cast in similar language, which thus provides comparable terms of discussion across the country programs. Each set of objectives includes:

- an **institutional development** objective, reflecting the intent to strengthen the capacity of the principal partner(s) to provide services to grantmaking organizations and to civil society organizations more generally;
- an objective to **strengthen the partnership between Synergos and its Southern counterparts**, reflecting the co-operation between these organizations and the opportunity to make their relationship more systematic and effective; and
- an objective to **provide capacity-development services directly to foundations or civil society organizations active in social and economic development.**

The centre of gravity of the program, then, is the collaboration between Synergos and its principal partners, the purpose of which is enhancing the capacity of the Southern organizations. In some instances, as explained below in the discussion of the Mexico and Brazil programs for example, Synergos' emphasis shifted towards the third objective (capacity-building with individual foundations) in the latter part of the program.

Complementing these three country programs was a Headquarters program intended to strengthen Synergos' capacity to manage and support its field programs. This program reflected USAID's dual logic for its Matching-Grant program: to strengthen Southern civil society organizations, but also the U.S. private voluntary organization (PVO) assisting them. The first of the two objectives in the HQ program thus addressed Synergos' management capabilities, including program planning and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, and systems of staff development and performance review. The second aimed to improve Synergos' ability to use its knowledge resources, such as the Senior Fellows program, more effectively in support of field programs.

The financial allocations for each of these programs and the corresponding actual expenditures to Nov. 30, 2005, were as follows (all figures US \$):

<b>Income source:</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Mozamb.</b>	<b>Headqtrs</b>	<b>Totals:</b>
USAID	522,888	480,415	344,095	152,495	<b>1,499,891</b>
Matching funds	522,888	480,415	344,095	152,495	<b>1,499,891</b>
<b>Budget Totals</b>	<b>1,045,776</b>	<b>960,830</b>	<b>688,190</b>	<b>304,990</b>	<b>2,999,782</b>
<b>Expenditures to Nov 30/05:</b>					
USAID	615,108	453,239	317,896	113,648	<b>1,499,891</b>
Matching funds	360,201	382,796	426,483	158,021	<b>1,327,501</b>
<b>Exp. Totals:</b>	<b>975,309</b>	<b>836,035</b>	<b>744,379</b>	<b>271,669</b>	<b>2,827,392</b>

<sup>1</sup> DIP (revised July 2003), p. 1.



**Program Implementation Status:** The program is complete, with any outstanding disbursements to be completed by Dec. 31, 2005. This evaluation is its final component.

**Synergos' Development Plans:** The Institute is reviewing and rethinking its work, in part because it has just appointed a new President—a change in senior management is an opportunity for strategic thinking. In addition, however, as the comments on the country programs make clear, both Synergos and its Southern counterparts are re-examining their longterm relationships, to decide where to go with them and how. The evaluation of the USAID-funded program, with its emphasis on strengthening partnerships, presents an obvious opportunity to address this issue. The discussions now under way will also include an assessment of whether and under what conditions to engage with a large bilateral donor agency such as USAID. As noted, this program grant was Synergos' first funding relationship with a bilateral, and there are diverse views within the Institute about its benefits and challenges.

From this reviewer's perspective, two factors will be critical in Synergos' internal debate. First, the Institute's preferred domain or program focus will likely continue to be the institutional development of foundations and foundation-like organizations, particularly those which work at the community level. Secondly, its principal resource in this endeavour will be the commitment of its people and their knowledge: about methods of work; the debate about civil society; about contacts in the form of people, organizations and networks; policy issues, and the like. Synergos' budget and its fundraising capabilities are not inconsiderable for an NGO, but its financial resources are modest in the larger picture of the development enterprise. What it brings to its work of institutional development, and what will determine how well it does that, is the knowledge, commitment and creativity of its people.

(Section 5.0, the conclusion to this report, includes additional comments on its implications for Synergos' future directions.)

### **3.0 PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS:**

#### **3.1 Synergos' Program Approach:**

The Synergos Institute sets out its overall program approach clearly and succinctly in the opening pages of the DIP.<sup>2</sup> Its work in the three countries included in this program forms part of its global program, which is intended to mobilize resources to reduce poverty and increase social equity. Synergos usually works with foundations and grantmaking organizations. In this program it has focused particularly but not exclusively on community foundations.

Synergos cites several key principles which guide its approach:

- working through partnership and collaboration;
- promoting peer-to-peer learning and capacity-building;
- strengthening indigenous institutions and mobilizing resources for development; and
- bridging social and economic divides that inhibit development

The Institute works at both national and regional or local levels within its program countries. Synergos staff describe their role not as funders of Southern organizations, but as networkers and facilitators, offering their partners knowledge and contacts through the Institute's wider philanthropic network of people and organizations. This network has nodes in North America, particularly in the U.S., the site of Synergos' head office, but extends to all continents. Synergos thus draws on several programming tools:

- Production, financing and dissemination of research and information on the grantmaking sector, including relevant practice and policy options.
- Fellowships and consultancies, including its Synergos Senior Fellows Program, which enables peer learning and exchange among grantmaking professionals.
- Capacity-building programs, including workshops and tailored accompaniment. These focus on issues such as programming, strategic planning, grant and project management, fundraising and endowment-building, and board development.
- Professional exchanges enable foundation staff to pursue in-service professional development through attachments to counterpart organizations.

Two key assumptions inform the program. These are noted briefly within the country program sections of the DIP, and are discussed below as part of the assessment of objectives in those programs. We mention them here, however, because they can be seen as part of Synergos' overall approach to its work. The first assumption holds that the foundation model is relevant to civil society in Southern countries because of its emphasis on mobilizing local resources to support development, and on the sustainable maintenance and use of those resources through endowments and grantmaking. Other important aspects of the model include the convening role of foundations—their potential to bring together different social actors in a common cause. Secondly, through their grantmaking and capacity-development resources, foundations can play a part in

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<sup>2</sup> This summary is taken from pages 3 and 4.

strengthening civil society organizations in the wider community. It follows that the work of such foundations offers a multiplier effect for Synergos' resources.

### **3.2 Common Issues within the Program:**

As the evaluation unfolded, the discussions of country programs generated issues relevant to the program as a whole. Several are noted here, as reference points for the later commentary on the individual programs. The first two issues address the way Synergos has framed and presented the program: the primacy of context, and the treatment of partners' roles within the program, particularly those played by Synergos. Secondly, two important issues stand out from the implementation of the program. These are the opportunities and achievements in leveraging additional program resources and the nature and extent of individual and organizational learning. Both could be described as achievements that went beyond the original plan and proposal. Different respondents gave their own interpretation and emphasis to all these issues, so we have used brief examples to show these perspectives.

#### ***Framing the program: the primacy of context:***

The broader social and institutional setting of Synergos' country programs is generally underplayed in the planning documents for the program, such as the DIP and the related DIP Planning Matrices of March 2004. These offer little information, for example, on the national socio-political context and its influence on the shape and texture of capacity issues for foundations in Mozambique, Mexico or Brazil, or its implications for the capacity development strategies of an organization like Synergos.<sup>3</sup> The DIP notes the diagnostic processes used in the conception and planning of the country programs, but offers no detail on these, nor are the analyses appended. Nor do these analyses find expression in the goals and objectives of all three country programs, which are stated in similar terms (as noted in the Program Background section above.) As a result the program as presented seems generic, rather than crafted to respond to the particular challenges posed by the condition of philanthropy in Mozambique, Brazil and Mexico. Synergos staff said this approach was deliberate. It reflected the Institute's understanding of USAID's requirements. In response to Synergos' first proposal in 2001, the Agency requested that program objectives be cast in similar language to allow comparison across its component parts.

By contrast, respondents in all programs emphasized the specific characteristics of the context in which they worked. From their commentary, a picture thus emerged of a program operating in environments characterized not by homogeneity but by complexity, diversity and dynamism, in which the programming challenge has been to understand and

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<sup>3</sup> The terms "capacity development" and "capacity building" are used interchangeably in this report. The author's preference is for capacity development, signalling a broader process; where respondents or Synergos' documents speak of capacity building, that phrase is used.

adapt to the special circumstances of time and place, people and organizations. To be sure, these circumstances and their influence are more evident now, with the benefit of hindsight and several years of programming experience, than they were five years ago when the program was being designed. Nevertheless, respondents' insistence on understanding these issues does signal that future programs of this kind should present a rigorous analysis of the context, so that program strategy and objectives can be seen within and tailored to their broader setting. In capacity development, context is content.

Three levels of the context warrant analysis: the national, the institutional<sup>4</sup> and the operational. Mexico, Brazil and Mozambique have very different histories, political economies and development trajectories. In these circumstances, the relationship between civil society and the state, for example, merits exploration in some detail if an organization such as Synergos aims to intervene to strengthen civil society and/or civil society organizations. There is an implicit friendly challenge for Synergos here: if, as the Institute says in the DIP (p. 23), "the foundation model" offers real advantages to civil society in Mexico, let us say, then its appropriateness to the Mexican context needs to be explored and demonstrated rather than simply asserted. Indeed one of the questions raised in all three countries was whether it is useful to speak of *the* foundation model—defining a Mexican or Brazilian or Mozambican interpretation of others' experience and examples is very much a work in progress.

In all countries, secondly, Synergos works with counterpart organizations. Hence, the institutional setting of each program and the quality of its core relationships largely determine its limits and possibilities. The number of counterpart organizations varies from program to program, but in all three there have been complex and occasionally difficult relationships to navigate, relationships sometimes shaped by strong—not always helpful—interpersonal dynamics. There is nothing unusual in this. There is, however, a question that needs to be addressed by Synergos and by its counterparts: what organizational conditions need to be in place if a partnership is to work well? In all three countries, Synergos and its counterparts built on existing relationships. These gave both parties a valuable if variable measure of familiarity and trust. In retrospect, however, respondents argued, both sides should have scrutinized more thoroughly their *institutional readiness* for the program.

The third level of context, the operational or programmatic, is relevant to initiatives (such as this one) which focus on organizational development. A program of this kind must contend with the "so what?" question: do measures intended to make organizations more effective lead to benefits in the wider community? It is not uncommon for organizational development (OD) initiatives to focus on issues and interventions *within* an organization; yet in this philanthropic enterprise, the rationale for doing so, and the ultimate indicator of success, is an organization that plays a more effective role in its wider community.

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<sup>4</sup> The literature on capacity development often makes a distinction between individual *organizations* (or groups of organizations) and *institutions*. The latter terms refers to sets of established social practices and customs, as well as related laws and regulations. Marriage and land tenure are examples of "institutions" in this sense. In this report, we will use "organization" and "institution" interchangeably, reflecting conversational practice.

Synergos typically works with *intermediary organizations*, such as foundations, which in turn support community organizations of one kind or another. There are thus several links in the chain to be examined, if one is to assess benefits (or problems) in the wider community which may be attributed to Synergos' efforts. This interplay between organization and community is not prominent in the planning documents, however. These focus more on inter- and intra-organizational relationships. Nonetheless, respondents in all three countries highlighted this aspect of their work—the challenges they faced in working out ways to respond to poverty, or to build stronger citizens' organizations, or to promote a culture of active citizenship and institutional responsiveness. Again, in future programs of this kind, this piece of contextual logic needs to be addressed.

The relationship between organizational effectiveness and community benefit does not lend itself to quick or easy analysis, however. This is especially so if diffuse but important factors like legitimacy, social values and political culture are a key element in that relationship—and in Mexico and Brazil especially, respondents argued that this was the case. Foundations had a major role to play in building a culture of active citizenship. To do so, they had to be legitimate actors within their communities. In such circumstances, answering the question “Did we succeed?” is not at all straightforward. It is possible to identify summary indicators of organizational effectiveness, such as resource mobilization, that offer some precision. Yet the complementary “And so?” question, directed (for example) to the wider domain of building a civic and political culture, or to maintaining institutional legitimacy, is both more important and more difficult to answer. It is clear from respondents' comments, however, that it should be integral to any program of this kind.

To conclude this section, **it is recommended to Synergos and its partners that** these three aspects of the context of the program be factored into the rationale for any future program, to present a more detailed and sharper setting for the program strategy and objectives.

***Framing the program: acknowledging partners' roles***

An early and forthright examination of the main partners' expected roles in the program, especially those of Synergos, would usefully complement the analysis of the institutional context of the program. Roles are not unchanging, and have to be negotiated rather than proclaimed. The various actors may also differ in their perceptions of their and others' roles. A statement of roles at the start of the program, moreover, is no substitute for the skills required to negotiate an adjustment later in the program, or to balance the imperatives of competing roles. It may, however, help the different actors to establish a contract among themselves, and to clarify expectations. The discussion of partnerships in the country programs suggests that there were some mismatched expectations and/or a lack of clarity about roles within some of the key organizational relationships. A

deliberate and extensive negotiation of roles at the outset of the program, including a benchmarking statement of roles, might have anticipated some of these difficulties.<sup>5</sup>

Underlying the expectations and negotiation of roles is a fundamentally important issue within partnerships: are the participating organizations fully engaged with and committed to the partnership? An evaluator's report of the GIFE/Synergos partnership in Brazil argues that the effective design and implementation of joint action in a partnership requires the parties' full engagement.<sup>6</sup> It will become clear from the assessment of the country programs that this condition was unevenly realized in the program as a whole. As one might expect, the more wholehearted was the mutual commitment to the partnership, the more effective the organizations were in realizing their agenda.

To appreciate the challenge facing all participants in working through roles and responsibilities, we only need note Synergos' multiple roles within the program. These include: institutional fundraiser (from USAID and the several sources of matching funds); manager of the entire program, hence manager of and reporter on the use of donors' funds; principal interlocutor between the program participants and the donors; organizer and/or direct provider of technical assistance to participating organizations; networker, facilitating counterparts' access to sources of advice and information; supporter of and participant in organizational learning; source of accompaniment to people and organizations within the country programs. These roles do not fit easily together, and the aggregate weight they gave to Synergos probably unbalanced some of the program partnerships. Both in program reports and in interviews, for example, Synergos staff noted the tension between their historic role (one they understood) as supportive partner to Southern organizations, and the *de facto* donor's role required by their function as manager of USAID funds.

### ***Achievements beyond the plan: leveraging new resources***

Respondents argued convincingly that the program shows major achievements in two related areas, leverage and learning. Synergos' work in Mexico offers an example of effective leveraging of new resources. Its success in securing the USAID grant and related matching funds, and its profile as a supporter of the community foundations network, both helped to secure complementary funding. The latter included a matching grant from the Inter-American Foundation, directly to CEMEFI, to enhance the endowments of community foundations. Synergos was also the principal agent in securing the funds for the Border Philanthropy Partnership, and for the program of institutional support to CFs financed by the Hewlett Foundation. In their financial scale,

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<sup>5</sup> A resource exists that may be useful for future such programs. Two OD consultants, Alan Fowler and Joseph McMahon, offer a pre-partnership facilitation process to assist collaborating organizations in identifying potential problems and planning ways of resolving them. See Inter-Mediation.org, *Making Development Relationships More Effective, Productive and Equitable Using a "Partnership Facilitator"* (March, 2004: Denver, USA, and Herbertsdale, South Africa).

<sup>6</sup> Simone Coelho, IDECA, "Avaliação da Parceria GIFE-Synergos" January, 2005, p. 4.

these initiatives are a great deal larger than the original USAID grant and its matching monies.<sup>7</sup>

Synergos' leveraging experience and contacts may appear to be *ad hoc* and opportunistic in the most positive sense, but are a standard feature of its *modus operandi*. Nor is Synergos' experience unique—the practice is widespread and systematic. Accordingly, **it is recommended that** USAID treat resource leveraging as an integral part of the rationale for supporting an NGO like Synergos, acknowledging the multiplier effect on public funds.

***Achievements within the plan and beyond: organizational and individual learning***

Respondents in all country programs testified to the amount and variety of personal and organizational learning derived from the program. In a sense, this is only to be expected, because the program has been premised on learning for organizational development. There are thus numerous examples of “learning activities” within the workplans of each country program on resource mobilization, grant and project management, endowment management, governance, and so on. Respondents chose to emphasize, however, learning that overspilled the banks of planned activities and went beyond techniques of foundation management or conventional approaches to capacity development. Examples of issues cited include:

- The complexity of capacity development, especially the centrality of intangibles like legitimacy, confidence and commitment. For these there is no handy toolkit or software.
- Understanding organizational development in civil society as strengthening a culture of civic responsibility and participation, as building institutions that are owned by and responsive to citizens and communities, and as encouraging philanthropy that promotes social transformation. Many respondents saw these issues as more important than “better management” narrowly understood.
- The necessity of developing a Mexican, Brazilian or Mozambican interpretation of the foundation “model”, suited to the nation’s culture and society. Complementing—not contradicting—this focus was an emphasis on the value of exposure to others’ experience through mechanisms such as professional exchanges and the Senior Fellows program.
- The complexities and challenges of institutional partnerships, especially the necessity of building a mutual commitment to the agenda.
- The limits and possibilities of different methodologies of institutional development, from training workshops to tailored programs of coaching and accompaniment.
- The necessity of developing capacity within the community at large to complement capacity within foundations, so that foundations can use their resources more effectively.
- The benefits and pitfalls associated with large multi-year projects financed by a large official development agency like USAID.

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<sup>7</sup> In 2005, the Border Philanthropy Partnership budget alone was just over \$900,000. Of this, about one-half (\$450,000) is to be used on programming in Mexico. The three-year allocation of the USAID grant to programming in Mexico was \$480,415. See also the textbox below, p. 39.

Running through all these examples is a thread of exchange or reciprocity. The planning documents focus on Synergos' support for capacity development within Southern organizations. From this perspective, Synergos is the *developer*, and its counterparts the *developee*. Synergos staff, conversely, emphasized what they have learned from and with their Southern colleagues about different capacity development strategies, and about the subtleties of social and institutional contexts. Another recurrent theme in their comments was the necessity and complexity of developing a national approach to philanthropy for social change, particularly community philanthropy, and for Synergos to adjust and adapt its thinking and practice accordingly.

The widespread agreement<sup>8</sup> on learning is a sure indicator of achievement. The challenge now for the program participants is to systematize their experiences, and to gather and apply knowledge that may be latent and dispersed. Instructive examples already exist within the ambit of the program. These elaborate Synergos' existing documents such as the *Foundation Building Sourcebook*.<sup>9</sup> In Mexico, for example, Fundación Comunitaria Oaxaca has provided a valuable precedent by compiling a record of its history, and lessons it has learned and applied along the way.<sup>10</sup> Participants in the program have created and used different diagnostic tools adapted to the specific circumstances of Mexican CFs. Synergos staff have in turn found these useful in their programming in other countries, such as Ecuador, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The Brazil program has invested in documenting case studies and guides to philanthropic practice in that country.<sup>11</sup> Work of this kind can be time-consuming, and some respondents mentioned that foundation staff often feel over-burdened by the day-to-day demands of running their organizations. From another perspective, the most important resources within this program are its people, their knowledge, and their relationships. Hence, an investment in organizational learning is an investment in these resources, not a cost of operating a foundation. For a support organization like Synergos, its most valuable long-term contribution may be its capacity to assemble the people and money to make this happen.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sometimes unanimous. Every respondent in the Mexico program mentioned it, for example.

<sup>9</sup> Published by Synergos in 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Fundación Comunitaria Oaxaca, "Lessons Learned". Available on its website, [www.fundación-oaxaca.org](http://www.fundación-oaxaca.org)

<sup>11</sup> Examples include GIFE/Synergos, "O Investimento Social Privado e os Fundos Patrimoniais: Um Estudo de Caso sobre o Desenvolvimento do *Endowment* da Fundação Boticário de Proteção à Natureza," São Paulo, 2003; Jose Bernardo Toro, *A construção do público: cidadania, democracia e participação*, Rio de Janeiro: (X) Brasil and SENAC Rio, 2005; GIFE, *Guia sobre Parcerias e Alianças em Investimento Social Privado*, São Paulo, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> One option may be to use the experience of this program as a basis for a proposal for applied research into institutional development. USAID offers an example of potential donor interest with its 2005 Annual Program Statement, "FY 2005 Research Options for DCHA/PVC-ASHA" (Washington, DC, 2005). This particular window had closed by time of writing.



### 3.3 The Mozambique Program

#### 3.3.1 Mozambique Program Goal and Objectives:

The DIP sets out three objectives for the FDC/Synergos program. Together, these comprise a capacity development agenda to enhance FDC's role as a grantmaking foundation. They address the three domains of Synergos' overall program, noted in the Program Background section above: FDC as an institution, the partnership between Synergos and FDC, and FDC's support to community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within Mozambican civil society as a whole. The objectives are as follows:

#1 *Institutional development for FDC*: to build the capacity and resources of FDC as a strategic grantmaking foundation to promote strong civil society development organizations in Mozambique;

#2 *A stronger FDC/Synergos partnership*: to strengthen the FDC/Synergos partnership [in order] to build a stronger technical and financial resource base for civil society development organizations in Mozambique;

#3 *Capacity-building for civil society organizations*: to strengthen the technical and financial resource base for community development in Mozambique, through FDC's capacity-building services to civil society development organizations.

These objectives are intended to contribute to the overall goal of Synergos' programming in Mozambique: *to strengthen the non-governmental financial and technical resource base for development in Mozambique, generating models for adaptation in other countries.* (The similarity with the overall program goal is evident.)

#### *Comments on the program goal and objectives:*

(1) **Validity of “the foundation model”:** First, Synergos' work with FDC rests on the “explicit assumption that the foundation model has a unique capacity and a unique role in nurturing successful sustainable development initiatives.” (DIP, p. 36) How appropriate is this assumption where Synergos' partner is a “hybrid” entity? A senior FDC official described FDC in these terms, noting several points where the organization departs from the classical philanthropic model: FDC has been an operating social-development NGO as well as a grantmaking foundation; it is also a membership organization; it has a community orientation, but is national in scope. The tension between these two perspectives exemplifies the need for sharper analysis of the relationship between foundation “models” or principles and organizational realities in Mozambique.

(2) **Framing the program objectives:** Secondly, the three objectives would be more useful if they were more specific and their inter-relationship spelled out. The presentation of the objectives could be improved in several respects:

- The objectives are not all of similar weight or importance. The first one, institutional development in FDC, is the most important, addressing the core of the program. The second, a stronger partnership between FDC and Synergos, is an end in itself, but also an enabling condition for the other two objectives. The third, capacity-building with Mozambican CSOs, is of less immediate importance within this program, but is part of the longer-term *raison d'être* for this program and for FDC's work as well. These characteristics could be explained in a short preamble.
- The capacity challenges to be addressed are not reflected in the objectives. To be useful, each objective should be more specific, including the key elements of a capacity profile, tailored to reflect the issue(s) for the organization(s) involved. For example, the primary objective, "To build the capacity and resources of FDC as a strategic grantmaking foundation," is stated in fairly general and aggregated terms. What aspect of FDC's capacity is at issue here, and how does "capacity" differ from "resources"? In a similar vein, what type of "capacity-building services" are required by Mozambican CSOs? And what does it mean "to strengthen the FDC/Synergos partnership?"
- Lastly, the objectives are not linked to the budget available, i.e., from USAID and the donors of matching funds. Adding this information to the objectives would enable the reader to see their respective financial weight and priority, and would allow an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of related activities.

Accordingly, **it is recommended that** in future such programs, Synergos and its partner organizations clarify the priority and inter-relationship among the program objectives; tailor these objectives to the specific capacity issues of the organization(s) and country concerned; and link resource allocations to objectives.

(3) **Risks and enabling assumptions:** Thirdly, risks and enabling assumptions are an essential part of any program framework and should be prominent in the presentation of these objectives. The DIP format asks that "Additional Information" include "problems and challenges likely to be faced during implementation". Synergos' DIP provides two short paragraphs (p. 46), noting that the partners have identified no overriding problems to interfere with effective implementation. The DIP does note Mozambique's continuing vulnerability to natural disaster, and the lingering effects of the war on the country's infrastructure, especially in the more remote rural districts. What is required, however, is a summary assessment of the feasibility of each objective, as well as the manageability and feasibility of the ensemble. This implies a reality check: What did the actors assume would help them do what they wanted to do? And what might limit them? These might include social or institutional forces, or personal factors, as well as broader ecological or political processes. The answers to these questions should also take account of the contextual logic of the program as a whole—the relevance of a "foundation model" to FDC's own circumstances and to Mozambican civil society. Synergos staff members were candid in saying that these issues had not been dealt with

thoroughly enough before the program began, and a senior FDC staff member implicitly concurred, saying that FDC had not been ready for the program.

**It is thus recommended that** in the design of future programs, Synergos and its partners give more comprehensive and systematic attention to risks (and mitigation strategies) and to enabling assumptions. This assessment should flow readily enough from the contextual analysis highlighted earlier, and should take account as well of the dynamics of partnership. (See comments immediately below on Objective #2, strengthening the Synergos/FDC partnership.)

### **3.3.2 Assessing Objectives: #2, strengthening the FDC/Synergos partnership**

This objective is assessed first because it is in part an enabling condition for the other two: the quality of the partnership between the two organizations shapes the quality of the work they do together. Margaret Wheatley's acute observation, that capacity in an organization depends on the quality of its relationships, is relevant here.<sup>13</sup>

#### ***Positives...***

FDC and Synergos have a long history of partnership. This predates the birth of FDC in 1994, and includes its predecessor, the Association for Community Development (ADC), created in 1990. There is a strong and longstanding personal bond between the Board Chairs of the two organizations, which was the basis of Synergos' original assistance to ADC and FDC. FDC staff were very clear about the importance of Synergos' support over the years. The Institute has been a source of valued advice and accompaniment, and a means of access to other foundations' experience, especially in developing countries. (The Senior Fellows program was praised in this respect.) Synergos' endorsement of FDC gave the young organization credibility, and its readiness to open doors and encourage relationships in philanthropic circles within the U.S. has been a major asset in FDC's fundraising successes. Not least important, finally, has been the part played by senior Synergos officials in fundraising for FDC, the unrestricted resources from the U.S.-based Friends of FDC being a vital source of operating revenue for the Foundation.

The collaboration has meant benefits for Synergos, as well. Synergos staff say that the Institute has in turn acquired legitimacy because of its association with Mme Machel, the President of FDC. The special circumstances faced by FDC in establishing itself as a foundation in Mozambique, and its novel strategies for creating its endowment from Mozambican sources, have informed Synergos' understanding of the models and dynamics of foundations in developing countries. FDC's experience is noted in Synergos' foundations sourcebook.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World Revised* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1999.)

<sup>14</sup> Synergos, *Foundation Building Sourcebook* (New York, 2000), pp. 189 –91.

Staff in both organizations have also learned about the complexities of managing organizational relationships effectively, as they have worked through their partnership during the years of the USAID grant. The assessment of this objective offered in this Report is based largely on commentary from Synergos and FDC staff, and thus reflects knowledge derived from practice. The test of that knowledge will be their ability to design and implement a new phase of co-operation after the USAID grant ends in 2005.

There is an immediate opportunity here for FDC and Synergos. Both are re-examining their various longstanding relationships, and both have used this evaluation to assist them in doing so. Because the long co-operation between the Institute and FDC will almost certainly continue after the USAID grant, both parties have the opportunity to apply what they have learned about partnerships. This could be done in at least two ways.

First, both can contribute to redefining the Synergos/FDC relationship. FDC staff were unanimous in saying that they valued the link with Synergos and wanted to continue to work with the Institute. They believed that FDC was now sufficiently mature to define its priorities clearly, and to negotiate roles and approaches with Synergos so as to address these priorities effectively together. Some relevant issues and options are noted below in the “Areas for Improvement” section. Secondly, however, because the Mozambique sub-program is one of three within the larger USAID Matching Grant program, FDC is interested in exchanging knowledge and experience with their counterparts in Mexico and Brazil, and respondents in those countries have shown a complementary interest.

**It is recommended,** therefore, that Synergos convene a face-to-face and electronic exchange among its partners in the larger program, to reflect together on their work during the USAID Matching Grant initiative, and to examine options for future co-operation.

*...and Some Areas for Improvement:*

The organizations could have managed their partnership better in several respects:

First, FDC staff said that broader participation in the design of the program would have created wider knowledge within the Foundation about the purpose, resources and parameters of the program, and thus greater buy-in. This process would have grounded the program better within FDC, and thus laid a stronger basis for continuing it during the nearly eighteen months in 2003 – 04 when FDC lacked a fulltime permanent Executive Director. Conversations with FDC staff revealed some perception that Synergos had brought a standard package to FDC as a proposal, rather than working out a response to the particular circumstances of FDC. Yet FDC staff also acknowledged that the Foundation could have been more rigorous in analyzing its situation, issues, and priorities, the possible responses, and Synergos’ strategies. Doing so in a more public fashion within the Foundation would have allowed closer scrutiny and better knowledge of the FDC/Synergos program, and of Synergos’ approach.

FDC staff described the Synergos/FDC program as based within senior management of the Foundation, at its strategic and governance levels. Hence, when opportunities arose for staff training activities (exchanges, visits, and so on), these were welcomed, but they were not understood as part of a broader process or program. FDC staff saw the partnership as a link between the upper levels of the two organizations, rather than as an integral to the daily life of the Foundation.

The parties' close history may have influenced the design and negotiation of the program. FDC staff, reflecting on the moment, said that good friends had offered resources, and that FDC wanted support in its own development. The program seemed an obvious thing to do.

The parties could address this issue of understanding and engagement in the future by encouraging wider participation in the design and management of the program. For example:

- A small working group (perhaps three or four people from the two organizations) could draft the elements of a program: diagnostic, objectives, roles, methods, activities, budget.
- This could be presented to a larger “users’ group”, comprising people from both organizations who would be involved in its implementation—program staff, managers, fundraisers, Board members, possibly clients or friends from other Mozambican organizations as well.
- Advice from the larger group could be built into the final design of the program by the working group.
- From time to time, as the program unfolds, the larger group could be reconvened to review and adjust it.

As approach of this kind would help to compensate for the differences in size between the two organizations. Synergos may have one or two staff working regularly on the program, which may involve several staff within FDC. Practically, it would thus be difficult for Synergos staff to stay in touch with all the FDC staff involved. Establishing a “users’ group” would create a forum for the program, and make it public knowledge and property within the Foundation. Such an approach of course implies that senior FDC management are comfortable with a more open and participatory style of program management. This issue goes beyond Synergos’ mandate as an historic friend and supporter. Nevertheless, the observation by FDC staff that the program has been lodged at the strategic and governance levels of the organization signals their awareness of the limitations of past practice, one that can thus reasonably be introduced into the negotiations about future co-operation.

Second, the program budget should be a key part of this more collective design and management process. FDC staff said they did not know the size and composition of the Synergos/FDC program budget, nor its parameters—what was an allowable expense, and what was not. The budget for the program did not pass through FDC’s books, its administration being in Synergos’ hands. Synergos thus determined what could be funded or not—a role that created some discomfort for both organizations, for it

effectively placed Synergos in the position of a donor. A different approach in the future would strive for more transparency by including finances (available and required) in the design process described above. Secondly, an annual joint planning and budgeting session would maintain joint knowledge and responsibility for the resources. At issue here is more than transparency within a partnership, however. The recommendation in section 3.3.1 (p. 12) on linking budgets to program objectives is also relevant.

Thirdly, **it is recommended that** any future co-operation include an accord. A contract between two organizations is no guarantee of performance: this partnership included an MOU. If people are not fully engaged in a joint enterprise, an accord will not make them so. Conversely, if they are strongly committed to a partnership, they may not need an accord. An accord can be useful when there is staff turnover in either or both partner organizations. This was the case for both FDC and Synergos during the period of the USAID Matching Grant. An accord can also make the rationale and planned operations of a program public knowledge within the organizations. A contract based on a more participatory process could be a real asset in maintaining or adjusting directions or methods of work, checking roles and responsibilities, and resolving disputes. One respondent suggested, finally, that organizations like Synergos and FDC, interacting at both Board and staff levels, may find it useful to create an accord which includes both umbrella statements of values, intent and principle, and more operational guidelines for specific joint initiatives.

FDC has an opportunity here. Several staff members said they felt their Foundation had matured considerably since Synergos first helped to create it; and, while they would like to continue to work with Synergos, they would like to redefine the relationship. An obvious first step would be to draft a new accord as a basis for this re-negotiation.

Finally, perhaps as a cumulative result of the processes listed, the ownership of the program appears to have been uneven. It was narrowly based within FDC—not enough staff knew enough about it, or had the necessary mandate, to move it forward. FDC staff also referred to “the Synergos program”, rather than to (for example) “our program with Synergos”. Staff in both organizations noted that at different times in the years 2002–2005, Synergos wanted to move the program forward, and tried to press FDC to do so, but the Foundation had “other priorities”. There appear to have been mismatched expectations about what was possible or desirable at any given time. Respondents in FDC acknowledged that Synergos felt some frustration about the slow implementation of the program, but also said that the pacing of the program had to suit FDC’s circumstances. In a related vein, both organizations felt pressure from Synergos’ contract with USAID. Staff in both organizations said they felt they were not wholly in control of the program, or of the process between the two organizations. Both felt a pressure to deliver on “The Plan”, an ambitious list of activities scheduled in the agreement with USAID.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The July 2003 DIP workplan, for example, runs to ten pages.

### *Indicators of achievement:*

Following is a summary of progress against the two indicators for Objective #2:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>B/line</b>	<b>EOP Target</b>	<b>EOP Actual</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>(1)</b> # and % of Synergos/ FDC annual workplan items completed	No data	80%	n/a	Target not reached. (See discussion of Objs 1 & 3.) Spotty documentary record of annual joint workplans: Evaluator received ten-page plan (2003), & Renewed Action Plan for 2005, drafted by senior FDC staff & Synergos' staff in Feb. 2005
<b>(2)</b> # of donors supporting FDC/ Synergos capacity-building program	1	3 (300% incr.)	4	Target exceeded; 400% increase over base figure.

There is a problem with the first (workplan) indicator. This one shows the necessity of justifying indicators by explaining how they measure an objective. The percentage of workplan items completed does not signal a stronger partnership between the two organizations. It may be an indicator of the feasibility of the workplan, or of institutional capacity (especially within FDC) to carry out workplans, or of Synergos' capacity to identify the right resources for FDC's development, and to ensure they are available when needed. All of these may be useful things for the parties to know, but they say little about partnership. A better indicator of institutional co-operation and of common purpose and understanding (i.e., of "partnership") would be, for example, "three-year and annual workplans and budgets jointly constructed and implemented to the satisfaction of both parties". The latter phrase highlights the quality of the relationship between the parties, which is the essence of this objective.

The second (financial) indicator offers useful information about the program, but signals Synergos' fundraising abilities, rather than the quality of the FDC/Synergos partnership.

In a related vein, finally, without more clarity in the objective about the substance or profile of "a stronger partnership" between the two organizations, it is hard to design valid indicators.

### **3.3.3 Assessing Objectives: #1, building the capacity and resources of FDC as a strategic grantmaking foundation.**

This objective goes to the heart of the capacity development agenda of the Mozambique program, centred on FDC's institutional development as a grantmaking foundation.

### *Influencing factors:*

Several institutional forces influenced the partners' pursuit of their main objective.

**(1) A foundation? Or a hybrid?** First, FDC’s organizational reality is not as unambiguous as the objective suggests. It is true that from its inception in 1994, FDC’s declared intention has been to establish itself as a grantmaking foundation. This purpose lay behind its progenitor, the ADC, and reflected the thinking and approach of the presidents of Synergos and FDC. The challenges of Mozambican development, however, required that FDC establish an organizational presence and profile different from that of a grantmaking foundation. The organization has always been part foundation and part operational NGO active in social development at the community level. This hybrid character reflects a deliberate choice made in the early 1990s to respond to the demand and need for healthcare and educational services in Mozambican communities, and to the fact that there were few Mozambican NGOs active in the field at the time. FDC’s own operational role increased dramatically in 2000 and 2001, as it played a major part in the emergency response to the disaster of the floods in the country’s river valleys.<sup>16</sup> It continued an operational role after the immediate emergency, contributing to rehabilitation among the communities who had to rebuild, and the projects established then are only now winding down. At the same time, USAID funded FDC to carry out a large (\$11 million) program on HIV/AIDS between 2001 and 2004. When the USAID Matching Grant program began, therefore, FDC’s actual profile, and the work for which it was known—its centre of gravity, as it were—was that of a social-development NGO rather than a grantmaking foundation.

In retrospect, therefore, the objective of strengthening FDC “as a grantmaking foundation” was premature, inadequately reflecting its dual personality, which was the real starting-point for the program. A more realistic objective may have been to strengthen the grantmaking *function* within the organization. FDC staff say that now, in 2005, FDC is closer to becoming a grantmaking foundation than it was in the aftermath of the emergency, that the Board is committed to making FDC a grantmaking foundation, and that the Executive Director has the mandate to do so.<sup>17</sup> The issue may be striking a balance between a history and public profile which include FDC’s presence as an operational NGO, and its stated intent to be a grantmaking foundation, sustained by its own endowment and by funds raised from supporters outside Mozambique. Certainly some staff argued that FDC should seek an intermediate path for its own strategic development, one that recognizes both aspects of its history and culture.

In a related vein, this hybrid quality poses a friendly challenge to Synergos in its work with FDC. Following the observation in section 3.3.1 (p. 11) above, the Institute should surely examine its underlying premise of the relevance of “the” foundation model in Mozambique.

**(2) Executive turnover:** Secondly, a year after Synergos and USAID signed the contract, FDC’s Executive Director, who had planned and negotiated the program with Synergos, resigned. Replacing him proved to be a long process, with the new ED only

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<sup>16</sup> FDC raised US\$3.6 million for emergency relief.

<sup>17</sup> These comments were made in early September, and the ED resigned at the end of October. The questions of strategic direction, and of FDC’s status as a grantmaking foundation or a hybrid, remain.



taking on fulltime responsibility at the end of 2004. As a result, FDC lacked a fulltime permanent ED for nearly 18 months (August 2003 to December 2004) in the middle of the grant period. This meant that, although a Management Committee was established to continue operations, there was no senior executive in place with a mandate to implement programs such as the one supported by Synergos. The effect of this hiatus—described by some as a “leadership vacuum”—was surely exacerbated by the limited breadth and depth of understanding and buy-in for the Synergos/FDC program, as described in section on the partnership objective, 3.3.2 (p. 14) above. In this period, FDC staff described a pattern by which Synergos would make suggestions on activities to be undertaken—the initiative appeared to be out of FDC’s hands.<sup>18</sup>

**(3) An ambitious OD program:** A third factor complicating the process is the scale of the organizational development agenda itself. The objective centres on consolidating FDC as a grantmaking foundation. The related indicators highlight the core issue of financial sustainability, and strategies to establish and expand the assets of a foundation. They include: creating an operating framework for managing grants and donor relations; implementing an integrated fundraising and endowment-building strategy; and using this strategy to increase FDC’s overall financial base. The activities anticipated to realize this objective, however, suggest a more comprehensive OD agenda. Activities outlined in the DIP include extensive staff development in project management, monitoring and evaluation, teamwork and work-sharing, and a rationalization of FDC’s operational activities. There is provision for numerous professional exchanges, oriented to skills development linked to fundraising, but broader ones as well (such as community development methodologies and natural resource management). Board development figures prominently, as does technical assistance and training related to resource mobilization and endowment management. Any or all of these may have been useful for FDC. Certainly a year-long evaluation of the Foundation’s role, programming strategies and operations, co-ordinated by a Senior Fellow from the Philippines in 2001-02, highlighted several of these issues, including the importance of FDC clarifying its role as a grantmaker.<sup>19</sup> The point is, however, that together they amount to a very broad and multi-faceted program of organizational development, one that goes well beyond the focus of the objective, certainly beyond the indicators noted, and possibly beyond Synergos’ mandate and resources as well.

It can of course be argued that any program of financial sustainability has to be broadly conceived and broadly based, touching on the issues noted here. Several key terms are missing from the equation, however. The summary of activities related to this objective, first, contains no budget figures matching the scale and quality of resources to the size of the capacity agenda. More generally, there is no discussion of FDC’s *institutional readiness* for such an undertaking. This omission is critical. One way to address it would be to ask and answer the question: what conditions need to be in place for the

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<sup>18</sup> Synergos staff, conversely, felt that without strong mandated leadership within FDC, they could do little to move the program forward.

<sup>19</sup> “FDC Impact Evaluation,” 2002. This fed into FDC’s strategic-planning process, itself intended to generate a Strategic Plan for 2003 – 07 (revised to 2004 – 08). Sandra Libunao, the Senior Fellow, followed this Report with a case study of the evaluation, “Have we made a difference?” June, 2003.

projected Synergos/FDC program to work? Several are apparent in retrospect, and even if the shape of these could not have been predicted in 2002, some scenario-building could have shown their importance and generated strategies to respond to them. Examples include the necessity of continuity in senior management, committed to the program; the necessity of broad understanding and buy-in among the Foundation staff that would be affected by the program; similar understanding and buy-in among Board members; and more generally, the scale, complexity and duration and hence manageability of the strategic planning and change project recommended by the 2002 Impact Evaluation. This example shows the need for a systematic exploration of risks and enabling assumptions for the program as a whole, as noted in 3.3.1 (p. 12) above.

**(4) A stretch too far?** Taking account of these three institutional forces, one has to ask: “Could Synergos and FDC deliver on this objective and its indicators in three years?” The answer must be that in retrospect the program seems far too ambitious. A different approach—much easier to see with hindsight—might have focused on the foundation “function” within FDC. Within that, it should have been possible to identify a limited number of initiatives that could be well supported financially, with a well-established team to work on them. A more modest but more solidly based and focused agenda may have had a better chance of continuing despite the management turnover within FDC.

There is, however, a certain structural tension at work that will influence Synergos’ work with FDC (or other such organizations) in circumstances like these. Synergos is a small NGO with a program budget of modest size. Its total Mozambique program budget (both USAID and matching funds) for the 39 months of the grant was just over US\$688,000—some \$230,000 per year. Of this amount, just over \$496,000, or 72%, is devoted to intra-Synergos costs for regional and headquarters staff and support. The amount available for activities related to the institutional agenda was thus limited, on the order of \$68,000 in 2004, for example.<sup>20</sup> For FDC, Synergos was but one of many supporters—to be sure, one with a close and important history, and one focusing on a strategically important issue, FDC’s development as a foundation. Yet in 2002, 2003, and 2004, the Foundation’s total investment in all forms of programming approximated \$7.5 million per year. The Foundation had a large staff complement, reflecting its operational role.<sup>21</sup> It was a large and multi-faceted organization that had embarked on a strategic-planning (and eventually) a restructuring process which was protracted, complex and—in the absence of a permanent ED—which moved slowly at best. The tension for Synergos is that its program has depended very much on an expeditious and effective process of organizational change and development within FDC, and hence upon an effective leadership with the mandate to see through that change. Synergos staff were often frustrated by the fact that these “other priorities” of FDC so often took precedence over its evolution as a grantmaking organization. Yet Synergos could scarcely move the process along. Its own mandate and its expertise are not in this area, nor does FDC

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<sup>20</sup> Program resources in that year included \$18,700 for consultants, \$5,900 for meetings and conferences, and \$2,600 for publications, a total of \$27,200. The travel budget was larger, at \$40,950, but this figure included staff travel, as well as provision for exchanges or visits by Senior Fellows.

<sup>21</sup> Approximately 100 at time of writing.

expect it to play an OD role. Finally, its budget in this instance may have been far too limited even if the parties had agreed that Synergos should actively participate in and support a broader OD agenda.

**Indicators of achievement:**

The three indicators for Objective 1 turn on FDC’s planning for and movement towards financial sustainability. They include the management of grants and donor relations; a fundraising and endowment-building strategy; and increased revenues as a result of the latter. Following is a summary of progress against these.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>B/line</b>	<b>EOP Target</b>	<b>EOP Actual</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>(1)</b> % compliance with procedures of an integrated FDC grants management and donor relations framework.	No written fr/work	Written f/wk, 80% compliance	Written grant procedures; no donor rel’ns f/wk.	Target not met. Partial success: FDC codified its <i>de facto</i> procedures in 2003 – staff now have guidelines for managing grants. Not in use: new grants frozen by reduced program revenue.
<b>(2)</b> achievement of tasks & targets in integrated fundraising and endowment-bldg strategy.	No integrated strategy	80% tasks & targets achieved in strategy for project period.	No integrated strategy.	Target not met. Limited success: parts of a strategy in place – policy for investments & legal instrument to manage those.
<b>(3)</b> Increase in FDC’s overall resource & funding base through endowment building & fundraising campaign.	No endowment & f/r campaign	20% incr in FDC’s endowment & program funds & pledges	n/a	Target not met – no increase in FDC’s overall financial base via a fundraising and endowment-bldg campaign.

Some additional notes are in order on the limited progress against these targets:

- **Grants management framework:** The 2003 summary of grantmaking procedures means that staff now have guidelines for proposal formats, assessment, contracts, and reporting. The test will be the application of these procedures within the operations of the Foundation. There is no plan for progressively increasing the percentage of program funds assigned to grantmaking, and at time of writing new grants have been frozen by reductions in program revenue.
- **The design and implementation of an integrated fundraising and endowment-building strategy:** The partners can point to limited success because of several useful activities which together afford some basis for such a strategy in the future. As an example, FDC staff spoke very positively about professional-development visits to East and Southeast Asia in 2003, facilitated by Synergos’ Asia regional office. These gave the staff involved access to the experience of Asian foundations in building and managing endowments. This in turn helped FDC in formulating its policy on investments and in setting up the for-profit company that will manage its

investments to feed its endowment. A broader fundraising strategy (including a donor relations framework) to feed the endowment remains to be developed, and only in November 2005 did FDC appoint a Director of Fundraising. Other useful activities in 2004 and 2005 have included engaging a South African organization to train individual staff and to provide workshops with larger staff groups on the central place of fundraising within the life of a body such as FDC. The people involved received these very positively, and have built upon them to begin assembling a donor database, for example. It remains for senior management and the Board of FDC to hire a Director of Fundraising and to assign staff to the resource mobilization function, if these targets are to be pursued or achieved.

- **An increase in FDC's overall financial base via fundraising and endowment-building:** It follows that this third indicator has not been achieved. This evaluator was unable to obtain current information from FDC on its endowment, nor on the reduction in program revenues noted in the discussion of grantmaking.<sup>22</sup>

FDC staff said that there were two reasons for the lack of movement on these key targets. The organization had embarked on a process of redefining its strategic directions in 2003. Shortly after doing so, it lost its ED, then spent well over a year finding a replacement and getting him on seat. Since December 2004, the strategic planning and restructuring has continued. Acknowledging these changes, it is not clear to this evaluator why FDC has taken so long to get to grips with functions as critical as fundraising and endowment-building. Individual staff members of FDC expressed their frustration and dismay with the lack of movement. Certainly Synergos staff felt that, as representatives of an external organization, they could do little more than promote piecemeal activities of the kind described—useful in themselves, but not part of an overall process to consolidate the resource-mobilization function more generally.

### **3.3.4 Assessing Objectives: #3, Capacity-building with Mozambican CSOs, to strengthen the technical and financial base for community development by providing FDC's capacity-building services.**

The observations here echo those of the preceding sections.

An objective more tailored to the capacity assets and priorities of Mozambican CSOs would be both more specific and more readily understood. The indicators below suggest three elements: written fundraising strategies; guidelines for good development practice; and dialogue among Mozambican companies, FDC and CSOs on corporate citizenship. It is not clear, however, whether these are priority components in a capacity development agenda, or simply items that seemed feasible within the period of the project grant. Certainly the rationale for FDC to invest in promoting capacity among CSOs is clear

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<sup>22</sup> FDC's overall revenue figures are skewed by the presence of the large USAID-funded HIV/AIDS program. The annual expenditure of approximately \$7.5 million/yr between 2002 and 2004 reflects the influence of more than \$3 million/year from that program, hence a significant increase from the total 2001 figure of \$5.12 million.

enough. As one staff member put it, if FDC is to be a grantmaker, the necessary complement to its own capacity will be *external* capacity—i.e., among those organizations to whom it will make grants. (For this reason, in this program, Objectives #1 and #3 are closely complementary.) The same staff member felt, however, that this objective had the lowest priority of the three. A similar pattern appeared as in the activities related to FDC’s institutional development. For example: it was agreed that a useful workshop on resource mobilization with CSOs, held in Maputo late in 2003, would be replicated in the provinces—but no one in the Foundation made the necessary followup decision to make this happen, and the initiative withered.

The longer-term importance of this issue—FDC’s support for capacity development among Mozambican CSOs—gave rise to an interesting proposal by FDC staff. AS FDC and Synergos negotiate a new phase of co-operation, runs the argument, Synergos should establish a small team (perhaps two people) with the mandate and skillset to support organizational development among Mozambican CSOs. It is important that such a resource be located in Mozambique, with the necessary language skills. There are very capable South African OD practitioners, but they are not on-the-spot, nor do they usually have the required language skills. Such a presence would allow Synergos to offer longer-term, practical support to CSOs. **It is recommended that** Synergos investigate this idea. FDC staff also acknowledged the value of the Senior Fellows facility, but also looked for a continued and longer-term process of dialogue, coaching and accompaniment.

***Indicators of achievement:***

The following table summarizes progress against the two indicators (March 2004 Planning Matrix, revised) for this objective:

Indicator	B/line	EOP Target	EOP Actual.	Notes
(1) # of Mozambican CSOs who have guidelines for good development practice	No national guidelines	Guidelines for one nat'l umbrella & 10 major CSOs.	Guidelines not in place.	Target not met.
(2) # of Mozambican companies in structured dialogue & corporate c/ship co-operation with FDC.	No structured dialogue.	10 major Mzmbcn companies in dialogue & co-operation.	n/a	Target not met. Partial success: survey of corporate citizenship led to 2003 paper and forum. These helped put the issue onto a more public agenda. Good relationships have been built, which are likely to be productive in longer term.

One additional point should be added to this summary. Within the wider Mozambican development community, FDC has contributed to a strengthening of individual and collective capacity among Mozambican CSOs, even though these activities have not been part of the FDC/Synergos program in the strict sense. Networks such as the Mozambique Debt Group, to cite one example, have improved their policy advocacy through FDC’s financial support, management and policy advice, and cultivation of political space.

### ***In conclusion...***

The core theme of our assessment of the Mozambique program can be simply stated: the long-established partnership between FDC and Synergos remained cordial during the period of the USAID grant, but the partners were largely ineffective in moving forward their main agenda, strengthening FDC as a grantmaking foundation. It may be too much to speak of *immobilisme* within FDC, but its protracted process of organizational change appears to have imposed real limitations on what it could achieve in its work with Synergos. The Synergos/FDC program, wideranging in its scope but aimed at FDC's financial sustainability and its programming as a grantmaker, depended in the final analysis on FDC's desire to make itself into the grantmaking foundation it claimed to be—or at least to give greater weight to that part of its hybrid character. In the absence of sufficient “effective demand” from FDC, and leadership to articulate and realize its part in a joint undertaking, it is hard to see how more could have been achieved.

#### **Sowing seeds for the future?**

During the period of the USAID grant, Synergos and FDC staff organized several initiatives which addressed key issues for FDC, and which participants said they valued highly. These activities generated ideas, skills and working relationships which are potential assets for both the individuals involved and for FDC as a whole. Realizing this potential is the challenge for FDC's leadership. Some examples:

##### **Resource Mobilization:**

- In February 2003, two FDC managers visited foundations in Hong Kong, Thailand and Philippines to study fundraising processes and systems. Both brought back tools to use in fundraising and endowment building for FDC. A weeklong exchange to South Africa in 2004 and a three-day workshop in Maputo in April 2005 consolidated staff knowledge of resource mobilization strategies.
- In August 2003, Synergos and FDC convened a two-day workshop for all Foundation staff on fundraising for sustainability. Staff responded enthusiastically to the challenge that fundraising was a collective responsibility. A July 2005 consultancy with a Synergos Board member underscored the theme of institutional readiness and commitment.

##### **Linkages and Exposure:**

- Synergos co-ordinated a fundraising tour to New York in May 2005, with Mme Machel and FDC's Executive Director opening conversations with major donors such as the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Institute.
- In September 2004, an FDC program officer participated in a monthlong triangular exchange in the Cape with counterparts from rural development organizations in South Africa and Zimbabwe.
- In March 2004, Synergos, FDC and the CTA, a business association, co-sponsored a forum which launched a joint survey on corporate citizenship in Mozambique.

### 3.4 The Mexico Program

#### 3.4.1 Program Goal and Objectives:

Synergos' programming in Mexico supported by the USAID Matching Grant project is framed in terms similar to the Mozambique and Brazil programs. The overall goal of the country program is *to strengthen a non-governmental financial and technical resource base for development in Mexico, generating models for adaptation in other countries.*<sup>23</sup>

Three objectives structure the program towards this goal. These address the institutional development of CEMEFI, the Mexican Centre for Philanthropy, Synergos' principal partner in the program; the partnership between CEMEFI and Synergos; and the resources of individual foundations. The objectives are as follows:

#1 *Institutional development for CEMEFI:* to increase CEMEFI's institutional capacity to deliver, on a sustainable basis, capacity building services to Mexican foundations, including foundations focusing on health and environment.

#2 *The partnership between CEMEFI and Synergos:* To strengthen the Synergos/CEMEFI partnership with the goal of building the financial and technical resource base for development programs, including those in health and environment.

#3 *The resources of individual foundations:* To strengthen the financial and technical resource base for non-profit sector development in Mexico, especially in the areas of health and the environment, by providing capacity-building services to sixty<sup>24</sup> existing and emerging grantmaking foundations.

Each objective has three indicators, summarized in the March 2004 DIP Planning Matrix (the total of nine reduced from the original eleven in the 2003 DIP.) These are noted in the commentary below on progress against each objective.

#### 3.4.2 Assessing Objectives: General Observations

##### (1) Influencing Factors: the context of the program:

Respondents highlighted several aspects of the context of the program which influenced the people and organizations involved. From the résumé of their comments, it will be clear that the program has operated in a complex and challenging environment. It can be

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<sup>23</sup> DIP, July 2003, p. 24. The USAID-funded program, with its matching grants, became known as the Mexico National program. When it began, it was to all intents and purposes the Mexico program. Synergos' programming later included the Border Philanthropy Partnership (from 2002) and a program of institutional development with three individual community foundations, funded by the Hewlett Foundation (from 2005). The phrase "National Program" serves to distinguish among the three initiatives.

<sup>24</sup> Reduced to twenty-four in the revised DIP Planning Matrix of March 2004.

argued too that the CF's consciousness of this environment, and their place in it, is a signal of their growing sense of collective identity as a movement.<sup>25</sup> The dynamics of that environment are clearer now to the program participants, working with the benefit of some years of experience and reflection, than they were when the grant began.

At the national level, respondents argued that foundations in Mexico, and community foundations in particular, are part of the broader process of consolidating democracy—building democratic institutions and a democratic political culture, and promoting active citizenship. They saw community foundations as part of civil society in Mexico, with an opportunity and obligation to contribute to strengthening it. Moreover, civil society's place within the democratic project remains far from firm and assured. For this reason, international support for Mexican civil society of the kind provided by Synergos—in this instance, for community foundations—was vital, now and in the future.

This analysis holds implications for capacity development programming. Respondents emphasized the centrality of governance; of responsiveness and co-operation between CFs and their wider community, especially civil society organizations but also business and government. They also emphasized the critical place of *intangibles* in these processes—of confidence and a commitment to social responsibility, civic participation, and a public voice for people historically excluded from public life. This concept of capacity is very different from the common preoccupation with skills development in organizational management, clarity about roles and responsibilities, acquiring policy influence, and so on. And, as one person put it, “There’s no tool-kit.”

In such circumstances, Synergos has the analytical opportunity and challenge to substantiate its claim<sup>26</sup> that “the foundation model” offers unique advantages to civil society and development in Mexico: its appropriateness to this context needs to be explored and demonstrated rather than asserted. To say this is not to argue that foundations, and CFs in particular, are not relevant. Quite the contrary—Mexicans in the CF movement are actively debating and working out what a Mexican community foundation will be, and Synergos is part of that process.<sup>27</sup> The challenge and the opportunity are—as in Mozambique—to set out the terms of the debate, the conclusions and outstanding questions.

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<sup>25</sup> CDRA, a South African development resource centre, argues convincingly from experience that the first condition of autonomous organizational development is a sense of identity and one's place in the wider world. See CDRA, “Crossroads: A development reading,” CDRA Annual Report, 1997/98, Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>26</sup> DIP, pp. 23-4.

<sup>27</sup> A respondent with a Mexican CF put the issue this way: “Mexican Community Foundations are a brand new movement in the country. Cultural issues make it hard to gain trust in an institution, so we have to be very creative in the way we attract donors, and explain the benefits of investing in our communities through us. We are building endowment funds, but it is hard to do so. So we do not operate in the same way as American CFs. We have funds but not all of them are permanent. They must be very flexible to meet the donor's needs, and maybe with time they will become permanent funds. We do not operate programs, but we have to sometimes be the catalysts for creating programs and to help non profits to do a better job in the community.”



Secondly, the institutional setting is particularly relevant to the program. Although the program began with a core partnership between CEMEFI and Synergos, one based on collaboration between the two organizations stretching back to the early 1990's, there is more to the story than this. Within CEMEFI, the growing community foundation movement found expression in the Community Foundations Group (the CFG), an affinity group established by CEMEFI and Synergos in 1998-99. Complementing this was the CFG Consultative Group, an advisory body set up by Synergos and CEMEFI for this program.<sup>28</sup> In developing the program, Synergos also drew upon the advice of prominent individual foundations such as the Vamos Foundation. The program included action both at the broader national-institutional level, with CEMEFI and the CFG, but also, and especially in the last year of the program, at the level of individual CFs. In a changing institutional environment—the growth and development of CFs, and the maturation of the CGF within CEMEFI—any support program would face a challenge of ensuring balance and co-ordination among its different parts, and effective communication and transparent decisionmaking among the various institutional actors. This program is no exception.

As the program developed, moreover, its institutional context took on another layer of complexity. Synergos' achievements in securing additional program funds for the Border Philanthropy Partnership (BPP) and its support for individual CFs via the Hewlett Foundation significantly expanded the scale of its program in Mexico. Although these are not part of the Mexico National program, they are derived from Synergos' experience and learning from that program, and comprise both part of Synergos' profile in Mexico and part of the topography of philanthropy in the country. These changes have made the institutional stage considerably more crowded, and institutional relationships more complex. These are also influenced by inter-personal relationships, some positive and effective, others less so.

The point is not that institutional issues are somehow uniquely complex in Mexico; rather, that the program has operated in a challenging institutional setting, and the possibilities and limitations of that should be part of the design of future such initiatives. This issue is comparable to one arising in the Mozambique program. Given Synergos' reliance on a sole (FDC) or primary (CEMEFI) program partner, what conditions need to be in place if that partnership is to work well?

## **(2) Framing the Program Strategy, Objectives and Indicators:**

The DIP sets out a clear two-tier program strategy for Synergos. The Institute would work with the national body, CEMEFI, to enhance its capacity to support its member foundations, especially CFs, and in a complementary way, would work with individual foundations on organizational development. Less clear in the program documents is the relative priority of each tier, either conceptually or in the weight of resources assigned to each. Synergos staff made the operating assumption that that working with CEMEFI would be an effective means of strengthening individual foundations. In the last year of the program, as we shall see, Synergos changed its emphasis to work more with

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<sup>28</sup> It is made up of five elected representatives of the CFs, CEMEFI's Executive Director, CEMEFI's Community foundations co-ordinator, and is led by a member of CEMEFI's board. (DIP, p. 26.)

individual CFs. The point is not that any program strategy should remain unchanged; rather, that the assumptions about the links between the different parts, and their relative priority, should be described and explained, as well the conditions required for both parts of the strategy to be effective.

The three objectives thus effectively divide into two, reflecting the two tiers of the program strategy: strengthening CEMEFI, and strengthening individual foundations. Objective Two, strengthening the CEMEFI/Synergos partnership, is valid and a distinct issue, but is very close to the first objective, and in practice, distinguishing between the two, or assigning resources to one or the other, becomes very difficult. This second objective can also be seen as an enabling condition for the others, directly so in the case of Objective One, and indirectly in the case of Objective Three. Interviews with Synergos staff revealed a *de facto* priority among these, initially weighted to the first objective, and with more emphasis on the third in the latter stages of the program.

As in the presentation of the Mozambique program, the statements of the program strategy and objectives for Mexico would be clearer if accompanied by a summary of the financial resources attached to the different elements. These should include both the weights of the respective budgets, and the type of resources used for the program. These would include Synergos' staff time, as well as technical assistance in the form of consultants and Senior Fellows, and complementary resources like travel and workshops.

We should note as well that as the program developed, Synergos staff narrowed the objectives. In particular, the program came to focus on community foundations, both in the work between Synergos and CEMEFI, and in Synergos' direct engagement with individual foundations. As the summary at the start of this section shows, the scope of the program at its outset was broader, directed towards grantmaking foundations. Within a year, Synergos narrowed its attention to CFs, although the revised program planning documents such as the March 2004 DIP Matrix do not reflect this adjustment. This narrower focus was surely more manageable than the broader approach, but also more in line with the origins of the program in the late 1990's. Synergos staff explained that the program arose from discussions with CEMEFI at that time on how best to support Mexico's emerging community foundation movement.

In a related vein, the statements of goal and objectives for the program would be clearer and more faithful to the program if they expressed the intention to support grantmaking foundations, and later, community foundations in Mexico. The references to "a financial and technical support base for development program" are unnecessarily broad.

We should also note here that Objectives One and Three contain iterative processes. In both instances an analysis of foundations' capacities, needs and priorities is intended to lay the basis for a capacity-development program. Setting out these phases as distinct objectives would tailor these objectives so that they better capture the iterative quality of the program. In the DIP, these objectives are presented in quite general terms, with little substance on what is to be achieved during the program. This approach would have required Synergos and its partners to adjust the objectives within the program—in effect,

there would have been two sets, each of shorter duration—but the resulting objectives would have been more specific about what was to be achieved, and in what period of time.

Lastly, some general comments can be offered on the indicators in the program, of which there are three for each objective. In all cases, an explanation of the link between each indicator and its objective would provide a useful reality check. As explained in the commentary on each objective below, the indicators do touch on factors related to the objective, but these are not *central* to the objective. Hence, the indicators comprise oblique rather than direct signals of achievement of objectives. They provide useful information on the program, but do not express the essence of the objective.

The recommendations that conclude this section are similar to those made for the Mozambique program (p. 12). **It is recommended that** for future comparable programs, Synergos and its partners ensure that:

- program objectives are tailored to the specific capacity issues and priorities of the organizations concerned;
- the relationships and priority order among the components of the program strategy, and the corresponding objectives, are clear;
- resource allocations for each program objective are clear;
- indicators are explained and justified as markers for the program objectives.

### **3.4.3 Assessing Objectives: #2, strengthening the Synergos/CEMEFI partnership:**

#### ***Influencing factors:***

As in the commentary on the Mozambique program, we begin the assessment of the objectives of the Mexico program with #2, strengthening the CEMEFI/Synergos partnership. This priority reflects the importance of effective relationships in a capacity-building program. Two considerations shape the assessment of this objective:

- The collaboration between Synergos and CEMEFI substantially predates this program. The two organizations built on an organizational relationship dating from the early 1990's, and in interviews for this evaluation, representatives of both organizations stated their wish to continue working together. (As noted in the general observations above, several Mexican respondents also emphasized the importance of maintaining international support and solidarity with Mexican civil society in the current conjuncture. They cited Synergos as an important international ally.)
- In practice, the scope of this objective has not been limited to the CEMEFI/Synergos partnership. It is necessary to consider as well the co-operation between Synergos and CFs, both individually and collectively via the CFG. Indeed one of the major challenges for all the participants in the program has been to strike an effective balance between these two domains of partnership.

### *Positive features...*

Respondents spoke of several positive aspects of the co-operation between Synergos and its Mexican counterparts:

- The bng relationship between Synergos and CEMEFI enabled the two bodies to work effectively together in the late 1990's to set up the CFG in response to Mexico's growing CF movement. In a similar vein, the history of partnership between the two provided a good basis for the Matching-Grant proposal to USAID. The USAID grant in turn allowed CEMEFI and Synergos to establish a more systematic basis for their co-operation. With the USAID grant under way, Synergos helped CEMEFI to leverage additional funds from the Inter-American Foundation in 2003 for a two-year program managed by CEMEFI to enhance CFs' endowments. According to CEMEFI, this initiative created a "good synergy" with the USAID monies, both resource pools being used by CEMEFI and Synergos in their capacity-building work with the CFs.<sup>29</sup> The later summary of achievement against indicators for Objective #3, strengthening individual CFs' endowments, shows these resources were used effectively.
- The Community Foundations Consultative Group was a useful forum for annual planning of work to be done within the USAID project. More generally, respondents welcomed the approach taken by Synergos staff, bringing the various participants to the same table to work out program directions, broad resource allocations, and specific actions.
- Mexican respondents mentioned the value of Synergos' Senior Fellows program as a means of access to others' experience and knowledge. This international presence<sup>30</sup> did not diminish the importance of developing a Mexican approach to community foundations.
- CF respondents spoke well of Synergos' readiness to adjust its capacity building methodologies towards a more customized approach to organizational development, one that took account of the specific circumstances of the different foundations within the network rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach. More generally, they respected and welcomed Synergos' commitment to strengthening the CF movement, and the CFG as a particular vehicle for that. Several respondents mentioned the importance of the independent evaluation of the CFG, which has helped to galvanize and strengthen the Group.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> To complement the IAF resources for fundraising staff, marketing and outreach, and endowments, Synergos committed MN\$20,000 to each foundation on a matching-grant basis. The overall sum was modest, US\$12,619, but it allowed each foundation to plan and finance its own OD activities. (Synergos Institute, USAID Grant, "Annual Report for Period June 2003 to June 2004," July 2004.)

<sup>30</sup> Not only international. The Program included two Senior Fellows from the Mexican CF network.

<sup>31</sup> Commissioned by Synergos and CEMEFI and undertaken at the end of 2004 and in the first months of 2005.

*...and some difficulties:*

Respondents also identified several difficulties in the key relationships in the program, both within the CEMEFI/Synergos relationship, and arising from Synergos' decision to establish closer and more direct programming links with individual CFs. Thus:

- Respondents described a basic imbalance within the core Synergos/CEMEFI relationship, derived from Synergos' role as raiser and manager of funds. As the contracting agency with USAID, Synergos held the purse for the program, and was responsible for reporting to USAID on the use of the funds. Hence, Synergos was often in the position of interpreting USAID regulations and deciding on the appropriate use of USAID monies. Thus, while both CEMEFI and Synergos were jointly planning and using the funds in the field, only Synergos was accountable for them, and held ultimate decision-making power on their use. Synergos staff felt this put them in a donor's role, quite different from their longstanding partnership relationship. CEMEFI for its part felt excluded from control of core program resources. Had CEMEFI been able to bring its own financial resources to the program, this might have redressed the imbalance in some measure. The imbalance in control of finances thus created a substantial imbalance in the autonomy of each party and their accountability to each other as nominally equal actors in a joint program. Despite these imbalances, Synergos and CEMEFI did succeed in planning their work together for the three-plus years of the USAID grant, and implemented all their planned activities.

In any comparable joint undertaking in the future, CEMEFI would want to exercise some management authority over the finances, and Synergos would want to see fundraising responsibilities shared and co-ordinated. Potential donors in turn would have to anticipate direct disbursements to a Southern (in this instance Mexican) non-governmental entity. There is a precedent for this practice in the IAF grant to CEMEFI.

- In a related vein, tension arose between CEMEFI and Synergos over the latter's decision to work more directly with CFs. By securing funds for the BPP and the Hewlett-funded institutional development program, Synergos signalled that it was not working in Mexico exclusively with and through CEMEFI. Within the USAID program, Synergos allocated a portion of its 2004/05 matching funds to support the OD plans of individual CFs.<sup>32</sup> Synergos staff felt that organizational development for and with individual CFs was an effective way of strengthening the foundations and their network. Synergos saw this approach as a complement to CEMEFI's national and representative role, and to the organizational home the Centre provided to the CFG. And as noted, Synergos and CEMEFI continued with their joint workplan. Nevertheless, CEMEFI as a national body felt that Synergos should work through its channels, to avoid introducing confusion into the network.

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<sup>32</sup> As a complement to the technical work funded by the IAF endowment building program, administered by CEMEFI, described above.

- Between the two bodies there seem to have been different, and possibly unexamined, expectations about the extent of organizational autonomy and the role to be played by Synergos vis-à-vis the foundation movement. It appears that the tension resulting from Synergos' change in programming emphasis was not fully resolved. As a complicating factor, CFs welcomed Synergos' more direct engagement and support, particularly its longer-term accompaniment and tailored approaches to capacity development. At the same time (i.e., in 2004-05, the last year of the 3-year USAID program grant), the CFG was examining its place within CEMEFI, and some CFs were proposing a more independent body to represent CFs (though one affiliated to CEMEFI). In this instance, the debates within CEMEFI around the status of the CFG intersected with and probably intensified the tension between CEMEFI and Synergos. Interpersonal tension was an additional complicating factor, with CEMEFI unhappy about Synergos financing the work of a technical advisor to the CFs. For their part, Synergos staff that the advisor in question is the only resource person available in Mexico for work of this kind with the CFs.

***Indicators of achievement:***

The DIP Planning Matrix of March 2004 lists three indicators to show progress against Objective #2:

- The number and percentage of Synergos/CEMEFI annual workplan items accomplished;
- The number and percentage of favourable evaluations of activities implemented by the Synergos/CEMEFI partnership
- The number of donors supporting Synergos' capacity-building work for Mexican foundations.

Synergos staff have provided the following summary of progress against each indicator. Each target has been achieved:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>B/line</b>	<b>EOP Target</b>	<b>EOP Act</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>(1)</b> # and % of joint annual workplans completed	none	90%	100% of 4 workplans, 2002 – 05.	<p>Synergos &amp; CEMEFI completed all activities listed in joint workplans, incl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 capacity building workshops a year;</li> <li>• 1 annual National Conference of Mexican Foundations;</li> <li>• 4 meetings per year of the CFG Consultative Group;</li> <li>• program of professional exchanges (until 2004) for CF staff and board;</li> <li>• one professional exchange for CEMEFI staff</li> </ul> <p>With the reception of the IAF endowment building grant, Synergos and CEMEFI expanded their workplan to include technical and financial assistance to the 13 foundations in this program (2003/04)</p>

<b>(2)</b> # and % of favorable evaluations of activities implemented by the Synergos-CEMEFI partnership	No data	90% favourable	Seven workshops evaluated: responses were 96% favourable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2003 Synergos and CEMEFI systematized their process for evaluating joint activities and for reviewing those evaluations.</li> <li>• Target exceeded in the seven workshops held between Jan/03 and March/05.</li> </ul>
<b>(3)</b> # of donors supporting Synergos' capacity building work for Mexican foundations.	1	5 (500% incr)	12 (1,200% increase)	Target dramatically exceeded. Previous or current donors: Hewlett Foundation, Ford Foundation, Mott Foundation, Gonzalo Rio Foundation, McCune Foundation, Meadows Foundation, Annie E Casey Foundation, Houston Endowment, JP Morgan Chase, Pfizer Corporation, Inter-American Foundation.

These indicators provide useful information about the program as a whole, and it is a very positive sign that CEMEFI and Synergos can show solid progress, exceeding each EOP target. Synergos' fundraising achievements are especially notable, for the matching funds secured made the similar amount of USAID money available for the program. In addition, revenue secured for the USAID-funded project opened the door to other programs. As mentioned earlier, Synergos built on this program to leverage funds from Hewlett Foundation to support the CFs' institutional development program.

None of these indicators, however, adequately taps the central element of the objective: the capability of the organizations to work together, and their satisfaction with their collaboration. The first indicator signals primarily the feasibility of the workplan items; and indirectly the capability of the two organizations to work together. The second highlights the relevance of the joint activities for those served by them, and the third, Synergos' fundraising capabilities. At issue, however, is the synergy created by the cooperation of the two organizations, and their commitment to and satisfaction with their relationship. A well conceived and delivered joint workplan may be a proxy for these factors. Such a workplan combined with an explicit end-of-year endorsement of the working relationship, as part of a joint review, would be a better one. It is true that Synergos and CEMEFI worked well enough together in the program to organize and see through annual planning sessions; it is equally true that both parties felt tensions within the relationship, and had their own dissatisfactions with it. The challenge is to craft an indicator that expresses the essential elements of the objective—here, mutual satisfaction with the relationship. This is likely to require a judgment by both parties, hence a qualitative indicator.<sup>33</sup>

In the end, said one respondent, although the partnership between Synergos and CEMEFI did not unfold as the program statement envisioned, "both organizations probably found their niche," with Synergos focussing its support more directly to community foundations, and CEMEFI maintaining its position as their national representative.

<sup>33</sup> Though this would not rule out using, let us say, a numerical scale to show the degree of satisfaction with particular aspects of the relationship.

Both organizations, it should be remembered, affirmed in interviews their desire to continue working together. What that co-operation will look like remains to be negotiated. In September 2005, Synergos outlined to CEMEFI the services the Institute is willing and able to provide to the CF movement, and at time of writing was awaiting CEMEFI's response.

#### **3.4.4 Assessing objectives: #1, strengthening CEMEFI's capacity to deliver capacity-building services to Mexican foundations**

##### ***Some brief history:***

The revised DIP (July 2003) explains this objective by noting that historically, CEMEFI lacked both the personnel and the funds necessary to provide capacity-building services to the community foundation sector. Hence, it lacked systematic baseline and diagnostic data about the capacities and needs of Mexican foundations. The first programming objective of the USAID Matching Grant, then, envisaged strengthening this aspect of CEMEFI's operations. CEMEFI secured funding from the Mott Foundation which enabled it to appoint a staffperson dedicated to its Community Foundations Program. A diagnostic process in 2002 enabled CEMEFI and Synergos to build a joint capacity-building workplan for 2002/03 with the Consultative Group, and enabled CEMEFI to set up a database with profiles of the community foundations. The workplan included four training workshops focussing on Analysis of the Local Context, Communication and Social marketing, Local Resource Mobilization, and Evaluation of Impact. It also included a program of professional exchanges among the Mexican CFs, technical support for CEMEFI staff, a conference of Mexican grantmaking institutions, and a system for monitoring and evaluating the CEMEFI/Synergos activities.

This approach appears to have been well considered, based on the use of diagnostic tools and consultation with members of the CFG. The lessons of practice led to some important modifications, however. Training workshops, the key element in the program, were (and are) a commonly used tool in capacity-building programs. Participants evaluated these workshops, and although the individual sessions were often reviewed positively, they generated limited overall benefit for the foundations. There was insufficient followup and continuity between the workshops, and the individuals participating were not able to integrate what they had learned into the practice of their organizations. Synergos staff recounted an important lesson: if the participating bodies (in this case the CFs) do not have their own organizational-development agenda, built on experience, motivation and commitment, and guided by an effective leadership, workshops will likely be one-off events with little developmental impact. Nor did the workshops adequately reflect and respond to the diversity among the CFs. Some of these were a decade old, with established endowments and programs, while others were start-ups. The needs and assets of each were quite different, and the more established foundations in particular found the workshop approach was not well suited to their requirements.



Towards the end of the program year 2003/04, therefore, Synergos adjusted its approach to focus more on the second strand of the overall program strategy, i.e., towards more direct support to individual foundations. To do this, Synergos used matching funds from the Hewlett Foundation to finance technical assistance by an experienced consultant (also working within the BPP.)<sup>34</sup> In doing so, Synergos drew on its experience with a very different approach to capacity-building used in the BPP. Synergos staff describe this as *acompanamiento*.<sup>35</sup> The approach is based on a long-term engagement by staff or consultants, in which the parties create and carry out a development plan tailored to the circumstances, resources and requirements of each foundation. The approach relies on coaching in the workplace and on-the-spot joint problemsolving.

### ***Positive Features...***

- Respondents in the community foundations affirmed that their network would never be where it is today without the support of CEMEFI and Synergos, beginning with the joint initiative to set up the CFG in the late 1990's, and continuing with the program of assistance under the USAID grant.
- Staff of both organizations said that they learned a great deal about the concepts and practice of capacity development, and in a professional sense, grew together. CEMEFI and Synergos were able to work together effectively to secure funds from the IAF for CEMEFI to work with thirteen CFs to strengthen their endowments and their management of grantmaking. This latter program, in place from August 2003, was effectively merged with the Synergos/CEMEFI initiative to create a more comprehensive capacity building program. The success in that program probably helped CEMEFI in securing a US\$200,000 grant from Microsoft in 2005, intended to support CFs in three states to increase access to information technology and development appropriate skills and knowledge in this area.
- Synergos' support (complemented by other funders' resources) thus made a major contribution to CEMEFI's Community Foundations Program, helping the Centre to set up a systematic program of support for the CFG.
- Relations between the CFG and CEMEFI have not always been smooth—there have been differences of opinion over the autonomy of the group, and over capacity-development strategies and services—but Synergos staff believe they have helped mediate relations between the two parties. One respondent also argued that the CFG has helped CEMEFI by strengthening both its membership and its representative role.
- The CF database on CEMEFI's website and the baseline data analysis feeding it have been regularized. The baseline diagnosis has been shared with each CF, which can use the assessment for its own OD plan.
- Synergos staff believe, finally, that the Institute has been able to maintain its support for CEMEFI's engagement with business. The annual Mexician Grantmakers' Encounters have included speakers from the corporate as well as the philanthropic sectors.

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<sup>34</sup> This approach effectively served as a pilot scheme, since the Hewlett Foundation subsequently funded an organizational-development program with three CFs.

<sup>35</sup> The English word "accompaniment" is also used in development NGO networks. The Portuguese *acompanhamento* is used in Brazil.

**...and Points of Difference:**

- Over the course of the program, differences emerged between the two organizations in their approach to capacity-building with the CFs. As noted, Synergos staff concluded (from consultation with members of the CFG) that the training workshops which were the core of the first (2002/03) workplan did not significantly improve organizational capacity among the CFs. Synergos revised its approach to include more work with individual CFs, but CEMEFI was not in accord with this adjustment. In an interview, CEMEFI staff described their approach as one of creating space for the CFs to exchange experience and to learn from each other, rather than providing technical assistance to the foundations. As the commentary below on Objective #3 shows, however, the CFs involved have been positive about the shift in emphasis, which (because of Synergos' success in securing funding for the BPP and the Hewlett program) has brought developmental benefits to ten community foundations. It is not clear whether CEMEFI will buy in to this approach. Respondents noted that the conversation continues with CEMEFI on the issue.
- Programming roles and strategy are at issue here, perhaps obscured by the tensions in the triangular organizational relationship. The question is whether a national representative body (CEMEFI) can or should provide OD for its members (the CFG) wholly or in part. Or, to what extent should it encourage or co-ordinate national and international OD specialists to do this work? One respondent wondered whether CEMEFI really wanted to play this technical role as a provider of capacity-building services, and suggested a division of labour would be a more effective way of working. In this scenario, CEMEFI would play its national representative role, with Synergos supporting OD services to community foundations. A key factor in realizing such a scenario will be the ability of the CFG to articulate and negotiate the CFs' capacity development agenda with organizations such as CEMEFI and Synergos.

**Indicators of achievement:**

The DIP Planning Matrix lists three indicators for Objective #1:

- The number of Mexican foundations with current profiles in the CEMEFI database
- The number of knowledge resources on the CEMEFI website
- The number of donors supporting CEMEFI's capacity-building work.

Synergos and CEMEFI have provided information on progress on each of these. The following table shows that all targets have been met or exceeded:

Indicator	B/line	EOP Tgt	EOP Act	Notes
(1) # of foundations with current (annual) institutional profiles in the CEMEFI database.	0	20	19	Target effectively met: All 19 members of the CFG have an institutional profile in the CEMEFI d/base. CF profiles are part of CEMEFI's Directory of Mexican CFs and are grouped by region. Profiles include general information (history, name of the Chair of the Board, mission, geographical scope, programs), contact information and a link to the CF's website.

<p><b>(2)</b> # of knowledge resources on the CEMEFI website</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>40 (400% incr.)</p>	<p>Target exceeded</p>	<p>CEMEFI has these knowledge resources on the CF section of its website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description_of the nature and purpose of a Mexican CF: Brief summary of the emergence and trajectory of CFs.</li> <li>• Section on Basic Concepts for CFs: includes “How a CF operates”, “What it means to be a CF in Mexico” and roles of a CF.</li> <li>• Profiles for the 19 CFs in the CFG.</li> <li>• History of the CF movement in Mexico</li> <li>• Summaries of the 16 CF workshops conducted by Synergos and CEMEFI between Nov 1998 and Sept 2005.</li> <li>• Summaries of the 3 National Conferences of Mexican Grantmakers, Nov 2002, 2003 &amp; 2004.</li> <li>• Summary of Nov./04 meeting on Institutionalization, Transparency and Performance of CFs in Mexico.</li> <li>• Indicators on Institutionalization, Transparency and Performance</li> <li>• Summary of Nov/03 international event “Community Foundations in Mexico: A Global Dialogue”, convened by Synergos and CEMEFI.</li> <li>• News and Events section of the CEMEFI website includes 13 national and international news and events sections: press releases, opportunities for professional learning and exchange and resources for institutional development.</li> </ul> <p>CEMEFI also includes the following in the “Philanthropy” section of its website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philanthropy: a new social sector in Mexico</li> <li>• Awards and recognitions for philanthropic work</li> <li>• Rights of the donor</li> </ul> <p>CEMEFI’s website also includes a news archive, a press room and an annual calendar of events.</p>
<p><b>(3)</b> # of donors supporting CEMEFI’s capacity building work for Mexican foundations.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>3 (300% incr.)</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Target met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2002, Mott Fndtn was the only donor supporting CEMEFI’s CF work, via a grant for the salary of a CF program coordinator, travel expenses and some funds for activities. Mott grant is being renegotiated.</li> <li>• In 2003, CEMEFI received a 2 year grant from the Inter-American Foundation for a demonstration project building endowment funds within 13 Mexican CFs. This was followed by a grant from Microsoft in 2005, intended to improve access to information technology and to strengthen relevant skills.</li> </ul>

Once again, this objective needs better indicators. The existing ones present useful information on the program, and on CEMEFI’s information base in particular. The core

of the objective, however, is CEMEFI's capacity to devise and deliver an effective capacity-development program to and with the members of the CGF. Hence, the *conception and implementation* of such a plan, and its subsequent *endorsement or adjustment* by the parties, should be the basis of two indicators (to which the current database indicator would be a contributing activity.) The Planning Matrix offers *de facto* recognition of such an approach, noting the activity of creating a capacity development workplan based on the needs and assets of the sector. Indicators of the kind suggested would have captured key processes related to the objective better than the current ones: the diagnostic/consultation process that generated the first workplan; the assessment of that by the different actors; and the decision to change the methodology.

### **3.4.5 Assessing objectives: #3, to strengthen the technical and financial resource base for 24 members of the non-profit sector in Mexico.**

#### ***Progress proclaimed...***

In a manner comparable to their insistence on the breadth of learning that has happened within the program, respondents emphasized that those involved in the program could legitimately claim real and significant progress in strengthening Mexico's community foundations, individually and as a group.

Some individual CFs cited their own growth in assets, programs, staff, and organizational maturity over the period of the program. These are substantial, and noted in the summary of achievement against indicators below. These respondents acknowledged that it is not easy to isolate the influence of a single organization such as Synergos, though some did speak of the benefits of particular program established or assisted by Synergos. Adjusting the program strategy to include a more tailored assessment and an OD program based on coaching was welcomed by those CFs participating in the new approach. Indeed, Synergos was applauded for its readiness to learn and adjust. Other respondents highlighted the community foundations' knowledge of each other, their growth in numbers (from six to nineteen in a few years), and their increased awareness that they comprise a network and a movement, one that is also part of a movement beyond Mexico's borders. They recognized too the importance of this nascent movement within wider social processes, arguing that the CFs are part of the development of Mexico's democracy.

As might be expected, this development has not been smooth and trouble-free. Described by some as akin to a child maturing, it challenges the parents (CEMEFI and Synergos) to contend with greater independence of thinking and action by the CFs. CF respondents spoke of better strategic thinking within the network, and more diversified leadership and better organization within the CGF. They also foresee CEMEFI and Synergos as active players in the CFG, the former as a representative body, the latter as a support agency. At the same time, there are differences within the CFG on issues of independence—on

how much autonomy from CEMEFI is possible or desirable—and of identity, of what a “Mexican community foundation” actually is. Synergos staff saw these debates as part of the maturation of the CFG, a sign that the foundations are increasingly ready to charge of their own development agenda, and to negotiate with supporters like CEMEFI and Synergos.

*...but no shortage of work still to be done:*

This growth in confidence and identity will be an important asset for the network, because it will face a difficult task in sustaining its associational structure, the CFG. Like so many formal entities within civil society in the South, the CFG is heavily dependent on the support of the tax and gift economy of the North, in this instance NGOs like Synergos, the US-based foundations that have provided matching funds and other grants, and (for this program at least) a bilateral agency like USAID. Even with concerted efforts at local resource mobilization—described by some as imperative—this dependence is sure to continue. For Mexican respondents, moreover, seeking and maintaining international support for the movement is a matter of “small-p” political solidarity as well as funding for organizations and programs.

There remains as well a question of balance, of external funds allocated to umbrella or associational bodies such as CEMEFI or the CFG, or to individual foundations. Respondents had quite different perspectives on this issue. Some emphasized the necessity of building associations on the basis of strong member CFs, and were frustrated by what they saw as donors’ emphasis on representative bodies. Others argued the need for investment in the movement at both levels.

### **Leveraging New Funds for Community Philanthropy in Mexico**

Working with CEMEFI and with international donors funding, Synergos has used the base provided by the USAID Matching-Grant program to leverage substantial additional resources for community philanthropy in Mexico. Some of these funds have been directed to Synergos’ programming, and have been administered by the Institute. The Hewlett Foundation has contributed US\$ 324,962, and the Mott foundation \$ 150,000, a total of US\$ 474,962. Synergos also assisted CEMEFI in raising US\$ 900,000 from two sources in the United States: \$700,000 from the Inter-American Foundation and \$200,000 from Microsoft.

These figures are dwarfed by the funds raised for the work of the Border Partnership Program on both sides of the US/Mexico border. Synergos and its BPP partners have raised no less than US\$15 million in pooled and unpooled funds, with an additional \$3 million committed for 2006 to 2009. Beyond these amounts, Community Foundations in the US and Mexico have raised another \$3 million. The grand total is US\$ 21 million.

**Indicators of achievement:**

**A note on the usefulness of the objective:**

This objective offers an example of the value of adjusting objectives as the management of the program unfolds, and also of the need for clear language. This objective addresses the second strand of the two-tiered program strategy, strengthening the technical and financial resources of individual Mexican community foundations. As the original program strategy included grantmaking foundations other than CF, it would have been better expressed in terms of “the foundation sector”, rather than the “non-profit sector”. It should then have been revised as the program unfolded, to reflect Synergos’ focus on enhancing the resources of community foundations in particular. Program objectives are not holy writ. They can be changed, and the readiness of program managers and participants to revisit and recast original objectives in light of experience may well be a sign of growing confidence in their own capacity.

Synergos and CEMEFI provided the following summary of performance against the indicators for this objective:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>B/line</b>	<b>EOP Tgt</b>	<b>EOP Act</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>(1)</b> # and % of Mexican CFs with permanent endowments	6	12 (100% incr.)	14 (133% incr.)	Target exceeded by 33%: All 13 CFs supported by IAF-funded program, plus one other CF, have achieved goal of endowments of MN\$300,000.
<b>(2)</b> # and % of Mexican foundations that increase their grantmaking to Mexican non profit organizations by 25%.	0	16	12	Target of number of CFs 75% met: 12 CFs have increased their grantmaking to Mexican non-profit organizations. Of these, 11 have increased their grantmaking for more than 25%. 4 increased grantmaking by 90 to 100%.
<b>(3)</b> # and % of Mexican foundations that increase their permanent financial endowment by USD 75,000	0	8	4 plus 10	US\$ target 50% achieved. Number of CFs increasing endowments was 14, well above 8. All 13 CFs in the IAF program increased endowments between minimum of U\$30,000 and maximum of U\$76,000: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 CFs increased endowments from U\$30,000 to 40,000</li> <li>• 7 CFs increased endowments from U\$60,000 to 65,000</li> <li>• 3 CFs increased endowments from U\$70,000 to 80,000</li> <li>• 1 CF increased endowment by U\$82,800</li> </ul>

Data on these indicators are drawn from the community foundations, it should be noted, not “Mexican foundations” in general. An adjustment of the language of the indicators to

fit the objectives more closely would have been in order. Nonetheless, the evidence of achievement in the financial base of the CFs is very clear.

One final note on indicators: A future program would benefit by including indicators that tap the important *intangibles* in a process such as this. Respondents' comments emphasised the Cfs' growing sense of collective identity, their knowledge of themselves, their confidence and their ability to take decisions for their movement and represent themselves. These qualities are not so easy to measure as changes in endowments, but it may well be the change in attitude that produces the change in material assets.

### ***In conclusion...***

The participants in the Mexico program can point to substantial progress achieved in the period of the USAID grant, its resources significantly augmented by others that Synergos and CEMEFI secured. Individually and collectively, the CFs are stronger than they were three years ago, although they would say they still face a difficult road ahead. CEMEFI is more effective in providing support to the CFG than it was when the program began. As an external support organization, Synergos has a better understanding of which capacity-building methodologies are most effective in this context. There are outstanding questions to be resolved within the web of organizational relationships, as noted. An agreement on roles and the related division of labour between CEMEFI and Synergos, including the parties' place within the CFG, would be a real asset in their future co-operation.

## **3.5 The Brazil Program**

### **3.5.1 Program Goal and Objectives, and the Thinking behind the Program:**

In the revised DIP, Synergos sets out the goal and objectives of the program and the thinking behind the program. The indicators noted here appear in the DIP Planning Matrix of March 2004. Together, these describe the point of departure for the program and provide a reference point for its evolution over the period of the USAID grant.

*The goal of the program is to strengthen a non-governmental financial and technical resource base for development in Brazil, especially in the areas of children and youth, environment and health, by providing capacity-building services to 30 existing and emerging grantmaking organizations, disseminating knowledge about the sector, and stimulating leadership by consolidating model grantmaking organizations.*

The three objectives for the program are:

- #1 To strengthen the Synergos/GIFE partnership as a means of building GIFE's capacity to serve its member base, including organizations working in the area of children and youth, health and environment.<sup>36</sup>

There are two related indicators:

- the number of joint capacity-building services adopted by GIFE/Synergos for GIFE members; and
- the number of GIFE members.

- #2 To strengthen the technical and financial resource base for non-profit sector development in Brazil including the areas of children and youth, health and environment, by providing capacity-building services to 30 existing and emerging grantmaking organizations.<sup>37</sup>

There are again two related indicators:

- an increase in the number of foundation professionals trained in new skills of foundation management; and
- an increase in the grantmaking budgets of five key Brazilian grantmaking foundations: Brazil Foundation; Desiderata Foundation; Angela Borba Women's Fund; The Boticário Foundation; and FIRJAN.<sup>38</sup>

- #3 To strengthen two model grantmaking organizations, Abrinq and Instituto Rio, to promote effective grantmaking leadership in the emerging philanthropic sector.<sup>39</sup>

Indicators here include:

- an increase in the number of donors supporting Instituto Rio;
- an increase in its yearly grantmaking to non-profits; and
- an increase in the size of its operating budget.

Indicators related to Abrinq are:

- An increase in the size of Abrinq's endowment.
- The percentage of Abrinq's organizational support budget spent on grantmaking.

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<sup>36</sup> GIFE is a non-profit association of organizations (foundations, institutes and enterprises) grounded in the business community. It promotes private social investment, defined as "the voluntary giving of private funds in a planned, monitored and systematic manner for social projects of public interest". Focusing on action to counter Brazil's social inequalities, its strategic objective is to influence public policy "by means of partnerships and the sharing of ideas, actions and experiences with the State and other civil society organizations." ([www.gife.org.br](http://www.gife.org.br); accessed Nov 30, 2005.)

<sup>37</sup> The target of 30 was reduced to 24 in the March 2004 Planning Matrix.

<sup>38</sup> This indicator was added in the March 2004 Planning Matrix, reflecting Synergos' expansion of its working relationships beyond the main partners. FIRJAN is the Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro. Its Social Responsibility Nucleus administers funds for social investment.

<sup>39</sup> Instituto Rio is "a community foundation and a public-interest civil society organization. It is both a strategy for local development and a mechanism for private social investment." ([www.institutorio.org.br](http://www.institutorio.org.br); accessed Nov 30, 2005.) Abrinq Foundation, established in 1990, is "a non-profit organization, 'a friend of children'," whose mission is "to promote the defence of rights and the exercise of citizenship for children and youth." ([www.fundabring.org.br](http://www.fundabring.org.br); accessed Nov 30, 2005.)



Synergos' working relationships with its three main partner organizations predated the USAID grant. These objectives were thus based on consultations with each, as well as on research with GIFE into the Brazilian grantmaking sector more generally.<sup>40</sup> The objectives reflect Synergos' judgment that Brazilian philanthropic organizations needed and were ready for technical assistance to strengthen key institutional processes relevant to grantmaking to civil society organizations, particularly those active on social development within communities. These institutional functions included fundraising and resource mobilization, endowment building, communications and marketing, governance, and program design and management. In addition, Synergos hoped to influence the broader climate for grantmaking, and particularly for investment in community organizations, by supporting conferences, applied research and case studies.

### **3.5.2 Assessing Objectives: The Program in the Brazilian Context:**

With hindsight, Synergos staff could say that “the logic was clear, but didn't fit the reality.” Several key assumptions that seemed plausible when the program was conceived in 2000, proved to be flawed. As noted, Synergos had worked with GIFE and its members to survey the environment of the program, particularly the scale of grantmaking in Brazil, as well as the country's philanthropic sector more generally. In practice, it became evident that Brazilian foundations (mostly corporate entities) had limited interest in grantmaking to support community-level CSOs, nor in related functions like endowment development and management. In retrospect, it appeared that the initial analysis over-estimated the grantmaking function within the philanthropic sector, as well as the demand for Synergos' related services. Even the term “philanthropy” had little currency, being associated historically with charitable social assistance by the church, and more recently tainted by scandal in philanthropic organizations in the early 1990's. What existed, following a concerted social initiative in Brazil in the late 1990's, was some knowledge of and action on corporate social responsibility, with businesses setting up their own foundations for investing in social development—essentially, their own NGOs.<sup>41</sup> Activity of this kind is described as “private social investment”. As noted, this is integral to GIFE's mandate. According to respondents, there was, and remains, a sizeable gap between such corporate activity in the social sector, and community-based civil society organizations.<sup>42</sup> In these circumstances, a technical assistance program to promote grantmaking foundations was in retrospect premature. More generally, Synergos' working relations with the key partner organizations, although of some years' standing, needed more work to build the familiarity and mutual confidence that would sustain a program of institutional

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<sup>40</sup> DIP, pp. 13-14. The research included a National Study of Brazilian Grantmaking Foundations.

<sup>41</sup> The resources involved are considerable. A respondent estimated that the yearly budgets of GIFE members for such activity amounted to tens of millions of Reais.

<sup>42</sup> There are exceptions. Synergos works closely with The Boticário Foundation, for example, an independent grantmaking organization active on environmental issues. The Foundation was originally established by the business of the same name.

development. In the judgment of Synergos' staff, these relationships were not well enough developed to allow effective planning and joint action, and particularly to set the stage for any movement on a different approach to philanthropy.

What was required, and what happened, was a detailed talking-through of relationships between Synergos and its counterparts. Synergos staff made the decision first to consolidate the core relationships, and later to develop a plan for work together. In the process, Synergos has acquired a more complete and nuanced understanding of the philanthropic environment in Brazil, and of the depth and breadth of interest in grantmaking to support civil society and community development.

In effect, Synergos staff have re-cast the program around two axes to respond to the context. We have to take account of this redefinition in assessing the objectives of the Brazil program:

- First, in concert with its partners, Synergos has sought to influence the Brazilian discourse on philanthropy, both among the GIFE membership and more widely within business, civil society and the public sector. Here, the key concepts include community foundations and grantmaking; mobilizing local financial resources from individuals and families, not only corporations; building endowments; and social investment in civil society and the broader process of social transformation.
- Secondly, Synergos has provided practical support to the OD agendas of a diverse group of partners. The Institute has extended the reach of the program by choosing to work with organizations interested in the principles and practices of foundations as vehicles for investment in social change, whether or not these are part of its conventional niche of grantmaking organizations. Hence, Synergos' counterparts have included organizations like Instituto Rio, Brazil's first community foundation; GIFE, a representative and advocacy body dedicated to improving philanthropy in Brazil; NGOs like Renascer which are interested in building endowments; and an emergent network of grantmaking organizations that includes entities like the Angela Borba Women's Fund as well as grantmaking foundations like Boticário.

The two approaches are not separate, but reinforce each other. Publicizing successful organizational development—for example, the use of endowments for grantmaking to support community organizations—will influence the wider debate.

This approach reflects the way Synergos and its counterparts have addressed the core issue in their work in Brazil: promoting a different understanding and practice of philanthropy—philanthropy for social change that is civic, rather than corporate or clerical<sup>43</sup>—requires working with diverse organizations that are interested in this approach. Synergos has been asking, in effect, “Where can we make a difference?”

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<sup>43</sup> This phrase borrows from the title of a forthcoming article in *Alliance* (published by the Charities Aid Foundation, UK), by Synergos and GIFE staff, on “The Future of Philanthropy in Brazil: Neither clerical nor corporate.”

### 3.5.3 Assessing Objectives: # 1, strengthening the GIFE/Synergos partnership; and # 2, providing capacity-building services to grantmaking organizations

In practice, Objectives #1 and #2 show considerable overlap:

- GIFE and Synergos have built what both now describe as a solid partnership to support GIFE's development as a representative body promoting private social investment in Brazil.
- Synergos has extended the range of its working partnerships to include other foundations as well as NGOs and other civil-society organizations interested in aspects of philanthropy for social change. Not all of these are grantmaking entities, although Synergos has helped to create a fledgling network of grantmakers.
- Working with GIFE, its members and these other organizations, Synergos has organized a variety of capacity-building activities intended to introduce concepts and practices in community philanthropy, and to respond to related OD agendas—resource mobilization, endowment building and management, communications and marketing, grantmaking program design, and so on.

We now examine these points in more detail, to show how partnerships and the capacity development agenda in the program have evolved.

**The Synergos/GIFE partnership:** Synergos and GIFE began working together in 1997-98, and in the years before the USAID grant sketched the outlines of their longer-term co-operation, drafting accords for their work together. Both shared an interest in expanding and strengthening philanthropy/private social investment in Brazil. GIFE anticipated that their link to Synergos would offer access to ideas, expertise and international contacts. Synergos for its part hoped that GIFE would provide an opportunity to work with Brazilian organizations to promote grantmaking foundations as a vehicle for investment in social change. The USAID grant offered both organizations the opportunity to make their co-operation more systematic, including regular planning sessions and an evaluation of their activities.

In the event, the partnership was not a smooth and linear progression. An evaluation of the relationship, commissioned by both organizations, described its origins in the 1990's and assessed its development at two moments, in 2002 and 2004.<sup>44</sup> The first attempts at an accord were unbalanced, with one party or the other making proposals, rather than the two organizations drafting them together. The evaluator described some frustration on both sides, as expectations, roles and responsibilities lacked clarity. When Synergos established a Brazil office in mid-2000, staffed by a Brazilian, communication between the organizations became easier and the relationship more flexible.

Some of the earlier problems persisted, however. Although the relationship was cordial, it lacked a condition critical to an effective partnership—full engagement by both parties. Thus, in 2002 the two organizations were able to set out clearly enough the areas where

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<sup>44</sup> Simone Coelho, IDECA, "Avaliação da Parceria GIFE-Synergos," January, 2005.

they would collaborate—research, case studies and publications to improve the base of knowledge about philanthropy in Brazil; and capacity-building events in the form of workshops, round tables, and thematic discussions. They also generated a substantial list of related actions to be organized and financed together, focussing in the first instance on GIFE’s institutional membership, but also aimed at a wider interested public.

In practice, only a few of these activities materialized. Those that did were valuable, to be sure—publications in the form of case studies and practical guides, which described both grantmaking initiatives such as the Boticário Foundation, and methods of social investment.<sup>45</sup> Looking back at this period, the evaluator concluded that the partnership lacked traction, that there was a real tension in the way the parties planned and implemented the various tasks.<sup>46</sup> She saw a residual resistance in GIFE for a plan of action that was Synergos’; and the Institute for its part felt that GIFE did not make a real effort to live up to agreements.<sup>47</sup> Acknowledging these difficulties in 2002-3, the two organizations commissioned the evaluation, using it to review their partnership at the end of 2003. This seems to have helped the partnership considerably, making for a more open relationship and a more realistic planning of joint activities. Staff and governance changes in 2004 within GIFE brought turbulence but after the changes, easier and more effective co-operation between the two bodies.

GIFE’s new executive director is leading a redefinition and repositioning of the organization as a knowledge and advocacy network to support and promote philanthropy and private social investment in Brazil. Synergos has used modest amounts of money strategically to support this transition, and GIFE has praised the Institute for its commitment and its readiness to use its resources in flexible and appropriate manner—indeed, contrasting Synergos’ approach with the more rigid procedures of larger donors. Examples include:

- Synergos provided (alone among GIFE’s supporters) funds to allow the new Director to travel within Brazil and internationally, making the personal and organizational connections that would be critical to GIFE’s new role and profile as a network. These include GIFE’s participation in Co-ordinating Committee of the international grantmaking network, WINGS; the Director’s appointment as a Synergos Senior Fellow; and a working link between GIFE and the journal *Alliance*.
- Synergos provided a modest sum (approximately \$10,000) for GIFE and *Alliance* to make a Portuguese version of the journal available online, starting in December 2005. As an example of the ease of the current relationship, this step—in discussion for two years in the earlier phase of the partnership—was completed in two days’ triangular discussion in September 2005. This promises to offer Brazilians access to broader trends and debates about philanthropy and civil society, as well as policy issues.

Three points stand out here:

- An accord can be a useful means of focusing discussion and establishing a common reference point for a partnership.

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<sup>45</sup> Noted in fn. 10, section 3.2, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Coelho, “Avaliação,” p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> This latter point is from an interview with Synergos staff.

- If the parties cannot honestly present, negotiate and agree on the core issues of expectations, roles and purposes, the accord will be unrealistic at best, *pro-forma* at worst. An independent evaluator/facilitator may be a useful resource in this process.
- Synergos has resources that can be very useful for an organization such as GIFE. These include staff knowledge of issues in philanthropy; but more important, staff can offer access to a global network of ideas and people. This base of knowledge can be activated with intelligent, timely, and flexible application of modest sums of money. Using these resources requires that the Brazilian organization(s) be alert to their potential.<sup>48</sup>

**Extending Synergos’ Partnerships within the Program:** Synergos originally expected to work with three principal partners: GIFE, a representative body, and two individual foundations, Instituto Rio and Abrinq, described as model grantmaking foundations. These could be described as fitting within Synergos’ usual niche of grantmaking foundations and related support or representative bodies. As noted, however, Synergos staff felt it necessary to contend with “actually existing philanthropy” in Brazil by going beyond the original assumptions of the program. Staff sought out organizations with an active interest in a different type of philanthropy, or in key functions within that, such as local resource mobilization and endowment building and management. Thus, the Institute now has a working relationship with a cluster of diverse organizations. They include individual foundations such as Boticário, a member of GIFE notable for its independent status and grantmaking practices; new grantmaking foundations such as Desiderata and the Brazil Foundation, and a formative community foundation in Florianópolis; the Social Responsibility Nucleus of FIRJAN, the Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro; grantmaking bodies like the Angela Borba Women’s Fund, formally an NGO; and service and advocacy NGOs such as Renascer (active in innovative ways to promote children’s health) and IBDD, the Brazilian Institute for the Defence of Disabled People’s Rights. These latter organizations are not grantmakers, but are interested in establishing permanent funds (endowments) as they seek more financial stability and sustainability.

There is an important programming lesson here. Synergos in Brazil has not been bound by its usual niche. Instead, the Institute has sought out and helped to create a small but critical mass of leadership within a variety of civil society organizations, a leadership which is interested to learn about and act on new principles of philanthropy. Significantly, GIFE does not see such activity as a threat to its position. On the contrary, the director of GIFE sees such organizations as potential allies, and Synergos’ support for their work as a valuable experiment in new thinking and practice.

**Capacity-Building for a Philanthropy of Social Transformation:** Working with GIFE and this grouping of interested and like-minded organizations (as well as Instituto Rio and Abrinq) Synergos has organized a variety of capacity-building initiatives, using that phrase broadly to include knowledge, motivation, skills and practice. Its purpose has

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<sup>48</sup> It is notable that respondents from other partner organizations, Abrinq Foundation and Instituto Rio, said that they had not used Synergos’ resources to their full potential.

been to inform and stimulate interest and debate about different concepts and practices in philanthropy, and to offer practical support to related OD agendas. In the main, Synergos has applied its knowledge resources to this work. It has hosted breakfasts and round tables and made presentations at GIFE's conferences, for example, as well as financing publications such as the case studies noted earlier, and the translation of *Alliance*. Synergos has also supported professional development visits by Brazilians to relevant organizations in North America, and has engaged Senior Fellows as technical resources for individual organizations, and for collective discussions on a range of issues, from governance and Board development to endowment building and management. In some instances, assistance of this kind was tailored to the specific circumstances of an organization. Two Fellows assisted the Boticário Foundation with the design of its funds for its grantmaking program, for example, and Synergos provided similar assistance to FIRJAN. At other times, a presentation on endowment-building to GIFE members by a Senior Fellow triggered wider interest among other organizations, both NGOs and grantmakers. This in turn has led these entities to establish plans for endowments. And, Synergos has encouraged a formative grantmakers' association, which held its first meeting early in 2005.

Respondents among these organizations praised Synergos for its responsiveness and adaptability, emphasising the importance of a field office that enabled the Institute to stay in touch with local realities and seizing opportunities when these present themselves. While making clear its own interest and the nature of its resources, the Institute has responded to other organizations' interests and priorities. Both sides of the programming equation are important: active interest and leadership among the Brazilian organizations, and a flexible and timely response by Synergos. The size of the Institute's budget has been less important than its timely and flexible use. In the period of the USAID grant, Synergos' operating budget for Brazil has been modest: \$73,900 in 2003, \$55,000 in 2004, and \$69,000 in 2005.<sup>49</sup> The actual resource budget is larger, of course: the application of financial resources requires the imagination and commitment of staff, and all respondents in Brazilian organizations emphasised that they and Synergos have been well served in this respect.<sup>50</sup>

**Indicators of Achievement:** The indicators of achievement for these two objectives do not fit neatly with the way the objectives have been recast, and the activities have played out. Nevertheless, Synergos provided the summary information on the following page.

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<sup>49</sup> The operating budget supports conferences, publications, consultants and Senior Fellows, and travel.

<sup>50</sup> Synergos staff complement has been augmented by the use of a Brazilian consultant as program assistant since 2003.

Objective	Indicators	B/line	EOP Tgt	EOP Act	Notes
<b>(1)</b> strengthen the GIFE/Synergos partnership in order to build GIFE's capacity to serve its members	<b>1.1</b> Number of joint capacity-building services provided by GIFE/Synergos for members	1	12	20	EOP target of exceeded. NB: Services included publications, workshops, breakfasts. Participants included GIFE members & other interested organizations.
	<b>1.2</b> Number of GIFE members	66	79	83	EOP target exceeded. Synergos believes increase due principally to the energy and skill of GIFE's Director.
<b>(2)</b> strengthen the financial & technical base for nonprofits in Brazil by providing capacity-building services to grantmaking organizations	<b>2.1</b> Number of foundation professional trained in new skills of foundation management	0	40	60	EOP target exceeded.  Participants included staff of organizations other than grantmaking foundations, e.g. NGOs.  Services (noted above, Obj. #1) included more than "skills training". For many, the first step was exploring the idea of community philanthropy.
	<b>2.2</b> Increased grantmaking budgets of five Brazilian grantmaking organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brazil Foundation;</li> <li>• Desiderata;</li> <li>• Angela Borba Women's Fund</li> <li>• The Boticário Foundation</li> <li>• FIRJAN</li> </ul>	(Ind. figs.)  \$301,000 (aggr.)	\$1,115,000	Figures for: Brazil Fndtn: \$256,000; Boticário: \$444,000; Angela Borba: \$190,000 FIRJAN: \$130,000  Aggr.: \$1,020,000	EOP totals for four organizations exceed EOP target for five. Increases in grantmaking budgets are not necessarily due to Synergos' work. The Institute has assisted FIRJAN, Boticário, and Angel Borba Fund, as well as SPVS, an NGO based in Curitiba.  Synergos has supported the formation of a grantmakers' network in which all participate, along with Instituto Rio. This promises to be a source of mutual support and advice for participating organizations, as well as a basis for public policy advocacy to change the legal environment for family and individual giving, and for grantmaking organizations.

### **3.5.4 Assessing Objectives: #3, to strengthen Instituto Rio and the Abrinq Foundation to provide grantmaking leadership in the philanthropic sector**

**Situating this Objective within the Evolving Program:** As stated, this objective is misplaced. We have retained it here because it was part of the original proposal, and because Synergos has indeed committed considerable time and energy to both organizations, and both have lauded Synergos for its support. Conceptually, it makes better sense to consider Synergos' work on this objective as part of its capacity-development work with Brazilian organizations described in the preceding commentary on Objective #2. Moreover, in retrospect the objective misrepresents the position of these two organizations within Brazilian civil society and philanthropy. As the first example of a community foundation, the experience of Instituto Rio will be very important for others which will follow its example. To expect it to provide "grantmaking leadership" is probably unfair, however: Synergos staff said candidly that "it's a miracle to have survived this far." Abrinq, secondly, is an important organization in Brazil, a leader in promoting children's rights and a powerful force in mobilizing resources to do so, both from Brazil and elsewhere. It is not really accurate to describe Abrinq as a grantmaking organization, however; it is at most a hybrid. Of its nine current programs, only one is based on grantmaking. Nor, as we will see, has Abrinq invested in endowment-building as part of its OD and programming strategy. In major respects, then, its profile differs significantly from the practices Synergos is promoting.

**Synergos' Partnership with Abrinq Foundation:** In the DIP and related Planning Matrix, Synergos described its work with Abrinq as a two-part program of capacity building, aimed at Board development and endowment building, with the hope of effecting a major increase in the size of the Foundation's endowment, and in the portion of its budget devoted to grantmaking.<sup>51</sup> Synergos noted Abrinq's evident fundraising capability (exceeding \$1,000,000 a year from local sources alone); but also, the Foundation's high operating costs and limited grantmaking activity. A series of professional exchanges and workshops with staff and Board, using the expertise of Senior Fellows, would be the principal tools for this program.

In the event, something quite different happened, described by respondents as a vital contribution by Synergos to Abrinq's development, and making exemplary use of the Institute's resources—but quite divergent from the proposed program.

Synergos' program director approached Abrinq with the question, "What can we do for you?" This open and flexible stance was much appreciated by the Abrinq staff members interviewed, who had all worked closely with Synergos during the grant period. Notably, although the DIP spoke of "dozens of meetings" with Abrinq and Instituto Rio shaping this objective, a respondent who was a senior manager of Abrinq at the time described the process as "informal". Senior staff of the Foundation did participate, along with

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<sup>51</sup> The indicators show a planned increase in the former from \$100,00 to \$500,00 over the life of the project, and in the latter, from 26% to 40%.



members of other organizations, in Synergos' presentations and round tables described earlier. Individual staff spoke highly as well of the value of their contacts with NGOs and foundations in Asia with similar interests in children's rights. The critical interventions in Abrinq's OD trajectory, however, came from visiting Senior Fellows.

Senior staff at Abrinq had met Nelson Colón, of the Puerto Rico Community Foundation, through Senior Fellows' networks. With Synergos' Program Director, Abrinq management arranged two visits by Sr Colón to Brazil over a six-month period in 2003 and 2004. At this time, Abrinq was wrestling with problems of growth and direction, and respondents spoke of a leadership crisis within the Foundation that accompanied changes in executive staff and the Board. Sr Colón's intervention—he worked mainly with senior management, but also with the Board—proved instrumental. His presence and questions were challenging, and he galvanized Abrinq to redefine its mission and goals for the next fifteen years, and to devise and begin implementation of an action plan to realise these. In charting directions for the Foundation, the Board decided against a strategy to build its endowment. Instead, Abrinq retains an endowment equivalent to a year's operating budget, enough to allow the Foundation to close operations if required. In a similar vein, grantmaking holds only a limited place in Abrinq's programming, with only one of its programs using this mode.

A second intervention by a Senior Fellow enabled Abrinq to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation capabilities, providing an information base which staff described as essential for a stronger advocacy role on public policy related to children's rights. Prof. Jose Bernardo Toro, a Colombian sociologist, convened two international seminars in 2002 and 2003 on the subject, in which Abrinq participated together with international counterparts. According to respondents, the competency the Foundation acquired has been a major asset in its public advocacy.

The organizations can point to practical and specific results from their collaboration, results which according to respondents have significantly strengthened the Foundation. These do not fit with the original objective and its related indicators, but they signal an effective partnership. Respondents from Abrinq emphasized the value of Synergos' adaptability, its readiness to identify and seize an opportunity and provide the right resources at the right time—in this instance, the presence and advice of Senior Fellows. This stance—opportunism in the best sense, serendipity as program strategy—requires a close day-by-day dialogue. According to respondents, this can happen only if Synergos has a continuous presence on the ground.

**Synergos' Partnership with Instituto Rio:** In the last half of the USAID grant period, the partnership with Instituto Rio has been the main program focus for Synergos' Brazil co-ordinator, accounting for approximately 40% of her time.<sup>52</sup> Instituto Rio is Brazil's first community foundation—a second has just been established in Florianópolis—and Synergos has played a central role in its survival and consolidation. Synergos staff

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<sup>52</sup> In the first half of the program, the relationships with GIFE and Abrinq accounted for approximately 60% of her time.

describe it as “our greatest success story” and executive staff and Board members of Instituto Rio are lavish in their praise of Synergos’ support.

In this relationship, the stated objective of the program and the related indicators are reasonably close to the key issue—strengthening Instituto Rio as the first example of a community foundation, a working example of a different type of philanthropy.<sup>53</sup>

The origins of Instituto Rio lie in informal discussions in the late 1990’s about community philanthropy as a possible response to Rio de Janeiro’s dire social problems, discussions in which Synergos participated. The foundation was established in 2000, and in the early years of its life has received financial support from international foundations.<sup>54</sup> This has enabled it to meet its operating costs and establish a programming presence. The foundation works in a tough neighbourhood, Rio’s West Zone.<sup>55</sup>

Instituto Rio’s capacity development agenda is comprehensive. Its challenges, according to executive staff and Board members interviewed, include the following:

- Both Board members and staff have been on a steep learning curve in coming to grips with the reality of a community foundation, because community philanthropy and community foundations are a new idea in Brazil.
- The new entity has had to establish its legitimacy with its different publics. Most critical has been the task of earning the trust and confidence of the communities in the West Zone, and key community members, both individuals and organizations. Instituto Rio has also had to earn the confidence of its financial supporters, both people in business networks in Brazil, and institutional supporters such as international foundations.
- To its credit, the foundation is grappling with very testing questions in the wider social and institutional environment. What kind of structure, for example, can bring different actors in the West Zone together, to address problems of social violence? In a setting where public services in health, education, transport and security are inadequate-to-nonexistent, what role can a community foundation play, and how can such an entity mobilize the necessary resources? In a setting where many people have no confidence in public institutions, is it possible to build a culture of active citizenship and responsive institutions from the bottom up? A Board member emphasized that Instituto Rio *has* to deal with issues like these—it is, after all, a vehicle to improve conditions of life in the communities of the West Zone.
- It has been difficult to find good executive staff—Instituto Rio has changed Directors three times in three years—partly because the idea of a CF is so new. The Board has had difficulty finding the right blend of knowledge, experience, and motivation.

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<sup>53</sup> Although, as noted earlier, it would be unrealistic to expect Instituto Rio, preoccupied with survival beyond infancy, to play a wider leadership role by modelling a new approach to philanthropy. This may come in time, especially if GIFE succeeds in its current plan to promote wider knowledge of community foundations in Brazil.

<sup>54</sup> These include the Ford Foundation, the Avina Foundation, and the Inter-American Foundation.

<sup>55</sup> Site of the *favela* Cidade de Deus, which has recently gained international notoriety as the setting of an acclaimed film by the same name.

- In these circumstances, building an effective program, including both grantmaking and capacity-building with community-based organizations in the West Zone, is a major challenge. The foundation is charting the way forward here—Board and staff felt they had few examples to draw upon in Brazil.

Fortunately, Instituto Rio can also draw on real assets to address these issues.

- It can count among its Board members, people with connections, imagination, energy, and conviction on the merits and potential of CFs—and hence, the ability to mobilize support for Instituto Rio. (Notwithstanding their candour about their learning curve, both executive staff and Board members were clear about what CFs can offer: community participation and a sense of ownership of a local public institution; financial and organisational support to community organizations; and permanent funds—an endowment—that can both attract and multiply local resources.) The strength and operational role of the Board, augmented by Synergos’ presence, has enabled the foundation to maintain momentum during the changes of executive staff in the past three years.
- The foundation has made significant progress in establishing its endowment. A large grant from a benefactor has created the first Community Trust Fund in Brazil.
- The foundation has made a promising start in its programming, with more than twenty grants to CBOs, a capacity-building program with a focus on management and administrative capabilities, and the first stages of a network among these CBOs in place.
- Synergos has provided ready assistance which has been both strategic and practical. The Program Director has been part of a weekly (sometimes daily) dialogue with the foundation on its development and future directions. She has introduced new Board members to the Instituto who bring a diverse set of skills and experience in management, planning, and marketing. Synergos has provided access to technical advice on endowment building and management via Senior Fellows such as John Davis of the Baton Rouge CF and Nelson Colón of the Puerto Rico CF. Synergos has also introduced Instituto Rio to potential international supporters, most recently in a promising fundraising tour of the U.S. in early November 2005.

The example of Instituto Rio, and Synergos’ role in its history, merits consideration as a case study, because it offers potentially valuable lessons to other CFs which may be established in Brazil. GIFE, with its interest in exploring the principles and practices of CFs, would be an obvious sponsor for such a case study. Such documentation is not without its risks, however. One respondent noted the possibility that self-interested politicians could co-opt the idea of the CF. If the idea were hijacked into a discredited political process, the results could be catastrophic for any wider dissemination of CF principles.

### *Indicators of Achievement*

The following table summarizes progress against indicators for this objective:

Indicator	B/line	EOP Target	EOP Actual	Notes
(1) # of donors supporting Instituto Rio	1	10 (1,000 % incr.)	6 (600%)	Donor target not met, but value of donations is significant, including major grant to IR's endowment. Major potential among int'l donors following Nov/05 fundraising tour.
(2) # of grants by Inst. Rio to non-profit organizations	1	10 (1,000 % incr.)	23 (2,300 % incr.)	Target greatly exceeded (2005)
(3) Size of Inst. Rio's operating budget	\$30 K	\$150K	\$65K	Target not met, EOP figure close to original mid-term estimate of \$75K. One result of turnover of executive staff.
(4) Increase in Abrinq's endowment	\$100K	\$500K	n/a	Abrinq chose not to increase its endowment beyond requirements of a close-out reserve.
(5) % of Abrinq budget spent on grantmaking	26%	40%	n/a	Abrinq chose not to follow this programming strategy. Currently, one of nine programs is based on grantmaking.

To this may be added Brazilians' testimony on the work of Synergos Senior Fellows, summarized in the following textbox:

### Contributions by Senior Fellows:

Senior Fellows have made numerous working visits to Synergos' counterparts. Brazilian respondents highlighted contributions that Fellows made to their organizations. Several examples follow. The Fellows' visits were brief, a few days in duration, but brought real benefits to the organizations involved.

- Nelson Colón of the Puerto Rico Community Foundation visited Abrinq Foundation twice, in 2003 and 2004. He challenged the Foundation to rethink its vision and trajectory. In response, the Foundation set out an ambitious vision: by 2020, all of Brazil's 5000-plus municipalities would have policies and structures in place to protect children and their rights.
- John Davis of the Baton Rouge Community Foundation visited Brazil 2004 and 2005. He delivered workshops on endowment building and management to grantmaking foundations, including Instituto Rio and The Boticário Foundation. Several other NGOs and grantmaking organizations heard of his presence and asked for another workshop on endowments. These organizations have begun to set up their own endowments, investing in their own financial stability and sustainability.
- David Smith (formerly of The Foundation for the Environment, Jamaica) and John Davis helped The Boticário Foundation design its Funds and related investment strategies to support its environmental programming.
- José Bernardo Toro, Dean of the Faculty of Education of Colombia's Javeriana University convened two international seminars on monitoring and evaluation in 2002 and 2003, and worked with Abrinq staff to establish an M & E capacity within the Foundation. The Foundation acquired the capability to use evaluation to generate the practical knowledge necessary to sustain a program of advocacy for public policies that protect children and their rights.

This is high-value programming. A Fellow's assignment might cost \$5000 on average, and bring immediate benefits and unexpected spinoffs to the organizations involved. There is an important principle here: the Brazilian organizations were ready and able to use the Fellows' expertise, and Synergos was able to identify the right person and to make them available at the right time.

### ***In conclusion...***

Synergos' Brazil program has had to contend with the challenge of finding, creating and enlarging space for a different type of philanthropy in Brazil. To do so required rethinking some of the original assumptions for the program, effectively reworking its original objectives, and going beyond Synergos' usual pattern of working with grantmaking foundations. Synergos has persevered with this approach, and with its partners can show progress in defining the principles and practice of "a different type of philanthropy".

## **3.6 The Headquarters Program, and Related Program Management Issues**

**Note:** This aspect of the program received only limited attention during the evaluation, which focused on the three country programs described above. A more thorough assessment of the HQ program would have required a visit to New York, and interviews with Synergos managers. Budget constraints precluded this. What follows, then, is a brief note on HQ management issues to be addressed within the program, Synergos' response to these, and a résumé of achievement against indicators. We conclude this section with notes on Synergos' overall program management. This approach allows a single summary of Lessons Learned and Recommendations (section 4.0).

### **3.6.1 Strengthening Synergos' Headquarters Capacity**

The USAID Matching Grant program strategy assumed, appropriately, that a capacity-development program for and with Southern organizations, implemented by Northern NGOs, merits investing in the capacity of the latter as well as the former. Accordingly, the USAID grant made provision for such a program, directed towards Synergos' headquarters, to complement the initiatives in the field.

The two objectives for this program, revised for the DIP Planning Matrix of March 2004, were as follows:

- #1 To provide effective and efficient support to the programs being implemented in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique; and
- #2 To increase capacity of global programs in HQ to support field staff in delivering high quality capacity-building services to target foundations.

The distinction between these objectives could be more clearly stated. This reviewer saw two purposes for the HQ program: to strengthen Synergos' program management systems; and to improve Synergos' use of its knowledge resources (such as the Senior Fellows Program) to enhance the quality of its field programs. Synergos deemed three

management functions to be especially important: financial administration and reporting; planning and budgeting; and monitoring and evaluation of programs.

Synergos' Director of its Strengthening Bridging Organizations program, the "home" of the USAID grant within the Institute, acknowledged that financial planning and management had been "a vexing problem" for the Institute. She noted that mid-term financial reporting to USAID had been late, the delay being due to technical problems and incorrect data input, although the Institute's audits were clean. Field staff for their part expressed their frustration with HQ's inability to provide them with prompt and accurate monthly expenditure and performance-to-budget reports on their programs. They noted that this information was often available only three months after the month in question. Such delays meant that field staff had to maintain their own records as the primary information source for budget control. By the end of the project, Synergos' program manager saw improvements, though field staff still felt the delays were excessive.

In 2005, Synergos installed a new planning and budgeting system it designed with assistance from an established consulting firm. This author reviewed the manual for this system, which is strongly outcomes-oriented, and offers an adequate basis for aligning activities, program objectives and anticipated results with available financial resources. The test will be its use—effective program planning and budgeting can provide a good base of information for financial reporting, but offers no guarantee.

One observation and two recommendations are offered here:

First, **as benchmarks for compiling monthly financial program reports**, the following are reasonable deadlines. These are based on the author's program and organizational management experience with an NGO with a much larger budget and many more field offices than Synergos. Monthly reports can be completed by the field offices and sent electronically to HQ within *one week* of monthend. HQ should in turn be able to provide draft composite program expense and performance-to-budget reports to field offices and program managers within *one month* at most, preferably less.

**Secondly, a recommendation follows on the structure of Synergos' budgets:**

**It is recommended that** the Institute use a programmatic basis for its budgeting and financial reporting, rather than the line expenditure categories used for the USAID grant and continued in the Institute's 2006 plan. Doing so would give a truer picture of Synergos' intended and actual use of its programming resources. Expenditure categories currently include compensation, consultants, sub-grants, meetings, conferences, travel, publications, operating expenses, and overhead.<sup>56</sup> The challenge is to identify the

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<sup>56</sup> In the 2006 Plan, for example, the "Strengthening Bridging Organizations" program (the site of the programs supported by the USAID grant and matching funds between 2002 and 2005) has a total budget of \$5.16 million, this amount allocated against the various line items noted. The program includes activities in counties in Central and South America, Southern Africa, and Southeast Asia. From the plan, the reader does not know the allocation of resources to these countries, nor to the relevant program objectives. Detailed internal budgets for 2003/04 and 2005 provide a country-by-country breakdown, but no more

Institute's program resources, and to align these with the relevant sub-programs and their objectives.

As part of that process, **it is recommended that** Synergos present “compensation” (staff costs) as a *programming resource and expense*. It is evident to this reviewer that Synergos' staff are one of its principal programming resources, perhaps *the* key resource for the organization, and its program budgets should reflect this reality. Doing so would require staff to track time spent on corporate matters, on office management, and on programming with partners, but this is not unduly difficult.

A budget constructed in this way would allow Synergos to show how it planned to apply its various resources to its programmatic purposes in the countries where it operates, and to report on their actual expenditure.

With respect to monitoring and evaluation, finally, Synergos staff acknowledged the value of the USAID grant process, in emphasising the need for the Institute to describe its expected program outcomes, monitor progress to plan, and evaluate the program as a whole. The Institute does have a planning and budgeting system which offers a good basis for regular monitoring of activities and results, and thus for evaluating programs. Adopting program-based budgeting, as recommended above would provide a better basis for integrating financial resources with program activities and results. At bottom, however, the issue is less a matter of format and technique than of organizational culture. Synergos' primary resource is the collective knowledge of its staff and the wider networks of the Institute, including, notably, its Senior Fellows. The organization has usefully invested in documenting its work with its Southern partners—examples have been noted earlier. Program monitoring and evaluation is another, related, tool to help Synergos generate practical knowledge; expenditure on this function is not a cost but an investment for the organization.

Accordingly, **it is recommended** that Synergos invest at least 2.5% of its programming budget in evaluation. This is a resource for organizational learning. As a reference point, the original budget for this EOP evaluation was US\$ 20,000, against a program budget of nearly \$3 mn (both USAID and matching funds), or 0.67% of the program total.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.6.2 Headquarters Program: Indicators of Achievement

Synergos staff provided the following summary of achievements against indicators related to the objectives in the HQ program. An overall comment should precede and frame these, however.

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precise programmatic allocation, the country budgets being assigned to line expenditure items which are not grouped by objective.

<sup>57</sup> The EOP evaluation was complemented by, and drew upon, evaluations of program components in Brazil (the GIFE/Synergos partnership) and Mexico (the effectiveness of the CFG).

Synergos' Director of this program sees it *in toto* as a strategic asset for the organization. Beyond the immediate qualities and dynamics of the individual country programs, she argues that the program as a whole has changed Synergos' profile:

- In Mexico, the USAID-funded program allowed Synergos to consolidate its work with the community foundations. Its record with the CFs was critical in enabling Synergos to take on the management role in the BPP.
- In Brazil, the USAID-funded program enabled Synergos to establish an organizational presence in the country—an office and a field-based Program Director.
- In all three countries, the program allowed a much more comprehensive approach to Synergos' collaboration with its principal partners.
- In Synergos' headquarters, the logframe methodology that accompanied the grant has made the Institute much more conscious of outcomes, indicators, and the necessity of evaluation.

**Objective #1:** to provide effective and efficient support to the programs being implemented in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique.

Indicator	B/line	EOP Tgt	EOP Act	Notes
(1) # and % of Country Programs implementing revised monitoring and evaluation system	0	10	10	Target met. The new planning, budgeting and evaluation framework includes in its M & E a performance evaluation system for staff with professional goals for each.
(2) % of Synergos staff trained in new financial management systems	0	34	31	Target 90% met. All HQ staff trained; Synergos less successful with 3 overseas staff, because of distance.
(3) # of new donors supporting Synergos' programs in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique	0	15	19	Target exceeded. Donors include 16 foundations and three corporations.
(4) # of new GPC members from Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique	0	7	9	Target exceeded. 5 new GPC members from Brazil, 4 from Mexico.
(5) % of Synergos staff using new, improved program planning matrix	0	34	34	Target met, including all overseas staff.

**Objective #2:** To increase capacity of global HQ programs to support field staff in delivering high quality capacity building services to target foundations.

Indicator	B/line	EOP Tgt	EOP Act	Notes
(1) # of Senior Fellows assignments requested by field staff	5/yr	10/yr	11/yr	Target met: 3 in Mexico, 8 in Brazil
(2) % of professional exchanges based on new planning protocol which are rated favourably by exchange participants.	n/a	90%	100%	All professional exchanges used the revised protocol and all were rated favourably.
(3) % of foundations in which staff and leadership report that Synergos capacity building service improved performance.	n/a	90%	100%	The evaluations of Synergos' capacity building services report that the experience was 'good' or better.



### 3.6.3 Notes on Synergos' Program Management

#### (1) Management Approach:

This program is a capacity development initiative focused primarily on organizational development for and with Southern organizations—grantmaking foundations, hybrids with traits of foundations and NGOs, and philanthropic representative/support bodies. The vehicles for this work are Synergos' working relationships with its principal counterparts in Mozambique, Brazil and Mexico. The stance adopted by Synergos in managing these relationships matters a lot. The Institute is not a funding body in the manner of many Northern NGOs or foundations, providing core or program support to its counterparts.<sup>58</sup> As mentioned in the assessment of the country programs, Synergos' primary resource for its work is the knowledge it can offer to others—experience, expertise, judgment, and contacts in a global philanthropic network. Although its staff have their own experience with foundation-building and through networks such as the Senior Fellows, access to a great deal more experience in the field, on the whole the Institute seems not to have acted as The Expert. To cite an example, a Brazilian respondent acknowledged that Synergos, “like any of us approaching a community as an outsider,” had its own biases and ways of seeing and doing things, but nevertheless has understood and adapted to Brazilian contexts, priorities and interests. Respondents were generally positive about Synergos' approach to its work, even where differences arose between the parties.

An *organizational dialogue* has evolved in the three program countries, with varying degrees of clarity about agendas, and with different plans of action. (These, and their results, are noted in the preceding sections.) The experience of the program indicates that such a dialogue is greatly facilitated by a *continuous presence* for Synergos. This enables both parties to stay in touch with changing day-by-day circumstances, and to identify and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Such a presence may comprise staff members, consultants, or both. A continuous presence does not mean that all working relationships will be equitable, harmonious, and balanced—the multiple roles played by Synergos vis-à-vis its counterparts have meant imbalances were inevitable. It does allow for closer monitoring of roles and relationships as these evolve, and should make renegotiation and adjustments easier. In this respect, it is worth noting that the only criticism voiced of the Senior Fellows program was the desire to have the Fellows maintain their engagement with the host organization over a longer period of time, thereby encouraging a deeper relationship. Nor does a continuous presence guarantee that the Southern organizations will make the best possible use of Synergos' OD resources—as noted, Brazilian respondents whose organizations enjoyed a good rapport with Synergos felt they still had some way to go in this respect. Its success, finally, obviously depends heavily on the qualities and capabilities of the person(s) in the office.

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<sup>58</sup> In some instances in the Mexico program, Synergos did provide modest funding to CFs to enable them to plan their OD agendas. See fn 30.

In this program, it is very hard to imagine that the process of consolidating organizational relationships in Brazil, for example, and of reworking the orientation of the country program, could have been done from afar. Several respondents said that would have been impossible. In Mexico, *acompanamiento* as an approach to organizational development has required the regular presence of Synergos' advisors and (within the BPP) staff. If Synergos continues with that approach in a growing program, it may well require a permanent staff presence. In the Mozambique program, this evaluator believes that the partnership needed a stronger motive force within FDC to move the joint agenda forward; it is not obvious that a continuous presence by Synergos in Mozambique would have significantly changed that dynamic. That said, the suggestion by FDC staff that Synergos set up a small OD resource team in Mozambique offers some interesting options. In particular, with the proper profile of skills and a seed budget, such a presence would allow attention to the third objective in the program, capacity-building work with Mozambican CSOs.

## (2) Comments on the Detailed Implementation Plan (revised version, July 2003)

There are several points where the DIP could have been stronger.

### **Framing the program: defining the goal, strategy, objectives, and indicators**<sup>59</sup>

There are problems with the way the program is framed in the DIP. Ideally, a sharper contextual analysis of the kind recommended would also bring more precision to the statements of program strategy and objectives. As noted earlier, these are similar for all three programs, the language being generic rather than specific. This may offer some benefit of comparability, but for this reviewer it creates the impression of a blueprint-style approach.<sup>60</sup> The commentary on individual country objectives argues that these would be more useful if they were more specific, and tailored to the circumstances of individual countries and organizations. Synergos' programming strategy, moreover, usually included two components, a focus on umbrella or representative organizations as well as on specific organizations. In these circumstances, the relative priority of the different components of the strategy—hence of the objectives of the program—and their interconnections, all need to be explained. The objective of building a stronger partnership, for example, common to all three programs, appears to be an enabling condition for other objectives.<sup>61</sup> That is, progress in defining and implementing a capacity development agenda is likely to turn on the quality of this core relationship. If this is so, then aiming “to strengthen the partnership” does not take us very far. The

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<sup>59</sup> The summary of this issue is based on the author's assessment of the program objectives and indicators, as well as commentary by Synergos staff.

<sup>60</sup> To be fair, Synergos notes in the DIP that its capacity-building initiatives—workshops, consultancies, exchanges and fellowship—are tailored to the needs of the counterpart institutions (p. 4). The point is that the planning documents wash out this specificity. As noted in the discussion of common issues in the program (p. 5), Synergos staff felt pressure from USAID to present the objectives for different country programs in comparable terms.

<sup>61</sup> This appears to be so for the Mexico and Mozambique programs, where Synergos had a single major partner when the program began. The profile of the Brazil program was different in this respect.

substance of a stronger partnership needs to be embedded in the objective, and its enabling qualities explained.

Similar comments can be offered on the indicators in the program, of which there are usually three for each objective. In all cases, an explanatory link between each indicator and its objective would provide a useful reality check. As explained in the commentary on the objectives of the different programs, the indicators do touch on factors related to the objective, but these are usually not *central* to the objective. Hence, the indicators offer oblique rather than direct signals on the achievement of objectives. They do provide information about the program, but not about the essence of the objective.

Taking these points together, the program framework requires improvement in its handling of two basic questions: “What do we want to achieve?” (the “objectives” question); and “How will we know we’ve done so?” (the “indicators” question.)

(Recommendations on pages 12 and 29 refer.)

### **Integrating objectives and resources:**

The framing of the program, and the DIP as a whole, would also be improved if resource allocations accompanied the presentation of objectives. A program-based approach to budgeting of the kind recommended on p.56, using Synergos’ new planning format, should allow this. This information, when aligned to results achieved and performance to budget, would in turn assist Synergos and its partners (and external evaluators) to assess the link between resources and results.

As the DIP and the Planning Matrices are written, they do not allow a reader to answer a key question about the design of the program: are the nature and scale of the resources in line with the goals, objectives and related activities of the program?

Because the DIP is a management tool required by USAID, the recommendation is addressed to USAID as well: **it is recommended to Synergos, its Southern partners and USAID** that in the design of future programs of this kind, program objectives be linked to resource allocations.

A related comment can be offered on the overall program goal, *to strengthen a non-governmental financial and technical resource base for development in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique, and to generate models for adaptation in other countries.* (DIP, p.1) This goal statement is unnecessarily anonymous. The program has been directed to strengthening foundations, grantmaking organizations, and related support and representative bodies in these three countries, and this orientation should be clearly stated. To describe the organizations involved as “a resource base for development” seems grandiose. If the program succeeds in making such organizations more effective, they would be useful if modest developmental assets to development work in these countries. Lastly, the notion of generating models for adaptation elsewhere is not explained or justified. In practice it has been somewhat misplaced. As noted in the assessment of the country programs, a question has arisen within the program about the

definition and development of foundations (and of philanthropy more generally) suited to the culture and social dynamics of the countries concerned. In sum, a simpler and more precise goal statement would have been more in keeping with the reality of the program.

### **Risks and enabling assumptions:**

The DIP as a whole would be stronger, finally, if it included a more comprehensive assessment of anticipated risks and enabling assumptions for the program, together with methods of enhancing the latter and mitigating the former. The experience of the Mozambique program—its dependence on a single partner—generated the earlier recommendation on this issue (pp.12/13). Because the DIP is a management tool required by USAID, this recommendation is relevant to USAID as well. **It is recommended that** Synergos, its Southern partners and USAID give more comprehensive and systematic attention to risks and enabling assumptions. This assessment should flow from the contextual analysis highlighted earlier, and should take account as well of the dynamics of partnership.

### **3.7 Cross-Cutting Issues:**

**Sustainability** has been a recurrent sub-text in the entire program. Indeed the logic of Synergos' approach would have made a phrase like "Capacity Development for Financial Sustainability" a reasonable title for the program. The necessity for and the feasibility of financial sustainability comprise a key premise of "the foundation approach" within the rationale for the program (and of "the foundation approaches" in its practice.) Synergos convened a workshop on the sustainability theme with FDC staff, for example, which it later followed with technical assistance from South African consultants intended to detail both fundraising and endowment management strategies. (As noted, FDC has found it difficult to take concerted action on these issues.) Within the Mexico and Brazil programs, several respondents emphasized their need and interest to address problems of organizational sustainability, particularly financial sustainability. Foundations and NGOs in Brazil have responded positively to Synergos' efforts to give them access to others' experiences via the Senior Fellows program. As noted, most of Synergos' Southern partners are likely to rely heavily on sympathetic external supporters for some time to come. Nor is this a bad thing—Mexican respondents emphasized the importance of international friendship and solidarity for Mexican civil society in the present political conjuncture, and organizations like Synergos will continue to offer it.

There is a certain structural tension in the sustainability agenda, however, which we alluded to in the discussion of the Synergos/FDC relationship. Organizational sustainability is a much more multi-faceted challenge than financial sustainability, important though the latter is. The notes above on the development of Instituto Rio suggest the breadth and complexity of the issue: earning and maintaining legitimacy in the eyes of several publics; a capacity for strategic thinking, and for concerted followup action; the capability to manage change—particularly, to learn and adapt; a means of understanding and perhaps influencing the policy environment; the capability to assemble

the required resources (people and organizational relationships as well as money). For an agency like Synergos, the question then becomes how to balance its established expertise and profile—community philanthropy for social change, and financial sustainability of CSOs—with the more holistic requirements of organizational development and sustainability. Synergos is, moreover, an outside actor, though one with a respected history and established relationships. The limits of that role become evident in a relationship such as that between Synergos and FDC. When one partner has difficulty in really engaging with what Synergos has to offer on foundation functions and practices, there is not a great deal that Synergos can do. The programming question then becomes, as noted, “Under what conditions can Synergos make a contribution?”

The possibilities of that role, conversely, are evident from the Synergos/Instituto Rio relationship, where Synergos has been intimately involved in the dialogue on organizational development broadly understood—though with a particular focus on financial sustainability. Or, in the case of co-operation between Abrinq and Synergos, the Brazilian organization, despite internal changes in leadership verging on crisis, nevertheless had sufficient energy to use Synergos’ assistance productively. (Even though its choices on financial sustainability have diverged from Synergos’ assumptions about appropriate strategies.)

The *acompanamiento* approach to capacity development points the way forward. It implies a much closer set of working relationships for Synergos, whether the Institute is represented by staff or consultants, and by extension a collaborative/supportive presence that will go well the boundaries of financial processes, large as these may be. This orientation does not mean that all Synergos staff need to become OD facilitators; it does imply that the Institute’s program staff and managers need to be comfortable with issues of OD broadly understood, and knowledgeable about OD practitioners and agendas in the countries where they work. It is also worth emphasizing that Synergos’ current practice broaches these issues, so that a focus on organizational sustainability is less a departure from than an extension of current practice. The *acompanamiento* approach uses a broad scope for assessing organizational resources and capacity agendas. The experience of the Mexico and Brazil programs seems particularly relevant here.

## **New Tools and Approaches**

Synergos has invested in the development and use of diagnostic tools in its programs, notably in the Mexico program. These are essential for a capacity-building strategy based on *acompanamiento*. They provide a basis for organizational self-definition—profiling assets, needs and priorities—and for negotiating a contract between the CF (in this instance) and an OD facilitator. As noted, the tools used in the Mexico program have also been helpful for Synergos staff and partner organizations in Ecuador and Zimbabwe. Different diagnostic devices have been used, including one developed by Synergos’ staff in consultation with Mexican CFs at the beginning of the USAID program, and another now used in building baseline profiles in the Hewlett-funded program of institutional development for CFs.

The tools examined in this evaluation (i.e., those from the Mexico program, noted above) are well conceived. They examine core functions of a CF—governance, administration and management, programs and grantmaking, and resource mobilization—and include indicators for each and questions to elicit the necessary information. In future evaluations of the Hewlett program and the Border Philanthropy Partnership, it would be valuable to assess the usefulness of these tools. If they work well in Mexico, they may be useful in other settings, as their use in some of Synergos’ other programs suggests.

Following are this evaluator’s preliminary comments on these tools. These are based on personal experience and preferences, and on respondents’ observations.

- The utility and effectiveness of these and other tools depend very much on the skill of their users. Used for self-profiling, for example, they can be valuable within an organization if the leadership encourages careful scrutiny and open exchange among those participating in the process. In the hands of a good OD facilitator, a diagnostic tool can open up organizational issues and agendas not readily apparent from the data they generate. For example, SAGA, the Southern Africa Grantmakers’ Association, has used Synergos’ diagnostic tool successfully as a means of opening up discussion of board development.
- That said, two aspects of organizational life and capacity seem under-played. The first might be described as *issues and relationships in the wider community*. This issue-area includes questions such as the sources and maintenance of organizational legitimacy, and the centrality of larger socio-political issues such as citizenship and the development of a new institutional culture that is more transparent and responsive to citizens’ interests. Respondents in both Mexico and Brazil highlighted these issues. They also reflect this evaluator’s bias—that an essential starting-point for understanding institutions is the moral basis of its existence and authority. Organizational legitimacy is from this perspective a more organic quality than, let us say, the interaction between an “organism” and its “external environment”. The second dimension of organizational dynamics that merits more attention is the *intangibles of capacity and capacity development*. These may include a sense of identity, confidence and self-esteem, and of one’s organizational place in the world; a capacity for imagination and strategic thinking, to learn, act and adapt.<sup>62</sup>

Both of these considerations could be teased out of the diagnostic tools as they now stand, most obviously from their focus on governance and programming. From this reviewer’s perspective, however, these should be explicit rather than latent parts of the analysis of organizational capacity.

**“Partnership”** is listed as a cross-cutting theme in PVC’s guidelines for evaluation reports. In this report, we have incorporated comments on partnership into the

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<sup>62</sup> For different treatments of these issues, see CDRA, “Crossroads: A Development Reading,” and John Saxby, “COEP: Mobilizing against hunger and for life. An analysis of performance, capacity and change in a Brazilian network.” Occasional Paper, ECDPM, Maastricht, Netherlands, 2004.

assessment of the country programs, because program objectives explicitly addressed Synergos' partnerships with its Southern counterparts.

For reasons of space, we have deliberately omitted a résumé of the literature on partnerships for development, and of issues arising from that which would be relevant here. One obvious question to pursue, for example, would be whether Synergos' relationships with its Southern counterparts can reasonably be described as "partnerships". The word is ubiquitous in the development discourse, applied to organizational relationships that cover the spectrum from simple co-operation to organizational mergers; and to "partnerships" among all manner of entities in the spheres of government, business and civil society. For this reason, the usefulness of the word has been challenged by numerous commentators, yet it persists.<sup>63</sup>

Two points about the partnership discourse stand out from conversations in this evaluation. First, none of the respondents seemed troubled by the use of the term, accepting it as part of the language of organizational relationships. People spoke instead of what had worked or not within the partnership, key points in its evolution, and so on. One point raised by Simone Coelho's evaluation of the Synergos/GIFE partnership does deserve emphasis, however. As we noted on p.8 of this Report, she asserts the importance of both parties' full involvement in the design and implementation of joint action in a partnership. It is clear from the experience of this program that this condition has been realized unevenly, for different reasons. This observation is not a criticism of the organizations involved—a partnership with Synergos will be but one of many items on an organizational agenda, and subject to all sorts of influences. For any entity, however, gauging the depth of commitment across the table, and adjusting expectations and actions accordingly, is imperative. As the notes on the various partnerships suggest, the longstanding relationships between Synergos and several of the Southern organizations in the program may have restricted the application of "due diligence". If this is so, then the rethinking of some of these historic partnerships, now under way, is probably a healthy sign.

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<sup>63</sup> For critical commentary, see "Questioning Partnership: The Reality of Aid and NGO Relationships," ed. Alan Fowler, *IDS Bulletin* v. 31, 3, July 2000; Charles Abugre, "Partners, Collaborators or Patron-Clients: Defining Relationships in the Aid Industry. A Survey of the Issues," Accra, Ghana: Background paper prepared for CIDA/Canadian Partnership Branch, 1999; John Saxby, "Partnership in Question: An issues paper," Hull, Canada: Paper prepared for CIDA/CPB, 1999. A recent statement from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (the OECD) shows how the notion has been embraced within the development co-operation community: OECD/DAC, High Level Forum, Paris, Feb. 28 – March 2, 2005, "Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness." Simone Coelho's evaluation of the Synergos/GIFE partnerships echoes the critics' sentiment that the word has been used so loosely as to empty it of meaning.

#### **4.0 LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Programming and Management**

To preface the comments here, we can extend some of the observations made on Synergos' approach to managing its programs in Mozambique, Brazil, and Mexico. This program has been a capacity-building initiative centred on organizational development, primarily for and with Southern organizations. The heart of the matter has been an organizational dialogue and exchange among the principals, often effective, sometimes less so. If this dialogue is to be productive, it requires the people and organizations involved to build and maintain quality relationships. Capacity development from this perspective should have a strong element of reciprocity within it—though this is not to say that all relationships will thus be harmonious and balanced. From this perspective, capacity development is not about “delivering services”. A South African practitioner described it, accurately if a bit awkwardly, as about “facilitating resourcefulness”.<sup>64</sup>

Several lessons to be learned stand out from the assessment of the country programs, and of Synergos' management of those. These are summarized here, with the related recommendations and the page references for the latter. Much of what follows is not new, but reinforces what we already know.

**(1) The primacy of context:** The core issue here is the fit between “the foundation model” and the conditions of civil society in Mozambique, Brazil and Mexico. The challenge for Synergos and its partners is to invest time upfront in a more rigorous analysis of the context than we now see in the program documents. This contextual analysis should include the national socio-political context, focusing on civil society, and the institutional setting of the program. The operational or programmatic context matters as well, especially the interplay between partner organizations and the wider communities where they work. This is, after all, an OD program directed towards intermediary organizations, and the link between stronger organizations and benefits for the community at large must be addressed. In Mexico and Brazil, for example, CFs are seen to have a potentially important role in encouraging active citizenship, and in building democratic institutions and cultures. What does “capacity” look like through that lens?

**It is recommended** that Synergos and its partners integrate these three aspects of the context into the rationale for any future program, to create a more detailed and sharper setting for the program strategy and objectives. (p. 7)

In practice, these issues are already on the agenda in all three programs, and all can draw on examples noted in the references. The broader task is to make that discussion more systematic and comprehensive, and to chart and disseminate its main elements—to record and deepen the debates about hybrid organizations, for example, and about national interpretations of community foundations. This assessment also implies that Synergos

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<sup>64</sup> CDRA, “Crossroads: A Development Reading”.



should widen its conceptual screen, at least beyond what is evident in the program documents, and immerse itself in the ongoing debates and conjunctural analyses of civil society and its role in social change. Notions like “civil society” and for that matter “community” cannot be treated as uncritically, but have to be interrogated, and actors like Synergos and its counterparts have an opportunity to do so. In some instances, this may be only a short step—importing into the organizational discourse, for example, the themes argued by Jose Bernardo Toro in his essay *A construção do público*.<sup>65</sup>

(2) The response to the setting of the program turns on the quality of the working relationships between Synergos and its counterparts. **Candour and trust are of prime importance in negotiating a partnership.** Scarcely less important is sufficient confidence and judgment within the leadership of Southern organizations to harness Synergos’ resources—primarily knowledge—effectively. An accord can be a useful reference point in this process, if it expresses the parties’ expectations and agreed roles faithfully. It is no guarantee of performance, however. Partnerships require a full engagement by both parties; where this is uneven, effectiveness is compromised.

Synergos is not a large organization, and its staff presence for any country program will necessarily be small. Working out a partnership with a larger organization in such a way that the co-operation is accessible, understood, and supported, requires special effort. Discussions with FDC in Mozambique suggest that a more participatory process of program design would have helped to ground a partnership more effectively in the larger organization. A task-group approach offers one way of doing so, but also carries a challenge to the management of the Foundation to work in a less traditional fashion.

(3) **Program objectives are most useful when the partners tailor them** to their institutional and country context, reflecting the specific capacity development issues of the organizations involved and the related parts of the program strategy. It may be best to formulate objectives in an iterative manner, including (for example) a diagnostic exercise by which OD plans are developed and a followup implementation phase. It follows that objectives may be revised as the program unfolds—the ability to recast analysis and strategy may well be a sign of maturing organizational capacity, and a healthy relationship among the actors.

In a similar vein, specific rather than generic objectives make the design of indicators easier. In any case, indicators should be accompanied by an explanation that shows *why* they are an appropriate signal for the objective.

(Recommendations in the text are on pages 12 and 29.)

(4) **Capacity-building in this program has been essentially organizational development**—Synergos and its partners are not focusing their efforts on community or individual capacity, nor on wider enabling policy or cultural environments. Within this *optique*, what are some of the key elements of capacity development in this program? The following stand out from this report:

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<sup>65</sup> Published this year by (X)Brasil and SENAC/Rio, supported by Synergos.

- The contextual analyses noted above will shape the reading of potential counterparts, their assets, needs and priorities. There may thus be quite diverse answers to a common question such as, “Who do you work with?” In Brazil, there are few independent grantmaking foundations, and fewer still CFs. There are, however, NGOs and grantmakers-in-the-making interested in a new philanthropy. For Synergos, such organizations comprise a new but relevant public, and present an opportunity to expand the boundaries of its usual niche. A sharper analysis of such factors in the institutional and community context of the program raises a complementary question: “Who do these intermediaries work with?” If Synergos’ overall agenda is to support social change to combat poverty and inequity, then a clearer picture of the chain of actors in that process is essential.
- Do the resources—knowledge, people, contacts, energy and commitment, money—available fit the partners’ challenges, strategies and objectives? Synergos and its partners command modest resources, and contend with enormous social problems. As always, the question must be asked, “What’s feasible?” The estimate of resources is not static, of course—the evident capacity of Synergos and its program partners to leverage additional resources shows this. Donors interested in multipliers for their funds should take note.
- In this program, the practice of *acompanamiento* in Brazil and Mexico appears to be the most promising approach to OD. It is time-and-labour-intensive, requiring regular dialogue and hence a continuous presence for Synergos. This may take the form of an office or established consultants. It requires as well (as noted above) a capability among Southern organizations to understand and use Synergos’ resources.
- In this latter quality, *intangibles* remain fundamentally important—an organization’s sense of its identity and place in the world; confidence in its own values and competence; its readiness to engage with others, and enough energy and motivation to act on its own agenda. Some experienced OD practitioners insist that *unless* these qualities are in place, there is little that an external supporter can usefully do.<sup>66</sup>
- The logic of *acompanamiento*, with its emphasis on coaching and a tailored OD response to the specific circumstances of a community foundation (for example), pushes Synergos to promote organizational sustainability in its broad sense. The experience of working with organizations other than grantmaking foundations, if it continues, will probably have a similar influence on Synergos. All this may mean some re-tooling—an investment in a greater collective comfort level with the different currents of OD practice. This may not mean a great departure from current practice. As described in earlier sections, the diagnostic tools Synergos is now using are quite comprehensive, addressing issues of governance, mission and mandate, and management and programming capabilities as well as resource mobilization and investment. Deliberately examining the OD discourse in this way would complement the widening of Synergos’ conceptual screen to engage with the debates on civil society.
- One particular OD challenge presents itself immediately. Synergos works with intermediary organizations—typically, with foundations active in social development at the community level. What then is the thread of attribution to understand the

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<sup>66</sup> CDRA, “Crossroads: A Development Reading”.

results of Synergos' contributions, as these results play out within the wider community? As one Mozambican put it, there has to be capacity within the community if an organization like FDC is to work effectively. For Synergos and its partners, this means investing in understanding *impact*—the broader and longer-term effects of their OD work beyond their organizational boundaries.<sup>67</sup>

- Synergos and its program partners have designed and applied diagnostic tools, both in this program and elsewhere. These analytical frameworks can be useful for creating baseline datasets and for monitoring progress against objectives, depending on how actors use them. The frameworks reviewed in this evaluation would be stronger with more explicit emphasis on two of the points noted here: the interplay between organizations like CFs and their wider community; and the centrality of intangibles in capacity development.
- Capacity development, finally, is about *learning*, particularly practical learning from, and to guide, action. Earlier commentary has highlighted the extent of individual and organizational learning across the program, often well beyond what was planned. Respondents praised the Senior Fellows program as a means of peer-to-peer learning, and offered examples of important interventions made by Fellows visiting their own organizations. Synergos has an established practice of documenting innovation, and this program presents further opportunities for doing so. There is an opportunity as well for joint reflection among Synergos and its principal partners in this program, and **it is recommended that** Synergos convene its key counterparts to review their achievements and difficulties, and to examine future directions. (p.14) Doing so would both encourage and take advantage of a widespread rethinking of longstanding partnerships. A collective initiative of this kind would underscore the thread of reciprocity that has run through respondents' comments in this evaluation. It would also challenge the logic of the program documents, which present Synergos as capacity developer, and Southern organizations as *developees*. Exchange and mutual learning probably more accurately describe what has happened, and certainly are more in keeping with the notion of capacity development as organizational dialogue. An investment in organizational learning is not a cost of operating a foundation. For a support organization like Synergos, its most valuable long-term contribution may be its capacity to assemble the people and money to make such an investment.

**(5) Related lessons on Program Management** include the following:

- *Acompanamiento* as a core strategy for capacity development requires a continuous field presence. Extending this logic, FDC's suggestion of a small OD resource team in Mozambique broadens the possible reach of such a strategy to CSOs.

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<sup>67</sup> This may require lateral thinking, and an example from Brazil may be relevant. Renascer is an NGO that has created innovative ways of improving health care for children, by working to improve their families' resources and capabilities. Renascer is tapping Synergos' knowledge and experience to set up a Trust Fund to augment and sustain its revenues. Its challenge for the future may not lie in providing better health care for children, however. Despite its record of innovation, Renascer has been unable to interest public authorities in piloting its methodologies. Its Trust Fund, when it is established, may finance advocacy and policy research to influence the wider institutional environment. In any case, assessing impact is not foreign territory for Synergos. The discussion of the Mozambique program noted the evaluation of impact undertaken by Sandra Libunao, a Senior Fellow working with FDC.

- A budget based on programs and their components and objectives rather than line expenses would allow Synergos to articulate and assess the link between its capacity-development objectives and its resources. As per the recommendation on p.56, these resources should be understood to include staff time, perhaps *the* key programming resource for Synergos.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION:

We can conclude this Report by offering answers to three questions.

**Was the grant effective?** The answer here is “yes”, with some qualifiers. The programming supported by the USAID grant and by the independent donors’ matching funds was certainly effective in Brazil and Mexico. The résumé of progress against objectives (and related indicators) provided in the preceding sections makes this clear. There are some qualifiers to be entered. In the Mexico program, there remain some unresolved issues in the principal partnership, but these are not immobilizing, nor have they compromised the effectiveness of the support provided to the CFG. In Brazil, the scope of the current program is relatively small, but its potential reach is substantial. Synergos and its counterparts are in at the ground floor in defining a new philanthropy. The Institute is working with organizations and people who comprise a small but energetic and creative kernel of change. The picture in Mozambique is more complicated. The main partnership has been ineffective to date in realizing most of the objectives set for the program. At the same time, Synergos has supported activities which may provide a basis for future advances in fundraising and endowment-building, for example, *if* FDC can act effectively on its own organizational-development agenda.

**Do the results represent good value?** Estimating “good value” for the various participants in the program—USAID and independent funders; Synergos and its principal and secondary partners; and a step further removed, those CSOs with whom the Southern organizations work—is rather less straightforward. The judgment of value is more complicated than triangulating results anticipated with those achieved and budgets expended during the period of the grant. The *potential* implicit in each program needs to be taken into account, and hence the longer-term and broader impact of the three country programs. As indicated, both the Mexico and Brazil programs have supported organizations which individually and collectively hold considerable potential. If the Mexican CF movement continues to grow in number and consolidates its members’ individual strength in the next few years, then Synergos and CEMEFI can rightly claim to have played an essential part in its vital early development. Similarly, if community foundations and community philanthropy more generally expand significantly beyond their current toehold in Brazilian civil society, again Synergos and its partners can take

credit for offering practical and strategic support when it was needed. Neither outcome is assured. In both countries, these collective initiatives are vulnerable to upset from political and economic forces in the nation at large, not to mention the capacity challenges any young organization will face. *If* the wider environment is benign, or at least not destructive, one could certainly see the movements in both countries flourishing. From that perspective, the investment in this program would appear both modest and productive, i.e., very good value.

A similar question about the Mozambique program yields a more contingent answer. Here, the constraining variable seems to be organizational dynamics within the partner organization. If FDC can assemble the necessary mass of energy, organizational purpose, and leadership among staff and management to clarify its role and strategic directions and to strengthen its financial base, then the seeds planted during this program may take root. Staffmembers' exposure to different approaches to fundraising and endowment-building, for example, and organizational contacts with wider philanthropic networks, could yet prove to be valuable assets in the longer term.

#### **What does the evaluation of this program offer for Synergos' future directions?**

- The evaluation should contribute to Synergos' current review of its longstanding partnerships. Such a review seems very much in order, an opportunity to reflect on shared values, purposes, concepts and methods of work. The suggestion that Synergos convene a forum of participants in this program offers one way of doing so.
- If Synergos continues to promote capacity within grantmaking foundations, the experience in this program suggests that *acompanamiento* can be an effective approach. This in turn is greatly helped by a continuous field presence.
- *Acompanamiento* as an approach to OD has also led the parties towards the goal of organizational sustainability, broadly conceived. This orientation in turn may push Synergos conceptually deeper into the discourse on civil society on one hand; and practically, on the other, into acquiring more familiarity with principles and practices of organizational development.
- The evaluation recommends, finally, closer attention by Synergos to the way it frames and presents its programs, and in the use of some management tools such as program-based budgeting.

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## **ANNEX I: Note on Method**

The starting point for the design of the evaluation was Synergos' Statement of Work and Schedule (attached below.) Its bookend was the USAID/PVC "Evaluation Guidelines for Matching Grants", which has provided the structure for this report. The evaluation was managed by Synergos' Director of the Strengthening Bridging Organizations program, the "home" for the USAID Matching Grant within the Institute.

**Design of the evaluation:** The evaluator reviewed the SOW and basic program documents, such as the DIP and Synergos' Annual Reports to USAID, and interviewed Synergos' program manager by telephone on the evolution of the program. On the basis of this information, the evaluator drafted an Evaluation Scope & Focus Matrix, which was endorsed by the program manager. This Matrix set out three issue-areas for investigation: the quality of the relationships between Synergos and its core partners in the program; their capacity development agenda (issues and methods); and results expected and realized. Sub-issues are noted for each, as well as key questions and data sources.

The evaluation relied on two forms of inquiry, review of documents and structured interviews with key informants. (Persons interviewed and documents reviewed are listed below.) The Scope and Focus Matrix provided the basis of an interview protocol, with common questions tailored to the circumstances of individual organizations. Synergos program staff advised the evaluator on respondents to be interviewed, and assisted in arranging interviews. Interviews in Mozambique and Brazil were conducted in person, each lasting between one and two hours. In both countries the evaluator also made brief visits to projects and/or organizations supported by Synergos' counterparts. The purpose of these visits was to see first-hand the type of work Synergos was supporting in the wider community, not to assess the projects or the organizations. Participants in the Mexico program were interviewed by telephone, each interview lasting about one hour.

**Implementation of the evaluation:** The evaluation was carried out between late August and early December 2005, the evaluator using 42 person-days in this period. Visits to Mozambique and Brazil took place in early September and mid-November. Telephone interviews with participants in the Mexico and Headquarters programs took place in October. The Report on the evaluation was drafted in late November and early December, and reviewed in a workshop with Synergos staff on Dec. 6 and 7. The presentation to USAID is scheduled for Jan 24, 2006.

The evaluation was implemented according to its original budget estimate, with the exception of an increase in the number of person-days, from the original 30 to 42.

## **A1. PERSONS INTERVIEWED:**

### **Mozambique Program:**

*Synergos staff:* Barry Smith, Regional Director, Southern Africa (Cape Town); Andrea Rogers, Program Officer (Cape Town); Shari Turitz, Program Manager (by telephone—New York City).

*USAID:* Chris Runyan, Program Officer formerly responsible for Synergos program (Washington, DC). Interviewed by telephone.

*FDC:* (All interviews in Maputo. Positions in FDC at time of interview.)

Mme Graça Machel, President, FDC Board

Paulo Zucula, Executive Director

Carlos Fumo, former Executive Director

Marta Cumbi, Director, Advocacy & Co-operation

Paula Monjane, Director, Knowledge Management Unit

Eduarda Cipriano, Director of Programming

Muchimba Sikumba-Dils, Co-ordinator, Gender Programming & Fundraising Officer

Erik Charas, Manager, Endowment

Celso Mabunda, Program Officer

### **Mexico Program:**

(NB: All interviews by telephone.)

*Synergos staff:* Shari Turitz; Cristina Parnetti, Senior Program Officer, Latin America, (NYC); Judy Harper, Associate Director, Border Philanthropy Partnership (San Diego).

### ***Current and former participants in the Mexico program:***

Phillip Walsh (former Mexico Program Associate at Synergos), Inter-American Foundation, Arlington, VA

Vivian Blair (consultant in institutional development to Mexican foundations working with Synergos), Mexico City

Jorge Villalobos, Presidente Ejecutivo, (CEMEFI), Mexico City

Lourdes Sanz, Co-ordinator, Community Foundations Program, CEMEFI.

(NB: Sr Villalobos and Sra Sanz were interviewed together.)

Deborah Acevedo, Executive Director, Fundación Comunitaria Puebla, Puebla.

Karen Yarza, Executive Director, Fundación Comunitaria Frontera Norte, Cd. Juárez.

Jaime Bolaños, Executive Director, Fundación Comunitaria Oaxaca, Oaxaca de Juárez.

## **Brazil Program:**

(NB: All interviews in Rio de Janeiro unless noted.)

**Synergos staff:** Candace Lessa, Program Director; Mônica de Roure consultant and Program Officer (São Paulo); Shari Turitz (NYC, telephone).

**USAID:** Chris Runyan, (Washington, DC). Interviewed by telephone.

### ***Brazil program participants:***

Angela Dannemann, Instituto Rio Board member.

Geraldo Jordão, Instituto Rio Board member.

Isabella Nunes, Instituto Rio Board member, Founder of the Social Responsibility Nucleus of FIRJAN.

Ely Harasawa, Institutional Relations Manager, Abrinq, to May 2005.

Marcio Brazil, Instituto Rio Board member.

Elio Raymundo, Executive Director, Instituto Rio.

Amalia Fischer, Executive Director, and Madalena Guilhon, General Co-ordinator, Angela Borba Women's Fund.

Vera Cordeiro, Executive Director, Renascer.

Teresa d'Amaral, Executive Director, IBDD.

Fernando Rossetti, General Secretary, GIFE (São Paulo).

Luis Vieira Rocha, Executive Director, Abrinq, to May 2005 (São Paulo).

Ana Maria Wilhelm, Superintendent, Abrinq, to May 2005 (São Paulo).

**Headquarters Program:** Shari Turitz, Program Manager, NYC and Cape Town.

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Abrinq Foundation:	<a href="http://www.fundabrinq.org.br">www.fundabrinq.org.br</a>
Oaxaca Community Foundation:	<a href="http://www.fundación-oaxaca.org">www.fundación-oaxaca.org</a>
GIFE:	<a href="http://www.gife.org.br">www.gife.org.br</a>
Instituto Rio:	<a href="http://www.institutorio.org.br">www.institutorio.org.br</a>
The Synergos Institute:	<a href="http://www.synergos.org">www.synergos.org</a>
USAID:	<a href="http://www.usaid.gov">www.usaid.gov</a>

**A3. Synergos’ STATEMENT OF WORK AND SCHEDULE for this evaluation:**

External Evaluation of USAID Grant  
*Strengthening the non-governmental financial and technical resource  
base for development in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique*

USAID Grant # HFP-A-00-02-00015-00

**Timeline for the evaluation**

## **2005**

### **May**

- Week 1 and 2 Internal consultation on SOW (Synergos HQ staff) and preparation of draft SOW (DW)
- Weeks 3 and 4 Review of draft SOW by Synergos Staff. Identification of candidates for external evaluation

### **June**

- Week 1 and 2 Share potential evaluators with USAID; choose evaluator
- Weeks 3 and 4 Orientation of evaluator

### **August**

- Week 1 Evaluation starts

### **September**

Focus group discussions with Synergos program staff (HQ and field) in NYC.

### **October**

- October 31<sup>st</sup> Draft evaluation report submitted

### **November**

- Weeks 1 and 2 Draft report read by Synergos program staff (HQ and field), Synergos partner staff and PVC and comments returned
- Week 2 and 3 Report finalized by external evaluator

### **December**

- Weeks 1 and 2 Debriefing meetings Synergos and partners and preparation of post evaluation action plan

## **2006**

### **January**

- Before Jan 31<sup>st</sup> Final report presented to PVC, USAID

## **Draft Scope of Work for the External Evaluator**

### **➤ Evaluation objectives**

- Assess the extent to which the program objectives (set out in the DIP) were achieved using the categories “fully achieved, partially achieved or not achieved”
- Assess why they were or were not achieved (looking at both internal and external factors). i.e., enabling factors or impediments.
- Assess the effectiveness of the methodology used (including the role played by Synergos staff and Synergos Senior Fellows).
- Identify lessons to be learned from the program over its three year life span. These are lessons for Synergos (the grantee), Synergos partners in Mozambique,

Brazil and Mexico, and a broader audience interested in strengthening the foundation sector.

- Make recommendations for future action by Synergos management and staff and each partner organization.

It is particularly important that the evaluation:

- Explores and explains how the program's approach/activities/ methodology contributed to its success/failure/strengths/weaknesses
- Detects patterns and convergences in the evidence across program sites (are there common lessons?)
- Increase understanding of the program merits and broader significance

➤ **Evaluation questions**

We will use USAID list of the questions to be answered in the evaluation as a guide. These will be supplemented by Synergos staff.

➤ **Methodology**

The evaluator will use the following data collection methods:

- *Revision of base line data and indicators (contained in DIP)*
- *Revision of documents/reports produced by Synergos (including the Mid-term evaluation)*
- *Documents produced by the partner organizations*
- *Key informant interviews with Synergos staff and staff of partner organizations*
- *Focus group with Synergos program staff*
- *Interviews will be in person in Mozambique and Brazil and by telephone and email with partners in Mexico and staff in Synergos headquarters (NY)*

➤ **Roles of evaluator and other stakeholders**

The evaluator will be given orientation by a team of Synergos staff (SAT, JR, JH, JF and DW) led by DW. DW will be the principal point of contact between Synergos and the external evaluator. The SOW will be reviewed by partner organizations.

Synergos staff and staff of partner organizations will furnish the evaluator with all documentation required and will set aside time for the necessary interview.

➤ **Evaluation report format**

The external evaluator will follow the format laid out in the USAID PVC Guidelines. Synergos staff will prepare sections 1.1. and 1.3 in advance of the evaluation.

➤ **Strategies for debriefing, sharing and using the information resulting from the Evaluation**

Synergos team will prepare a plan for debriefing; sharing and using the information (see Timeline above)

➤ **Required qualifications for external evaluator:**

- Track-record in conducting major evaluations of development programs for bilateral or multilateral donors (including possible USAID)
- Knowledge and experience relating to a wide range of monitoring and evaluation methods and data analysis
- Experience in institutional development work in the no-profit sector (preferably to include work with foundations)
- Work experience in either Brazil or Mozambique
- Fluency in Portuguese and English
- Report writing skills
- Advanced degree in the social sciences

➤ **Applications should include**

1. C.V.
2. List of donor evaluations completed
3. Two references

**ANNEX II: Table A, Program Strengths and Weaknesses**

Program Objectives <sup>68</sup>	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>BRAZIL:</b>		
<p><b>(1)</b> To strengthen the Synergos/GIFE partnership as a means of building GIFE’s capacity to serve its member base, including organizations working in the area of children and youth, health and environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the program period, Synergos and GIFE have built an effective and valuable partnership.</li> <li>• In the first half of the program, when the relationship was not as easy as it later became, both parties agreed to a mid-term independent evaluation, which moved the process forward.</li> <li>• GIFE has praised Synergos for its timely and flexible response to GIFE’s agenda. Synergos’ presence in Brazil has been a major asset.</li> <li>• GIFE and Synergos have co-published several operational guides and case studies on private social investment in Brazil. These are useful resources for organizations interested in community philanthropy and grantmaking (see below.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the first half of the program period, the workplan was too ambitious. The evaluator’s report notes approximately half the planned activities completed in the intended timeframe.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(2)</b> To strengthen the technical and financial resource base for non-profit sector development in Brazil including the areas of children and youth, health and environment, by providing capacity-building services to 30 [revised to 24 in March/04] existing and emerging grantmaking organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synergos in effect recast the program objectives to respond to the Brazilian philanthropic environment, working with different organizations interested in community-based philanthropy and investment in social change. These included NGOs as well as grantmaking organizations such as Brazil’s first two CFs.</li> <li>• Synergos widened its range of program partnerships, and those organizations made effective use of Synergos services. NGOs and grantmaking organizations have used the services of Senior Fellows to plan fundraising and endowment-building strategies.</li> <li>• Synergos has supported the creation of a grantmakers’ network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The original assumptions for the program appear to have over-estimated the interest among Brazilian foundations (largely corporate entities) in grantmaking, and in the related services Synergos could offer.</li> </ul>

<sup>68</sup> Taken from the revised DIP unless otherwise noted.

<p><b>(3)</b> To strengthen two model grantmaking organizations, Abrinq and Instituto Rio, to promote effective grantmaking leadership in the emerging philanthropic sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instituto Rio, Brazil's first CF, has been established as a grantmaking foundation working in a touch neighbourhood in Rio. It has a strong Board, has created Brazil's first Community Trust Fund, and has built working links with international foundations. Synergos has been integral to this process, providing accompaniment on strategic and operational issues, access to technical expertise, and assisting IR in its international fundraising.</li> <li>• For Abrinq, Synergos facilitated the visit of Senior Fellows, one of whom, Nelson colon, was vital in Abrinq's definition of its strategic directions and operational plan for the next 15 years. Abrinq is an important and effective actor in children's rights, and Synergos' assistance in it evolution is valued, and is a good example of the quality of the Senior Fellows program as a resource to Southern organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The original objective was misplaced. Abrinq is a not a grantmaking foundation, but is in effect an operating NGO with one grantmaking program. Its endowment is a reserve fund, not a programming tool. Instituto Rio has survived, and is well placed to grow in size and effectiveness. In time it may well become an important example to other CFs, but to expect it to do so within the program period was too ambitious.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEXICO:</b></p>		
<p><b>(2)</b> To strengthen the Synergos/CEMEFI partnership with the goal of building the financial and technical resource base for development programs, including those in health and environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEMEFI and Synergos have leveraged substantial additional resources to support the CF movement in Mexico. Some of these have been channelled through CEMEFI (e.g., grants from the IAF and Microsoft); others have been managed by Synergos (e.g., funds for the BPP and the CF's Institutional Development program, supported by the Hewlett Foundation.)</li> <li>• The two organizations have planned a program together for the three-plus years of the project, working with the CFG. They have delivered all of the activities.</li> <li>• Both CEMEFI and FC respondents believe that Synergos' continuing support for Mexico's CF movement will be important—Mexican civil society needs international friendship and solidarity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEMEFI and Synergos have differences on Synergos' change of emphasis in its program strategy in the last year of the program. Synergos has invested some matching funds in direct support to the OD plans of individual CFs. CEMEFI disagrees with Synergos' use of a technical advisor, and would prefer that Synergos work only through its own channels.</li> </ul>



<p><b>(3)</b> To strengthen the financial and technical resource base for non-profit sector development in Mexico, especially in the areas of health and the environment, by providing capacity-building services to sixty<sup>69</sup> existing and emerging grantmaking foundations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individually and collectively, the CFs can show real progress. CFs affirmed the importance of the support given to their movement by CEMEFI and Synergos.</li> <li>• CFs welcomed Synergos' efforts to developed tailored programs of assistance via coaching methods.</li> <li>• The 2004/05 evaluation of the CFG, supported by CEMEFI and Synergos, was a valuable opportunity for the group. The CFs reflected on issues of strategic direction and autonomy, gaining clarity in their relations with both "parent" entities, and improving their ability to negotiate with CEMEFI and Synergos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There remains some tension in the triangular relationship, over issues such as the degree of autonomy that is desirable or possible for the CFG, and over the most effective means for CEMEFI and Synergos to provide technical advice and support to the movement.</li> </ul>
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<b>MOZAMBIQUE:</b>		
<p><b>(1)</b> To build the capacity and resources of FDC as a strategic grantmaking foundation to promote strong civil society development organizations in Mozambique</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synergos and FDC collaborated in a number of activities over the grant period intended to strengthen the capabilities of FDC staff for the future, in fundraising and endowment management. These are potential assets if FDC can stabilize its senior management and clarify its role as a grantmaking foundation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The partners were not able to achieve the major targets they had set for themselves: putting in place an integrated fundraising and endowment-building strategy for FDC, and a grant management system; and increasing FDC's overall financial base through a fundraising and endowment-building campaign.</li> <li>• For most of the grant period, FDC was in a slow and protracted process of strategic change and restructuring. The FDC/ Synergos program was not high enough in the Foundation's priorities to command the necessary leadership and commitment to move it forward.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(2)</b> To strengthen the FDC/ Synergos partnership [in order] to build a stronger technical and financial resource base for civil society development organizations in Mozambique</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organizations maintained a cordial relationship over the grant period, continuing a longstanding working relationship that dates back a decade and a half. Both affirm their intent to continue working together.</li> <li>• Synergos enlisted the support of four donors for the FDC/Synergos program, an increase of 400% from the start of the project, and exceeding the EOP target of three.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of the slow pace of change within FDC, and the consequent low priority it assigned to the FDC/Synergos program, joint workplanning was irregular. Items agreed to often did not receive the necessary followup attention.</li> </ul>

<sup>69</sup> Reduced to twenty-four in the revised DIP Planning Matrix of March 2004.

<p><b>(3)</b> To strengthen the technical and financial resource base for community development in Mozambique, through FDC's capacity-building services to civil society development organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FDC program staff understand and affirm the necessity of this function: capacity must exist in the community if FDC is to work effectively.</li> <li>• FDC continued its support for Mozambican CSOs active on policy issues such as Debt Cancellation, and the education of women and girls. This support included financial assistance, and opening doors for CSOs to engage with government and donors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Items planned, such as workshops on fundraising, received little followup attention after an initial event. Foundation staff felt this objective held the lowest priority of the three for FDC.</li> </ul>
<p><b>HEADQUARTERS:</b></p>		
<p><b>(1)</b> To provide effective and efficient support to the programs being implemented in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synergos redesigned its planning and budgeting system, including an M &amp; E framework, and trained all its staff in the use of same. The format is outcomes-oriented, allows for a program-based approach to budgeting as recommended.</li> <li>• The Institute reorganized its financial administration system, and trained staff in its use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field staff had less training than HQ counterparts in the financial administration system, and felt dissatisfied with the promptness and accuracy of monthly budget reports from HQ.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(2)</b> To increase capacity of global programs in HQ to support field staff in delivering high quality capacity-building services to target foundations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Senior Fellows program was praised by program participants. The Brazil program in particular made frequent use of the program, engaging 8 SF's in 2005.</li> <li>• All participants rated professional exchanges favourably .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None noted.</li> </ul>

**ANNEX C: Table B, DIP Results Status**

**Note:** The tables below consolidate those in the text of the Report. These tables are a simplified version of the format in the USAID/PVC Evaluation Guidelines. In the summary of indicators, mid-term targets and actuals are omitted; baseline and EOP targets and actuals are included. These data, secondly, have been supplied by Synergos and have not been independently verified. The process of checking documents within the principal target organizations would not have been feasible within the person-day budget of this evaluation. In conversations with the different respondents, the evaluator heard no evidence that the data presented here are inaccurate. The more relevant issue (noted in the text) is whether the indicators accurately tap the essential quality of the program objectives.

**Brazil Program:**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>B/line</b>	<b>EOP Tgt</b>	<b>EOP Act</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>(1)</b> To strengthen the GIFE/Synergos partnership in order to build GIFE’s capacity to serve its members	<b>1.1</b> Number of joint capacity-building services provided by GIFE/ Synergos for members	1	12	20	EOP target of exceeded. NB: Services included publications, workshops, breakfasts. Participants included GIFE members & other interested organizations.
	<b>1.2</b> Number of GIFE members	66	79	83	EOP target exceeded. Synergos believes increase due principally to the energy and skill of GIFE’s Director.
<b>(2)</b> To strengthen the financial & technical base for nonprofits in Brazil by providing capacity-building services to grantmaking organizations	<b>2.1</b> Number of foundation professional trained in new skills of foundation management	0	40	60	EOP target exceeded.  Participants included staff of organizations other than grantmaking foundations, e.g. NGOs.  Services (noted above, Obj. #1) included more than “skills training”. For many, the first step was exploring the idea of community philanthropy.

	<p><b>2.2</b> Increased grantmaking budgets of five Brazilian grantmaking organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brazil Foundation;</li> <li>• Desiderata;</li> <li>• Angela Borba Women's Fund</li> <li>• The Boticário Foundation</li> <li>• FIRJAN</li> </ul>	(Ind. figs.)  \$301,000 (aggr.)	\$1,115,000	<p>Figures for: Brazil Fndtn: \$256,000; Boticário: \$444,000; Angela Borba: \$190,000 FIRJAN: \$130,000</p> <p>Aggr.: \$1,020,000</p>	<p>EOP totals for four organizations exceed EOP target for five. Increases in grantmaking budgets are not necessarily due to Synergos' work. The Institute has assisted FIRJAN, Boticário, and Angel Borba Fund, as well as SPVS, an NGO based in Curitiba.</p> <p>Synergos has supported the formation of a grantmakers' network in which all participate, along with Instituto Rio. This promises to be a source of mutual support and advice for participating organizations, as well as a basis for public policy advocacy to change the legal environment for family and individual giving, and for grantmaking organizations.</p>
<b>(3)</b> To strengthen two model grantmaking organizations, Abrinq and Instituto Rio, to promote effective grantmaking leadership in the emerging philanthropic sector.	<b>3.1</b> # of donors supporting Instituto Rio	1	10 (1,000% incr.)	6 (600%)	Donor target not met, <u>but</u> value of donations is significant, including major grant to IR's endowment. Major potential among int'l donors following Nov/05 fundraising tour.
	<b>3.2</b> # of grants by Inst. Rio to non-profit organizations	1	10 (1,000% incr.)	23 (2,300% incr.)	Target greatly exceeded (2005)
	<b>3.3</b> Size of Inst. Rio's operating budget	\$30 K	\$150K	\$65K	Target not met, EOP figure close to original mid-term estimate of \$75K. One result of turnover of executive staff.
	<b>3.4</b> Increase in Abrinq's endowment	\$100K	\$500K	n/a	Abrinq chose not to increase its endowment beyond requirements of a close-out reserve.
	<b>3.5</b> % of Abrinq budget spent on grantmaking	26%	40%	n/a	Abrinq chose not to follow this programming strategy. Currently, one of nine programs is based on grantmaking.

**Mexico Program:**

Objective	Indicators	B/line	EOP Tgt	EOP Act	Notes
(1) to increase CEMEFI's institutional capacity to deliver, on a sustainable basis, capacity building services to Mexican foundations, including foundations focusing on health and environment	1.1 # of foundations with current (annual) institutional profiles in the CEMEFI database.	0	20	19	Target effectively met: All 19 members of the CFG have an institutional profile in the CEMEFI d/base. CF profiles are part of CEMEFI's Directory of Mexican CFs and are grouped by region. Profiles include general information (history, name of the Chair of the Board, mission, geographical scope, programs), contact information and a link to the CF's website.
	1.2 # of knowledge resources on the CEMEFI website	10	40 (400% incr.)	Target exceeded	<p>CEMEFI has these knowledge resources on the CF section of its website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of the nature and purpose of a Mexican CF: Brief summary of the emergence and trajectory of CFs.</li> <li>• Section on Basic Concepts for CFs: includes "How a CF operates", "What it means to be a CF in Mexico" and roles of a CF.</li> <li>• Profiles for the 19 CFs in the CFG.</li> <li>• History of the CF movement in Mexico</li> <li>• Summaries of the 16 CF workshops conducted by Synergos and CEMEFI between Nov 1998 and Sept 2005.</li> <li>• Summaries of the 3 National Conferences of Mexican Grantmakers, Nov 2002, 2003 &amp; 2004.</li> <li>• Summary of Nov./04 meeting on Institutionalization, Transparency and Performance of CFs in Mexico.</li> <li>• Indicators on Institutionalization, Transparency and Performance</li> <li>• Summary of Nov/03 international event "Community Foundations in Mexico: A Global Dialogue", convened by Synergos and CEMEFI.</li> <li>• News and Events section of the CEMEFI website includes 13 national and international news and events sections: press releases, opportunities for professional learning and exchange and resources for institutional development.</li> </ul>

					<p>CEMEFI also includes the following in the “Philanthropy” section of its website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philanthropy: a new social sector in Mexico</li> <li>• Awards and recognitions for philanthropic work</li> <li>• Rights of the donor</li> </ul> <p>CEMEFI’s website also includes a news archive, a press room and an annual calendar of events.</p>
	<b>1.3</b> # of donors supporting CEMEFI’s capacity building work for Mexican foundations.	1	3 (300% incr.)	3	<p>Target met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2002, Mott Fndtn was the only donor supporting CEMEFI’s CF work, via a grant for the salary of a CF program coordinator, travel expenses and some funds for activities. Mott grant is being renegotiated.</li> <li>• In 2003, CEMEFI received a 2 year grant from the Inter-American Foundation for a demonstration project building endowment funds within 13 Mexican CFs. This was followed by a grant from Microsoft in 2005, intended to improve access to information technology and to strengthen relevant skills.</li> </ul>
<b>(2)</b> To strengthen the Synergos/CEMEFI partnership with the goal of building the financial and technical resource base for development programs, including those in health and environment	<b>2.1</b> # and % of joint annual workplans completed	none	90%	100% of 4 workplans, 2002 – 05.	<p>Synergos &amp; CEMEFI completed all activities listed in joint workplans, incl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 capacity building workshops a year;</li> <li>• 1 annual National Conference of Mexican Foundations;</li> <li>• 4 meetings per year of the CFG Consultative Group;</li> <li>• program of professional exchanges (until 2004) for CF staff and board;</li> <li>• one professional exchange for CEMEFI staff</li> </ul> <p>With the reception of the IAF endowment building grant, Synergos and CEMEFI expanded their workplan to include technical and financial assistance to the 13 foundations in this program (2003/04)</p>

	<b>2.2</b> # and % of favorable evaluations of activities implemented by the Synergos-CEMEFI partnership	No data	90% favourable	Seven workshops evaluated: responses were 96% favourable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2003 Synergos and CEMEFI systematized their process for evaluating joint activities and for reviewing those evaluations.</li> <li>Target exceeded in the seven workshops held between Jan/03 and March/05.</li> </ul>
	<b>2.3</b> # of donors supporting Synergos' capacity building work for Mexican foundations.	1	5 (500% incr)	12 (1,200% increase)	Target dramatically exceeded. Previous or current donors: Hewlett Foundation, Ford Foundation, Mott Foundation, Gonzalo Rio Foundation, McCune Foundation, Meadows Foundation, Annie E Casey Foundation, Houston Endowment, JP Morgan Chase, Pfizer Corporation, Inter-American Foundation.
<b>(3)</b> To strengthen the financial and technical resource base for non-profit sector development in Mexico, especially in the areas of health and the environment, by providing capacity-building services to sixty <sup>70</sup> existing and emerging grantmaking foundations	<b>3.1</b> # and % of Mexican CFs with permanent endowments	6	12 (100% incr.)	14 (133% incr.)	Target exceeded by 33%: All 13 CFs supported by IAF-funded program, plus one other CF, have achieved goal of endowments of MN\$300,000.
	<b>3.2</b> # and % of Mexican foundations that increase their grantmaking to Mexican non profit organizations by 25%.	0	16	12	Target of number of CFs 75% met: 12 CFs have increased their grantmaking to Mexican non-profit organizations. Of these, 11 have increased their grantmaking for more than 25%. 4 increased grantmaking by 90 to 100%.
	<b>3.3</b> # and % of Mexican foundations that increase their permanent financial endowment by USD 75,000	0	8	4 plus 10	US\$ target 50% achieved. Number of CFs increasing endowments was 14, well above 8. All 13 CFs in the IAF program increased endowments between minimum of U\$30,000 and maximum of U\$76,000: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 CFs incrded endowments from U\$30,000 to 40,000</li> <li>7 CFs increased endowments from U\$60,000 to 65,000</li> <li>3 CFs increased endowments from U\$70,000 to 80,000</li> <li>1 CF increased endowment by U\$82,800</li> </ul>

<sup>70</sup> Reduced to twenty-four in the revised DIP Planning Matrix of March 2004.

### Headquarters Program:

<b>(1)</b> To provide effective and efficient support to the programs being implemented in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique;	<b>1.1</b> # and % of Country Programs implementing revised monitoring and evaluation system	0	10	10	Target met. The new planning, budgeting and evaluation framework includes in its M & E a performance evaluation system for staff with professional goals for each.
	<b>1.2</b> % of Synergos staff trained in new financial management systems	0	34	31	Target 90% met. All HQ staff trained; Synergos less successful with 3 overseas staff, because of distance.
	<b>1.3</b> # of new donors supporting Synergos' programs in Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique	0	15	19	Target exceeded. Donors include 16 foundations and three corporations.
	<b>1.4</b> # of new GPC members from Brazil, Mexico and Mozambique	0	7	9	Target exceeded. 5 new GPC members from Brazil, 4 from Mexico.
	<b>1.5</b> % of Synergos staff using new, improved program planning matrix	0	34	34	Target met, including all overseas staff.
<b>(2)</b> To increase capacity of global programs in HQ to support field staff in delivering high quality capacity-building services to target foundations	<b>2.1</b> # of Senior Fellows assignments requested by field staff	5/yr	10/yr		Target met: 3 in Mexico, 8 in Brazil
	<b>2.2</b> % of professional exchanges based on new planning protocol which are rated favourably by exchange participants.	n/a	90%	100%	All professional exchanges used the revised protocol and all were rated favourably.
	<b>2.3</b> % of foundations in which staff and leadership report that Synergos capacity building service improved performance.	n/a	90%	100%	The evaluations of Synergos' capacity building services report that the experience was 'good' or better.



**ANNEX IV: Table C, Partnerships:**

**Note:** The table below is adapted from the USAID/PVC format to take account of the fact that Synergos was not funding the organizations involved. References to partners received funds have been removed.

**Brazil Program:**

<b>Partner Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Agreement Type</b>	<b>Role &amp; Main Responsibilities</b>
Principal in-country partner(s)	(1) GIFE (2) Instituto Rio (3) Abrinq	(1) Association (2) Comm. foundation (3) Hybrid: children’s NGO, formally a Foundation	(All) MOU, plus regular planning meetings to detail workplans, with DIP Planning Matrix as reference	(1) Promotion of philanthropy in Brazil (2) Community social investment (3) Policy advocacy and public education on children’s rights.
Secondary partner(s)	Renascer FIRJAN IBDD Angela Borba Fund Florianópolis CF	NGO Association of industries NGO Grantmaking fund Community fndtn		(All) Investigating community philanthropy tools and practices, such as endowment-building and/or grantmaking.

**Mexico Program:**

<b>Partner Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Agreement Type</b>	<b>Role &amp; Main Responsibilities</b>
Principal in-country partner(s)	(1) CEMEFI (2) Community Foundations Group	(1) Association (2) Affinity group of CFs in CEMEFI’s membership	(1) MOU, letter of commitment, and regular planning meetings to detail workplans, using DIP Planning Matrix as reference.	(1) Promotion of philanthropy in Mexico. With Synergos, supporter of CFG and its members. (2) Community philanthropy
Secondary partner(s)	Individual CFs	Comm. Foundations	CFs seeking OD funds from Synergos submitted proposal with objectives, methods, participants, and expected benefits.	Community philanthropy.

**Mozambique Program:**

<b>Partner Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Agreement Type</b>	<b>Role &amp; Main Responsibilities</b>
Principal in-country partner(s)	FDC	(1) Foundation; a hybrid with a social development program	MOU; and planning meetings to detail workplans, using DIP Planning Matrix as reference. Occasional joints notes, e.g. SI/FDC 2005 Action Plan	(1) Social development programs with poor rural communities; grantmaking to civil society organizations in different sectors and regions.
Secondary partner(s)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a.