

**75 YEARS**  
1940 – 2015

# of Engaged Philanthropy



Nelson Rockefeller (left) in Latin America with the The American International Association for Economic and Social Development in 1958. Photo courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center.

**T**HE ROCKEFELLER family's interests in education, conservation, health, humanitarian concerns, and the arts have drawn it to international philanthropy for well over 100 years. Standard Oil, established by John D. Rockefeller in 1870, has been described as the world's first truly global corporation. By 1885, 70 percent of its business was being done abroad. When the five sons of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., established the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) in 1940, they incorporated international giving from the start. RBF grantmaking was initially divided into three broad program areas: New York City, national, and international.

## **1940–1970**

### **INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & DEVELOPMENT**

The RBF was founded on the eve of U.S. involvement in World War II, a conflict during which all five brothers were engaged in either government or military service. Among the Fund's first postwar international concerns were war relief and recovery efforts, to which it gave more than \$800,000 in the 1940s (over \$8 million in 2016 dollars). In addition to giving through organizations like the Red Cross and the National War Fund, the RBF made grants directly to the relief

funds of the Philippines, Greece, Russia, France, Italy, and China.

As the world moved into the postwar era, the founding RBF trustees individually established numerous international organizations focused on geographic regions that were of special importance to them. Nelson A. Rockefeller founded the American International Association for Economic and Social Development (AIA) in 1946 and the International Business Economy Corporation (IBEC) in 1947, both of which worked to strengthen economies and raise standards of living in Latin America. John D. Rockefeller 3rd launched the Population Council in 1952 and the Agricultural Development Council (ADC) in 1953, both of which worked throughout Asia. In 1956, he founded the Asia Society, which aimed to increase cross-cultural understanding, interest, and respect between Americans and Asians, and to address pressing challenges including population, agricultural productivity, and food security. Around the same time, he also reinvigorated the Japan Society, helping to make it into an important forum for rebuilding American-Japanese relations. Laurance S. Rockefeller donated the land for and helped develop the U.S. Virgin Islands National Park, which opened in 1956, and funded the establishment of the Caribbean Conservation Association in 1967. David Rockefeller launched

the Center for Inter-American Relations (CIAR) in 1965, known as the Americas Society today, to improve relationships between the United States and Latin American nations. In 1973, he helped found the Trilateral Commission, a non-governmental discussion group of high-level leaders working to foster closer cooperation among the United States, Western Europe, and Japan.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the RBF international grantmaking budget went primarily toward support for these organizations with which the brothers had special relationships. The Fund's international orientation was also expressed in grants to the American Association for the United Nations, Church World Service, Foreign Policy Association, Near East Foundation, American-Korean Foundation, World Youth Fund of the YMCA, and the Institute for International Education, among others. In 1966, the RBF launched the International Fellows program at the Council on Foreign Relations, and supported it for the next ten years with grants totaling more than \$1.5 million.

During this mid-century period, RBF international grantmaking emphasized rural economic development in non-industrialized nations, cross-cultural exchanges and capacity building, and the cultivation and encouragement of international cooperation. In addition to supporting the work of other organizations, the RBF created two initiatives



A Population Council staff member conducting a consultation on contraception in Korea in 1964.

Founded in 1952 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd, the Population Council expressed his interest in global population growth, family planning, and the health of developing nations. The Council approached population through medical research, effective and affordable contraceptives, educational outreach, technical assistance, professional training, and long-term planning studies. In 1955, the Fund gave almost half a million dollars for general support to help the Council establish its footing and continued to make grants through the 1970s.

Rockefeller Archive Center



of its own: the Ramon Magsaysay Awards, launched in 1957 to recognize leadership in Asia across a variety of fields, and the RBF West Africa program, established in 1959 to support technical assistance for development.

### **The 1970s RECOGNIZING GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE**

By the early 1970s, the Fund's international program was divided into four categories: Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Atlantic Basin. Grantmaking in each category ranged from \$300,000 to \$475,000 annually, a 2016 value of approximately \$1.3 to \$2.1 million to each area. After a 1975 program review, the Fund clustered its international program into two lines of funding: structuring interdependence and developing countries.

The first funding area recognized the world's growing interdependence reflected in economic relationships and shared risks, for example the global thirst for oil and the threat of nuclear warfare. Against the backdrop of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations and the U.S. Trade Reform Act of 1974, the Fund emphasized the interrelated factors of food, energy, trade, and producer/consumer country relations. In industrialized nations, the Fund focused on international economic management, international law and human rights, and science and technology. It made grants to the Trilateral Commission, the Atlantic

Institute, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and supported policy development at the Brookings Institution, Yale University's Economic Growth Center, and the Workshop on Alternative Energy Strategies at MIT.

In developing countries, the Fund gave financial and staff support to technical assistance organizations, including Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA), and made grants to U.S.-based Technoserve and the Technology Consultancy in Kumasi, Ghana, as well as the Institute of Rural Reconstruction. It also expressed support for human rights through grants to the American Association for the International Commission of Jurists (AAICJ) and the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), among others. In the later years of the 1970s, a new funding area was established within the international program entitled "Human Dignity, Individual Liberties and the Law."

The closing of the AIA in 1969 freed the RBF to take the Latin America budget in new directions. In the early 1970s, the Fund began a cooperative initiative with the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to assist South and Central Americans in the management of wildlands as a part of overall environmental conservation and rural land management. After the 1975 review, the Fund concentrated its Latin America program

Recent arrivals for the African Scholarship Program of American Universities admire the New York City skyline.

The African-American Institute was formed in 1953 to assist African students in pursuit of higher education in the United States. Starting in 1961, the RBF made grants to support its scholarship program, which selected and placed African undergraduates in American universities, providing logistical help and financial support for their education. The Fund supported other projects including a conference aimed at increasing U.S. and European private investment in West Africa and leadership training for women.



Africa America Institute

on Central America and in 1977 it launched a new program in the Caribbean, similarly geared toward connecting economic development to the conservation of natural resources.

In Asia, the work of the ADC was also winding down. By the late 1970s, the Fund focused less on Asia than on Southern and West Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean. It did, however, make \$1 million capital grants to both the Asia Society and the Japan Society, continue its support for the Magsaysay Awards, and it made a variety of grants in Japan and in the five countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. As U.S.-China diplomacy reopened in the 1970s, the Fund supported exchanges through the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, an organization it had helped establish in the 1960s, as well as translation projects through the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The region of Southern Africa increasingly became a concern of the RBF in the 1970s. The Fund worked with the government of Botswana on land-use management and education reform, supported training programs at Tanzania's College of Wildlife Management, and assisted refugees in Botswana and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In South Africa,

as early as the 1960s, the Fund sought ways to promote economic opportunity for black South Africans, address human rights issues, and encourage non-violent change. Grantees included the African-American Institute, the U.S.-South Africa Leader Exchange Program, and the South African Institute for Race Relations. The RBF was also instrumental, in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, and local donors in South Africa, to the establishment of the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) in Johannesburg in 1979. The LRC has proven to be an extremely important institution in terms of promoting the rule of law as a peaceful means of addressing race-based discrimination and in raising public awareness of many injustices in South Africa. LRC's longtime executive director, Arthur Chakalson, became president of South Africa's Constitutional Court after the fall of the apartheid government. The Fund has had an ongoing involvement with international human rights through its concern for refugees, and made grants to aid and relocation organizations serving Hungarian refugees after 1956, Cuban refugees after 1959, Czechoslovakian refugees after 1968, Soviet Jews in the 1970s, and Polish refugees in the early 1980s.



Photo courtesy of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations.

Chinese table tennis players meet with American students during their 1972 visit to the United States.

The Fund was instrumental in the creation of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations in 1966, and supported the Committee from that point forward. Established to legitimize discussions about the People's Republic of China in the United States, as well as to foster exchanges amongst leading citizens of both countries, the Committee co-hosted the 1972 visit of the Chinese Table Tennis Team in round two of what came to be called "Ping Pong Diplomacy." Alongside President Nixon's 1972 visit to China, the exchange helped encourage the re-opening of U.S.-China diplomatic relations.



## **The 1980s–1990s** **SUSTAINABILITY AND SECURITY**

In 1983, the RBF adopted a new strategic vision organized around the theme of global interdependence that had become an increasingly important concept in its international grantmaking. The principal part of the Fund's program was now organized under the rubric, One World, with two major components: Sustainable Resource Use and World Security. This reformulation of the Fund's major programs would have an enduring influence into the early decades of the 21st century. The new program architecture continued a special focus on New York City and included a program designed to strengthen the non-profit sector and civil society.

In the mid-1980s, the Fund phased out its Latin America and Caribbean programs and reinvigorated its work in Asia, first through its Program for Asian Projects, which made grants to extend the projects of the Magsaysay Award recipients and, later, through its Asian Resources Program, which supported projects in natural resource conservation and ecologically sustainable development throughout East and Southeast Asia. The Fund also phased out its longstanding African program, and replaced it with a retooled focus on Southern Africa. These geographic transitions were not, however, abrupt.

Multi-year phase-out grants to Latin America, the Caribbean, and the old African program were paid through the late 1980s as the Fund simultaneously moved into new areas of geographic focus.

In the area of security, the Fund became a pioneering funder of nuclear non-proliferation work, creating and supporting networks that monitored emerging suppliers of nuclear materials, disseminated non-proliferation research to governments and policy makers, and encouraged the extension of the International Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995. From 1983 to 1993, the RBF made roughly \$9 million in grants in the arms control field. The Fund also made the first foundation grant to the Institute for East-West Security Studies (now the EastWest Institute), for its path breaking programs that brought together mid-career security specialists from the Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and North America. This significant organization has become a longstanding RBF grantee.

In 1994, the Fund reconsidered the objectives of the world security program and, in 1996, it launched the Project on World Security (PWS), which aimed to broaden the very concept of "security." PWS sought to provide a new framework for security analysis and policy development that would include

A 1987 gathering in Bangkok for all the Ramon Magsaysay Award recipients marking the prize's 30th anniversary.

In 1987 the Fund set aside \$2 million designated for the Program for Asian Projects to be used for small grants furthering collaborative work, including efforts of the Ramon Magsaysay awardees, a program of Asia-wide awards the Fund had established in the Philippines in 1957. When it launched in 1973, the Program focused on Japan and the countries of Southeast Asia on regional security, trade, and economic issues as well as agricultural research and development. The grant program was extended to China and South Korea in the early 1980s.



Photo courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center.

economic, social, and environmental concerns alongside the actual military security of the state. Following from the PWS, in 1998 the RBF launched the Global Interdependence Initiative, a ten-year collaborative project housed at the Aspen Institute that aimed to build stronger domestic constituencies for international cooperation. In this regard, one especially important contribution was publication of a compelling study entitled *U.S. in the World*.

Fissures within and resistance to Communist governments in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) were increasingly evident in the mid-1980s, and important changes began to emerge in Russia after Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party in 1985. During this decade, the Fund played several key roles relating to the environment, agriculture, and East-West exchanges: for example, bringing together academics and practitioners from CEE and USSR with their counterparts from the West to address common environmental concerns. The Fund played a leading role in establishing the Foundation for the Development of Polish Agriculture in 1988, which, first, brought Western funds to the aid of Polish farmers, and, over time, became an important ongoing source for analyses of rural life and loan funds for strengthening overall rural development in Poland. By 1990, after the fall of Communist

regimes throughout CEE, the Fund stepped up its involvement in the region, helping (through 2004) these nations rebuild civil society mechanisms and foster democratic processes. In the early 1990s, the Fund was a co-founder of the Environmental Partnership for Central and Eastern Europe, which supported locally appropriate, locally-run community development and philanthropic approaches to environmental issues, setting up an infrastructure that could continue after Western funders exited.

South Africa also moved to the forefront of the Fund's international grantmaking in the 1990s, after the end of apartheid. In this case, the Fund recognized that building a new, democratic society would require attention to basic education for both children and adults as a bottom-up development approach, in order to compensate for the fact that several generations of black South Africans had been deprived of schooling. When HIV/AIDS emerged as a serious problem in South Africa, the Fund pivoted in its approach, realizing the extent of this threat to the stability of an emerging democratic society. The RBF made important grants to equip teachers, schools, and social service agencies to support children impacted by HIV/AIDS and poverty. The Fund also supported efforts to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on democracy, sustainable development, and security in South Africa.



Photo courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center.

David Rockefeller meets with Wojciech Jaruzelski, First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, or Prime Minister, in Poland, 1988.

Building upon its broad work in East-West relations, the Fund seized an opportunity in the 1980s to revitalize Polish agriculture, aided by the involvement of RBF chair David Rockefeller and exploratory trips to Poland by Rockefeller Foundation agricultural expert and Nobel Prize winner Norman Borlaug. The Fund organized a team, including agricultural and legal experts and RBF program officer Bill Moody, which negotiated with the Polish government in the establishment of one of the earliest independent foundations in Eastern Europe before the Berlin Wall fell in 1989.



## The 2000s

### PHILANTHROPY FOR AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD

Following the merger with the Culpeper Foundation in 1999, there was an internal need to consolidate and streamline the endeavors of the two foundations. In addition, the geopolitics of the early 2000s, including the events of 9/11, prompted the Fund to review and refocus some of its international work in the security field. Furthermore, the type of work the RBF had been doing in the arms control field was now well funded by others.

In 2003, the Fund introduced revised program architecture that reflected both continuity with the past and innovation. It reaffirmed the Fund's dedication to the theme of "philanthropy for an interdependent world." Sustainable Development and Peace and Security remained major programs. A third major program was entitled Democratic Practice, which refocused what had been a long standing program in support of the non-profit sector. In addition, the concept of "pivotal places" was adopted. The concept, borrowed from a 1996 article in *Foreign Affairs* by Paul Kennedy, defines pivotal places as cities, nations, or regions of special significance where change can have a far-reaching influence, and which have the potential to generate innovations and insights both within and beyond their immediate regions. Selected pivotal

places would become the focus for concentrating a significant portion of the RBF's international grantmaking in the fields of Sustainable Development, Peace and Security, and Democratic Practice. A fourth program, Culpeper Human Advancement, was added, and it included funding in the field of arts and culture as well as other areas.

Since 2003, the Fund has worked internationally in Southern China, the Western Balkans, and, through its Peace and Security (now Peacebuilding) program, in the wider Middle East. After the Arab uprising of 2010-2011, the Fund additionally designated Egypt as an "area of special concern" – and, with funds provided by David Rockefeller, it works there to advance the long-term goals of dignity and prosperity for Egyptians, defend human rights and advance economic reforms and sustainable development.

From 2003-2010, the Fund's Peace and Security program made more than \$10.7 million in grants to promote mutual respect and understanding between Muslim and Western societies. Beginning in 2002, the RBF, in concert with the United Nations Association-USA and the Foundation for a Civil Society, led a fourteen-year-long U.S.-Iran Track II dialogue and made grants that exchanged perspectives on U.S.-Iran bilateral relations, Afghanistan, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,

Jeta Xharra, the director of the Kosovar branch of BIRN, hosts *Life in Kosovo*, which drives public discourse and has become one of the country's most watched current affairs programs.

Since 2005, The Balkan Investigative Reporting Regional Network (BIRN) has formed the hub for a network of nongovernmental organizations working to develop media and investigative reporting in the Balkans. The RBF has supported BIRN since 2006 and it forms one key component of the Fund's "triangle approach" to supporting think tanks, grass-roots advocacy, and investigative journalism throughout the region.



Photo courtesy of BIRN.

terrorism, Iranian support for Hezbollah and Hamas, and the Iranian nuclear file. The UNA/RBF Track II dialogues are widely acknowledged as a contributing element to the Iran nuclear deal framework, or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, reached in 2015 between Iran, the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, and Germany.

In the Western Balkans, the RBF has worked since 2001 to achieve restorative justice after the devastating conflicts of the 1990s, to build civil society institutions, and to increase government accountability, especially on matters of environmental concern. It makes numerous grants to organizations working to prepare the Balkan nations to meet the requirements for membership in the European Union.

The 2003 architecture, which remains largely in place in 2016, recognizes that issues such as ecologically sustainable development require new levels of international cooperation and partnership. Climate change, which transcends national borders and work on which comprises over 40 percent of the Fund's grantmaking budget, is a prime example. The Fund and its grantees made important contributions to the successful negotiation of the international Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December 2015; this path-breaking agreement was achieved after long commitments of time and money. Similarly, the international portion of the Fund's Democratic Practice program

recognizes that global, cross-border flows of capital, goods, and people produce international interdependencies. The RBF currently works to enhance the transparency of global governance organizations, especially in trade, finance, and climate change, and to increase participation in the decision-making processes of these organizations by underrepresented constituencies, in particular the global south.

The RBF's style in its international grantmaking has been characterized by several methods that cross geographic regions and have remained consistent throughout the Fund's 75-year history. The most essential of these is the Fund's close attention to context. Its commitment to listening to a variety of resource people on the ground has been one of its signal characteristics. Second, it maximizes its modest grantmaking budget by making direct grants to indigenous NGOs, which has the effect of strengthening local capacity. Through technical assistance and capacity building, the Fund aims to have an impact that exceeds and outlasts the direct expenditure of grant dollars. It conducts extensive networking and convening in a variety of fields, recognizing that supporting a field of endeavor and the people doing its work will have long-term outcomes. Before entering a new geographic region or field, the Fund conducts careful investigations of needs, problems, and context. This has usually included dispatching a program officer to spend extended time in the prospective region, making contacts, building trust, and gaining true understanding of local issues. Often the Fund sticks with a field and with specific grantees across a very long period of time. "Staying the course" has been a key strategy. At its core, the Fund's style in international grantmaking has historically been grounded in fostering local philanthropy and a long-term view of social change.



Thomas L. Williams/Colonial Williamsburg

Governor John Battle of Virginia, Crown Prince Akihito of Japan, and John D. Rockefeller 3rd, eating oysters in Colonial Williamsburg, 1953.

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Philanthropy for an Interdependent World