Fundraising Strategy

Over the past two decades in particular, WACC has experienced significant changes in its funding base and financial stability. The root causes of this financial situation lie primarily in external trends that have similarly affected many other organizations. WACC has attempted to address these in a variety of ways, from major actions (e.g. office location change from London to Toronto and London property sale), staffing (reduction in staffing numbers; hiring fundraising consultants and staff), and a variety of fundraising efforts primarily through project grant applications but also through some "non-traditional" methods (for example, direct mail in Canada and online giving campaigns).

The current situation remains:

1. WACC needs to diversify its funding. We are reliant on one major donor (Brot für die Welt) for the vast majority of our project and core funding. Should this revenue stream be cut off, WACC will face an existential crisis.
2. WACC's past traditional donors (primarily European Christian agencies) have faced significant funding declines themselves; overall, WACC's donor base has significantly declined since 2004.
3. WACC staff have worked hard to reduce core expenditure (which include primarily staffing, administration, governance), but funding to cover core expenses (through undesignated or general funds) is still a significant challenge.
4. For long-term sustainability, WACC needs not only to diversify its donor base but also the sources of funding, e.g. not rely heavily on project grants to fund core costs.
5. Fundraising is not the responsibility of one staff member, or staff alone, but of the organization as a whole. Board involvement is key, not only to review the strategy but to actively participate in it.

From workshops to experience, there are at least six key elements to a successful fundraising and a sustainable (non-profit) organization:

1. Visibility and identity: The organization is known by its audiences. The organization is clear who its target audiences are: who benefits from it, who engages with it, who it wants to impact. Those audiences can recognize the organization through its name, logo, strap line and be able to attach a consistent identity to it.
2. Knowledge and strategy: In an increasingly competitive fundraising environment, the organization knows who to approach for funding, how to make the pitch, how to structure its income so that core and activity costs are covered, how to assess opportunities that are consistent with its core vision. These areas require constant re-assessment.

3. Relationship/partnership: The organization is able to cultivate long-term relationships and partnerships with like-minded organizations for funding, support, mutual capacity building and growth.
4. Recognised value: Beyond visibility/identity, the organization and its work is seen as effective and valuable by its audiences.
5. Efficient management: The organization demonstrates efficiency in its administration and project management.
6. A foundation for sustainability: An organization should not be entirely funded on project grants but ideally have some aspect of self-generated income through investments, products, membership, service provision or combination.

Against these aspects, what is working well, and what remains a challenge for WACC?

1. Visibility and identity: The organization is known by its audiences. The organization is clear who its target audiences are: who benefits from it, who engages with it, who it wants to impact. Those audiences can recognize the organization through its name, logo, strap line and be able to attach a consistent identity to it.

> **+** In its traditional circles, WACC is recognized – at least as a communication-related organization, if not a communication -rights organization. These traditional circles include its long-standing membership (which is declining), UN partners (particularly UNESCO and UN Women), ecumenical organizations and Christian agencies, like-minded organizations (from some media organizations, media and development organizations, academic institutions) and an array of past and current project holders.

> **-** In reaching out to new audiences, the name WACC/World Association for Christian Communication requires explanation, particularly for secular foundations and media agencies. In some cases, the inclusion of "Christian" alone in the name precludes involvement or application. This has even been an ongoing issue in the GMMP network, which WACC has coordinated from the beginning.

> **-** "Communication for all", "communication rights" often still requires explanation. Most recently, staff at least have been working on ways to explain what WACC does without using "communication rights" – invariably these are not exactly catchy phrases and tend to need concrete examples.

> **?** WACC actually has three potential identities: WACC, GMMP and Many Voices, One World Foundation. In the past, for visibility and consistency, we have tried to tie them all to WACC – which then has the identity problems mentioned above. The strategic proposal is now to more firmly develop the three identities as distinct but related. In this way, we can maintain our existing visibility and identity with our traditional audiences; solidify our identity with the GMMP network and related funding and media partners; and present a fresh and neutral identity to organizations which will not or cannot partner with a Christian-identified organization.

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> **+** WACC has actively identified partners and networks which advance in specific ways its mission and provides opportunities for contacts and partnerships. These are regularly assessed. Examples include ACT Alliance, Partnership for Religion and Development, CDAC Network.
> **+** WACC has commissioned, or conducted directly, evaluations of particular projects (e.g. DIP), and the funding landscape and opportunities, which have provided an important reference for further funding proposals. Research into potential new opportunities particularly for grants is ongoing.
> **+** WACC staff keep a running list of opportunities identified and how they are followed up for tracking purposes. WACC has applied for grants from an increasingly diverse range of foundations.

> **-** Unfortunately, whether it is specialized fundraising staff that have developed project applications or programme staff themselves with more direct knowledge of projects, the vast majority of applications over the last several years have not been successful. There are a variety of reasons for this, but one of the results is that it is and will take increasing amounts of research and project development time (not to mention relationship building below) to find good and successful matches – particularly for Foundations and other funders who do not know WACC – for the work WACC does.
> **-** Increasingly it seems, funders look for "innovative" programs and are not particularly interested in continuing long-standing activities, such as the GMMP, even if they see the results as extremely valuable.

3. Relationship/partnership: The organization is able to cultivate long-term relationships and partnerships with like-minded organizations for funding, support, mutual capacity building and growth.

> **+** WACC has a strong and ongoing relationship with our major funder, BfdW, which has resulted in long-term major funding that has supported the organization as well as project activities.
> **+** WACC has also had long-term funding for projects from Otto Per Mille, of the Waldensian Church in Italy, although they have not been particularly keen in developing a stronger bilateral relationship nor in providing increased funding for WACC's core costs.
> **+** Where WACC has been most successful in funding of grants (or in identifying strong opportunities) is where relationships have been made and built over time.

> **-** Many of the organizations with whom WACC has had long-term relationships and partnerships are themselves experiencing funding challenges.
> **-** WACC has started to build relationships with different organizations in order to pursue joint projects and proposals, but this will take time to develop.
> - All relationships – and the priorities and politics at work in organisations – takes significant time and effort.
> **-** The long-term effort will be to have contact with and be able to build relationships with non-traditional (for WACC) partners and foundations.

4. Recognised value: Beyond visibility/identity, the organization and its work is seen as valuable and worthwhile by its audiences.

+ Both in reputation and in evaluations, WACC's work – particularly the GMMP and the DIP – is highly respected. The description and results of these activities are concrete.

+ The regional projects – particularly in Europe – have led to a huge reputational boost for WACC, where WACC is seen as applying its specific expertise in critical areas (e.g. communication rights and migration and asylum)

+ WACC's external communication has significantly increased this year due to dedicated communication staff.

+ WACC works for, and takes advantages of, opportunities to present and showcase its vision and work for greater visibility.

- The decrease in project support and opportunities for face to face global networking has contributed to a decline in membership and engagement, which has a resulting effect on visibility.

5. Efficient management: The organization demonstrates efficiency in its administration and project management.

+ WACC staff have worked hard to reduce core expenses.

+ WACC works towards full cost recovery in its project applications (within the limitations placed by potential funders on administrative costs).

+ A previous benchmarking exercise in Canada confirms that staff remuneration is at or below similar organizations.

+ WACC globally and through its regions has enabled it to have a legal presence in major funding regions: Canada, UK, US (501c3 status) and European Union (WACC Europe registered in France).

- Core costs continue to be significantly more than undesignated or general funds.

? Current or future management decisions may be taken on office space, staff decentralization, staff structure

- As WACC UK has not been a significant operational hub for WACC, current efforts to raise funds based on its status as a UK charity have been made more difficult by low turnover and relatively high cash reserves.

6. A foundation for sustainability: An organization should not be entirely funded on project grants but ideally have some aspect of self-generated income through investments, products, membership, service provision or combination.

+ WACC has transferred its reserves into the Many Voices, One World Foundation which provides a greater return on investment, improves WACC's balance sheet for funders and provides an opportunity for a new identity for WACC-related work with funders and partners.

+ WACC has been able to "sell" service provisions and office space (e.g. ACT Alliance, Parliament of Religions) for defined periods of time that have helped to offset core costs.

- Membership income is in significant decline; although it most recently is directed to the work of the regions and can be used to enhance WACC's visibility there.
- WACC has tried to reach new audiences and new ways to raise funds through non-traditional (for WACC) methods, such as a direct mail campaign in Canada and two online global giving campaigns.
? Several ideas for "service provision" in terms of training and providing data analysis and media monitoring expertise have been suggested but not yet viable.

Basics of Fundraising Strategy

1. Maintain existing funding streams and core cost levels while seeking new opportunities for funding.
   a. Significant time and potentially new resources need to be placed into researching, connecting with, and applying to foundations and other funding organizations that WACC has not previously been connected to.

2. Sharpen WACC's vision and identity and look at ways to "repackage" and refocus work we are already engaged in.
   a. Rather than follow the temptation of creating projects to fit funding proposals, which may not help cover WACC's existing programme and core costs, prioritize strong potential matches and seek ways to describe and package existing projects into new proposals.

3. Proactively seek visibility in settings particularly targeted for partnerships and fundraising.
   a. Organize events (e.g. in Toronto, New York, London) such as film screenings, skills building, dialogues, networking, etc. that will help build WACC's reputation as a provider of distinctive, high quality programming.

4. Consider strategic new programmatic areas that could meet the call for "innovative" activities.
   a. Development of "Digital Transformation" programme and "Media and Migration" emphasis, for example. These can also address no. 2 above.

5. Develop WACC's different identities, particularly Many Voices, One World, for funding and partnerships.
   a. Develop a distinct identity and programme under Many Voices, One World and a strategy to make the foundation more visible.

6. Explore potential for "service provision" that could help generate income.
   a. Data analysis centre in Nairobi
   b. Communication rights/training package (similar to summer school coupled with attractive location and high quality programme)
   c. Apply intellectual property rights to GMMP data and methodology.

7. Provide (digital) communication resources for regions to be visible advocates.

8. Actively work with the Board of Directors and with Regional Executives to identify and approach potential supporters.