

INTERVIEW BY HARRIET LOWE, COMMUNICATIONS & RESEARCH OFFICER



MATTHEW HART

GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY PROJECT

Matthew Hart is the Director of Global Philanthropy Project, which the Foundation has funded for four years as part of its International Development programme. GPP (Global Philanthropy Project) is an intentional collaboration of 21 global human rights public and private foundations established to collaborate to specifically increase and improve resources for LGBTI people in the Global South and East.

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What have you been working on these last 12 months? Has Covid-19 brought particular challenges or opportunities for your work?

The last year has been extraordinary in many ways. We have personally been affected – not only by relocating our work lives, but also people got sick. I was really impressed by the care our community has shown for each other.

As an organisation GPP has continued its work. We've worked very closely with donor governments, in particular developing new relationships with their humanitarian teams. We continue to work with governments to provide support for increasing LGBTI-specific programmes for their development agendas. Actually, even with the Covid-19 situation, we found there has been increased capacity in donor governments to hear from us because we have such great data and the expertise of our membership is so unique.

We've continued to work with both public and private philanthropy to make the case that funding LGBTI communities advances their rights agendas and creates conditions that are healthier and more secure. We've been doing that with women's rights funders, children's rights funders, with

peace and security funders, and those concerned with closing space.

We've also spent a lot of time and energy responding to the rise of anti-gender movements, highlighting how they have emerged from the collusion of state actors and radical fundamentalist faiths and how LGBTI communities are being instrumentalised in order to accelerate state seizure. We connect those dots for others who are concerned about changes in liberal democracies around the world. This work has broadened our community of concern and the number of people who understand the value of resourcing LGBTI communities because, in lots of ways, we are the canary in the coalmine.

What has GPP achieved that you are most proud of?

I think there are a few things. One would be that GPP has formalised, built structures for and improved the accessibility of funding of LGBTI communities. There's now a centre of knowledge around LGBTI grant-making.

We have also spent an enormous amount of time and energy getting data; data that has defensible methodologies and is accessible to academics, politicians, policy-makers, grant-makers and civil society.

Data levels the playing field. In the past, conversations about resources were governed by those who had access and the loudest voice. In our reports, you can see the top ten grantees, top ten funders, so if you're a funder looking to organise or figure out who to raise money from... it's all available to you. That quickens our whole movement, ensuring the right kind of conversations can be had – with the right actors in the right places – to move resources to where they are needed.

When I came in, I started rolling out 'donor pre-conferences' adjacent to LGBTI civil society events. They reduce grant-maker isolation, build community and all the things our research does as well. Beyond this, they demonstrate that LGBTI grant-makers show up. We create a centre of gravity that gets grant-makers to events in Bogota, Bangkok, Accra ... where they wouldn't have come otherwise. That truly makes a difference. And we see it in how resource flows have been changing over the last ten years. I can't say that it's specifically because of our work but I do think we have made a great contribution to the amount and quality of resources LGBTI people have had access to.

What will GPP be focusing on over the next 12 months?

Well, we will continue to do our Covid monitoring. We're about to publish our second report which evaluates nearly 5,000 humanitarian mechanisms to identify the quality and quantity of LGBTI inclusive humanitarian aid for Covid-19. Maybe to no one's surprise but shockingly, we found zero mention of LGBTI people, except a single grant in one country for less than 100,000 euros. And that was an inclusive grant.

We are launching a multi-month collaborative summit called Shimmering Solidarity: Global Rights Summit. That is with a set of small networks of grant-makers with very specific priorities around a broad rights agenda.

We will also be starting the fourth iteration of the Global Resources Report. That will get underway in the next two months. Those take about a year to put together.

Then I think we'll be leaning into the opportunity that the reduction of travel has provided us. Our meetings have become far more accessible – we've seen a 43% increase in participation as people don't have to fly. And it's more diverse – geographically and linguistically.

What encouraged you to get into this field?

I've always been an organiser and queer activist. I've done everything from organising big structures, to being part of big global activist organisations, to being on Boards, all kinds of stuff. I think I found myself here because at a certain point I realised I deeply love, trust and respect our communities and we need millions more dollars. I'm less concerned about all the particularities of advancing rights, I trust everyone in our communities to make those decisions. But they need to get paid. We need resources to bring all that work for broad inclusion and the liberation of our people.

What are the best bits of your job?

GPP's work is intentionally quiet and private. I love those moments when we finalise commitments with an actor bringing tens of millions of new dollars to the field. And then I go home and change the laundry... I also love working with incredibly brilliant strategists

who have committed to taking unique risks to move more money. It's really exciting.

When you look at LGBTIQ+ communities and organisations around the world at the moment, what are you most worried about?

The thing I'm most worried about is that during the pandemic public and private philanthropy for LGBTI communities assumed all of the humanitarian burden. While that is positive thing, there is a danger in having done the work of humanitarian agencies, that the really critical work of rights advancement, preservation and defence went undone because those resources were spent elsewhere. The pipeline of rights risks is coming at us and there's no additional money to fill it.

The other big concern for me is that as new money comes into the field, there isn't much of a history around how we negotiate such big new resources. I think there are risks around Global North organisations becoming very well resourced and driving agendas that aren't always in the best interests of the Global South and East. One of our broad objectives is to build the economic and political independence and power of LGBTI communities in the Global South and East. That is a ship that always needs righting.

And what gives you the most hope?

I don't really believe in hope! But what energises me is that it does feel there are now more avenues, and more relationships and more emerging commitments that centre LGBTI lives in funding. That is really promising. That is our principal goal – more and better money. That indicator to me means we are being successful.