About CiYuan
BSR's three-year CiYuan (China Philanthropy Incubator) initiative builds innovative cross-sector partnerships to enhancethe value of social investment in China. With guidance from international and Chineseleaders in the field, CiYuan improves the capacity of local foundations and NGOs to serveas durable and effective partners with business. Ultimately, CiYuan will integratephilanthropy with core business strategy, foster collaboration, and inspire innovation. Visit ciyuan.bsr.org for more information.

About BSR
BSR works with its global network of nearly 300 member companies to build a just and sustainable world. From its offices in Asia, Europe, and North and South America, BSR develops sustainable business strategies and solutions through consulting, research, and cross-sector collaboration. Visit www.bsr.orgfor more information about BSR's more than 20 years of leadership in sustainability.

About One Foundation
One Foundation is one of the most influential foundations in China. Founded by Jet Li in 2007, the foundation focuses on promoting philanthropic activities, culture, and the strong growth of China's social sector by addressing issues related to the environment, education, health, poverty, and disaster relief.

In 2010, The One Foundation (Chinese: 壹基金), full title Shenzhen One Foundation (Chinese: 深圳壹基金公益基金会), was registered as an independent public fundraising foundation. One Foundation strives to provide a professional and transparent public service platform according to the vision of "It Starts with One" (Chinese: 尽我所能，人人公益). One Foundation's strategy is for this one platform to focus on three areas: disaster relief, children's welfare, and philanthropy development.

One Foundation Supports Grassroots NGO Networks to Strengthen Cross-Sector Partnerships

July 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As one of the most influential charitable foundations in China, One Foundation supports grassroots nonprofits in China building networks among themselves to learn from oneanother and collaborate to address social problems. This case study outlines the process BSR took to evaluate how two nonprofit platforms, Disaster Relief and Ocean's Heaven Project (OHP), engage different stakeholders—with a focus on private-sector companies and the media—in order to enhance their sustainability and achieve maximum impact. For the purposes of this paper, we define 'networks' as a formal cluster of often local connections and relationships among grassroots nonprofits, and 'platforms' as a cluster of networks focused on a particular cause, usually with a more national focus.

Based on this evaluation, we provide six recommendations for foundationsthat are using or intending to use a collaborative or network approach to support a particular social or environmental cause:

1. **Clarify the objectives for cross-sector engagement and the expected benefits for the network**
2. **Develop a clear strategy and short- and long-term objectives for cross-sector collaboration**
3. **Understand best practices in stakeholder engagement and your own strengths and weaknesses before approaching new partners**
4. **Clearly definethe roles and responsibilities of each partner to achieve cross-sector collaboration**
5. **Develop incentive mechanisms for nonprofits to participate in the platformand build their capacity to engage with stakeholders and potential partners**
6. **Develop a communication mechanism to understand stakeholders' needs and improve the cross-sector partnership**

PROJECT BACKGROUND

One Foundation uses a network approach to support the development of the nonprofit sectorin China. This approach clusters together formerly unaffiliated nonprofitsworking on the same social issueso they can learn from each other, minimize duplication of efforts, and develop new ways to address the issue collaboratively.While this approach has had some success, One Foundation wanted to understand how to make two different platforms, Disaster Relief and Ocean's Heaven Project (OHP, under its Caring for Children brand),more sustainable and less reliant on One Foundation funding.

Vision: One Foundation, One Family Make Charity Our Habit

Disaster Relief

Caring for Children

Philanthropy Sector Talent Development

Figure 1: One Foundation's Organizational Structure

Disaster Relief Platform

The Disaster Relief platformunites clusters of nonprofits workingon or interested in disaster relief to address small- to medium-sized disasters. One Foundation established the platform around 12 months ago and by the end of February 2013 was supporting 10provincial-level nonprofit networks in 10provinces in central and western China, areas subject to frequent disasters. One Foundation supports the nonprofitsby providingsupplies; covering operational expenses such as transportation fees; holding trainingon global disaster relief standards; andallowing nonprofits to use the One Foundation brandwhen they conduct disaster relief work. This enables One Foundation to expand the reach of its brand and enables the local nonprofitsin the networksto collect more resources for disaster relief work.

OHP Platform

The OHPplatformsupports nonprofits working on autism, cerebral palsy, and other childhood diseases. Similar to its approach with the Disaster Relief Platform, OHP helps nonprofits form local networks to share experiences and learn from one another.The Foundation also provides funding, in-kind support, and capacity building for nonprofits in the networks. Each individual network under the OHP platform is led by a nonprofitrepresentative whomanages the networkand maintainsregular communication with One Foundation. Because OHP operates in different regions in China, One Foundation holds a general meeting each year to bring together all the nonprofits in the networks for training and information sharing.

One Foundation approached BSR to evaluate how the two platforms operate, and help One Foundation understandhow broadening the participation in the platforms to other stakeholders could make them more sustainable. This included analyzing how both platforms approach cross-sector partnerships, and strengthening the capacity of the local nonprofit networks under each platform to engage two specific stakeholder groups: private-sector companies and the media.

BSR'SAPPROACH

BSR evaluated the Disaster Relief and OHP platforms to identify the operational challenges facing each platform.We provided recommendations for how each platform couldstrengthen its relationships with stakeholders to attract more resources and improve itssustainability. For the Disaster Relief platform we selected one local network with over 10 nonprofit members and evaluated it against five criteria: the level of support it receives from One Foundation; its strategy and goals;its management structure; the drivers for external stakeholders to participate in the network;and the opportunities and challenges it faces. For the OHP platform we evaluatedthree nonprofits representative of different networks.The criteriaare summarized into fourcategories(see the "Results" section for more information).

For both platforms the process involvedthe following steps:

Phase	Approach
Preparation	» Confirm project objectives, timetable, roles, and responsibilities
Information Collection	» Conduct desktop research and document review » Interview stakeholders
Evaluation andRecommendations	» Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of one network (Disaster Relief platform) and three networks (OHP platform) » Analyze how these networks interact with media and the private sector » Identify gaps and opportunities to strengthen stakeholder engagement » Provide recommendations
Benchmarking	» Benchmark the networks against two other cross-sector projects in China and two international cross-sector projects
Presentation	» Present the findings to One Foundation » Discuss recommendations

» Gather feedback

Table 1: Work Plan for One Foundation Development Demonstration Project

Interviews

BSR conducted 12 interviews with five staff from One Foundation (both project and management level) andfour representatives from nonprofit network leaders. We also interviewed three representatives from companiesand the media who were participating in local nonprofit networks byattending meetings, writing news articles,or making donations. The interviews helped BSR understand how the stakeholders within the networks collaborate and to identify the current challenges to engagement.

Analysis

BSR analyzedhow nonprofit network leaders promote the networks to external stakeholders;how they are managed; how they use resources from external companies or the media; and how they engage and build relationships with stakeholders.

To help One Foundation identify the most pressing issues hindering the networks from building relationships with other stakeholders, BSR ranked the issues facing Disaster Relief and OHPplatformsaccording to urgency and impact to stakeholders.

Benchmarking

BSR chose four national and international cross-sector collaboration projects to benchmark the One Foundation against. These organizations were selected because they use partnership approaches to implement projects and demonstrate best practices in program implementation.

Successful Elements	Benchmarking Projects
Clear objectives, systematic management	**CBM: Disabled Persons' Federation**
Deep roots in local communities, professional fundraising platform	**United Way**
Effective use of media toengage partners	**Free Lunch**
Professional coordination and resource management among stakeholders	**BSR: HERproject**

Table 3: Successful Elements of Cross-Sector Collaboration for Benchmarking Projects

RESULTS

The most urgent issues facing One Foundation and nonprofit network participants include the need to set appropriate goals around cross-sector collaboration and platform sustainability; understand the importance of stakeholder engagement;and strengthen the leadership of local networks and their ability to engage companies and the media.

The table below highlights BSR's findings on the current state and challenges facing the two platforms across four areas:networkpositioning, project management, cross-sector resources, and network communications.

Key Elements	Findings
NetworkPositioning	• Some local network leaders viewthe networkas a capacity-building mechanism for its nonprofit members, and have not invited broader participation in the platform by outside stakeholders, keeping the networkeffectively closed to other participant stakeholders. • Networks in both platformshave little engagement with the media, so public awareness ofthe platforms is relatively low. • Networks in both platforms similarly have little engagement with the private sector,so awareness and resulting financial contributions from companies is also low. • Local nonprofit networks are more effective in attracting local stakeholders, such as private-sector companies and media, than national networks, as the stakeholders are more motivated to engage and solve social problems pertinent to their local area. National

	networksaremore successfuladvocating for and improving awareness ofspecific social topics, and less effectivein mobilizing local resources to tackle tangible local social issues.
Project Management	• Nonprofit members from both platformsare enthusiastic about expanding the current networks to include the media and outside companies. • Nonprofit members are unsure about the roles and responsibilities they would like other partners to take. • The Disaster Relief network we analyzedlacks a coordinator to manage the network's daily work, which impacts its ability to build and develop cross-sector partnerships.
Cross-Sector Resources	• Networks leaders whohave relationships with outside companies and the media are more able to attract them to become members of the network, and to access their resources. • Network leaders without these contactslack experiencein reaching out to companies and the media and are less able to manage theserelationships.
Network Communications	• Local networks withlimitedcorporate and media partnerships have only a basic awareness of their partners' work and motivations for joining the network.

Table 2: Key Insights for Key Elements of Cross-Sector Collaboration for One Foundation Platforms

In addition to the general findings in the above table, BSR also found some elements specific to each platform:

Disaster Relief Platform
At the time of the evaluation, the Disaster Relief platform we reviewed had been established for aboutthree months. Local nonprofit network membersunder this platform have widely different program focus areasranging from emergency response, volunteering, and child welfare—many unrelated to disaster relief.

Common challenges facing the platform include:
» Each local network lacks a dedicated representative to manage overall network logistics and to develop partnerships with media and outside companies.
» Unclear division of roles and responsibilities for structuring local network operations between participating nonprofits
» Lack of a clear strategy to help the platform develop in thelong term
» Nonprofit network members lack experience in approaching and managing media and corporate partners.

OHP Platform
OHP platform contains a mixture of nonprofit networks at different levels of maturity, some national and others regional. Each local network was established at different times and continues to accept new nonprofits.

Challenges in engaging stakeholders in the OHP platform include:
» "Caring for Children" is a less attractive theme to capture the attention of companies and the media than disaster relief.
» Networks lack a vision and strategy for engaging media and corporate partners.
» Nonprofit network leaders lack experience designingevents to attract media and corporate attention andcommunicating with companies and the media.

Challenges and opportunities to enhance cross-sector participation in the networks
Both Disaster Relief and OHP platforms have few corporate and media partners participating in them. Both platforms lack a plan to incorporate a wider range of stakeholders into their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ONE FOUNDATION
We provide recommendationsfor how One Foundation can strengthen its existing platforms.

1) Project Management

Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of different organizations in the local nonprofit networks. For example, each network should have a network leader or coordinator responsible for attracting a wider range of nonprofits to the network and manage relationships with stakeholders.Media and corporate members should also have clearly defined roles, including responsibility to attend regular network meetings.

2) **Cross-Sector Resources**
   » Network leaders should try to build relationships with stakeholders that can help to further the network's goals.
   » Network leaders need training and support to help develop their networking and relationship-building skills.

3) **Network Strategyand Communications**
   » Each network leader should understand the overall objective of the network, the reasons why other organizations such as media and companies have joined or want to participate in their network, their expectations for participation, and how the network strategy is communicated to different partners.
   » Local networks shouldcreate a communications plan to outline how each will pursue stakeholder relationship building.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO OTHER FOUNDATIONS

Local nonprofit networks' willingness to engage external stakeholders depends on whether they have sufficient resources to carry out the network's goals and the staff capacity and confidence to effectively engage stakeholders and outsiders. Successful networks are those whose nonprofit leaders or members are able to effectively communicate their activities with stakeholders and build ongoing relationships to attract participation and resources from stakeholders outside the nonprofit sector.

Nonprofits with more experience, or networks thathave been operating for longer, are more likely to view cross-sector collaboration as important.Grassroots nonprofits or those newer to the platformtend to still bedeveloping their own strategies and be focused on program implementation.

We provide six recommendations to foundations or other organizations that intend to use a collaborative or network approach to addressing social or environmental issues:

1. **Clarify the objectives for cross-sector engagement and the expected benefits for to the network**

   While One Foundation and the local networks viewedcross-sector collaboration as a way to make the networks sustainable,they did not have a clear understanding of the objectives for engaging external stakeholders and the expected benefits they wouldbring. Organizations should identify their objectives for engaging with stakeholders and the risks and opportunities of doing so. For example,nonprofit network membersbelieved that partnering with the media or companies could bring financial resources and media attention, but they had not given thought to the longer-term benefits or risks of engaging these organizations. Conducting background checks of potential partners is one way to ensure organizations associated with the platform are reputable.

2. **Develop a clear strategy and short- and long-term objectives for cross-sector collaboration**

   Although the Disaster Relief platform had been operating for one year,some nonprofit networks under the platform had only been established for several months. For these reasons, and One Foundation's concentration on the platform's day-to-day operations, the foundation had not yet developeda strategy to guide the

platform's overall development, including planning for scaling up or engaging other stakeholders.

Organizations should develop short- and long-term strategiesand targets to help plan andmeasure their progress against goals. Developing a strategy is an opportunity to communicate internally and gain support from internal stakeholders. In One Foundation's case this would provide the nonprofit leaders within the networks an opportunity to discuss the strategy with its networks' members and other potential partners and obtain feedback and consensus on the strategy that would best help with its implementation.

3. **Understand best practices in stakeholder engagement and your own strengths and weaknesses before approaching new partners**

Identifying best practices in operating nonprofit networks and engaging organizations from different industries are two ways to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. Some of One Foundation's local network leaders lackedexperience in approaching outside companies and the mediaand therefore wanted to understand of how other organizations developed these relationships.

As anexample, regularly inviting the media to attend events the platforms are holding is oneway to engage reporters on issues the nonprofits are addressing, thus increasing their awareness of how nonprofits are working on these issues.

Organizations that havefew cross-sector partnershipscan make a list of all their potential partners, including nonprofits, outside companies, and the media,and investigate the pros and cons of pursuing partnerships. A helpful starting pointwould be toidentify complementary resources or common goals and develop a case for why partners might be interested in joiningthe platform, and what benefits the potential partners and the platformcould offer each other.

4. **Clearly definethe roles and responsibilities of each partner to achieve cross-sector collaboration**

Nonprofit members of the Disaster Relief platformheld different perspectives on the roles and the responsibilities that stakeholders, including outside companies and the media, should hold and the contributions they should make to the platforms.Platform leaders should make sure participants are aware of their roles so that they have accountability to the platform's goals.

Establishing a decision-making body or committee to represent the interests of members can help ensure that different organizations' interests receive a voice in overall decision making and enhance the management of nonprofit networks.

5. **Develop incentive mechanisms for nonprofits to participate in the platform and build their capacity to engage with stakeholders and potential partners**

Nonprofit network members need to be engaged and motivated to help achieve the platform'smission and goals. Integrating the organizational objectives of nonprofit participants into the platform's overall strategy will help ensure nonprofits are incentivized to contribute.

Sinceparticipating in the platformalso provides each nonprofit with the opportunity to promote itsown organization and programs, the platformsshould provide a mechanismto achieve this. For example, local disaster relief activities provide an opportunity to promote both the platformoverall and the individual participants' organizations through visibility in Weibo, event communication materials, etc.

6. **Develop a communicationmechanism to understand stakeholders' needs and improve the cross-sector partnership**

Active stakeholder engagement is a time-intensive process. Oneleader of a local disaster relief network commented that his organization can only dedicatea small

portion of one staff member's time to this, which has hindered the development of relationships with stakeholders and potential partners.

To help the networks engage with a broader rangeof potential partners, network facilitators should establish a dedicated communications role. This role would be focused on communicating and building relationships with potential corporate and media partners on behalf of the whole platformandhelp promote the platformand attract resources.This would enable nonprofits within the platform to focus on carrying out their program-specific activities.

In addition, platforms should consider formal and informal channels for communicating to members within the networks. For example, OHP holds an annual meeting with all nonprofit members, which provides an opportunity for formal communication and updates to members. Establishing informal ways to communicate between nonprofits in the network would also allow for information sharing and problem solving between members.