



HUMANITY
UNITED

Humanity United Organizational Strategy

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What Is Our Aspiration For Change?

1. Mission

HU exists to cultivate conditions that transform human exploitation and violent conflict to enduring peace and freedom.

2. Vision

HU was founded on the belief that we are all united in the challenges and opportunities we face. We believe in the power of all people to bring about extraordinary change. When humanity is united, we can act together to create a powerful force for human dignity.

3. Values

Shared Humanity

We recognize the interconnectedness and the intrinsic dignity of all human beings. We approach our work with open hearts, engaging with people and communities, as well as each other, from a place of genuine respect, curiosity, and dedication to continual learning. We listen, engage, and partner with those who are most impacted by the problems we work on.

Humility

We strive to be humble in the face of intractable problems that face humanity, recognizing our own biases, limitations, and shortcomings. We work in service to others.

Commitment

We are “all-in” on HU’s mission and committed to the work and time it will take to realize a world with enduring freedom and peace. No task is beneath us. We are also deeply committed to one another—our health, learning, and resiliency—as we work together for this.

Curiosity

We are deeply curious about our work, the problems as well as the solutions. We want to learn from others and ourselves to improve our service and impact.

Innovation and Creativity

We have the courage to be open-minded and vulnerable to change with a changing world, to support the most promising solutions in the face of uncertainty, and to honor the agency of nontraditional stakeholders and each other in solving problems. We are willing to take risks, and to fail, in order to learn and grow.

Inclusivity and Diversity

We recognize that diversity is a core strength of humanity. We seek out and value a diversity of perspectives and partners, and we try to elevate the contributions of individuals and communities that aspire to a world free of human exploitation and violent conflict.

Joy

We seek joy—the expression of inner peace, happiness, and contentment—which is an important source of strength and healing in the face of the persistent human problems that are the focus of our work.

What Are The Conditions For Enduring Peace And Freedom?

Based on conversations with partners, staff, and other stakeholders, HU identified the following conditions as critical to both enduring peace and freedom.

Informed Public Square	Freedom of Movement
Justice	Accountable and Responsive Institutions
Agency	Livelihoods
Recognition of Shared Humanity	

Conditions HU will focus on:

While HU’s work seeks to cultivate all these conditions, the core conditions that we will focus on are those that run through all our work. HU will focus its efforts on the three conditions below as the organization moves forward with this strategy. These can change as we learn and adapt from our ongoing work.

At Humanity United, we seek to cultivate the conditions for enduring peace and freedom. At this time, we are focused on cultivating:

Agency	We support efforts to shift and build the power of individuals and communities to determine and pursue the outcomes or solutions that best address their needs. What we aim to see is a shift of power that results in an increase in agency.
Accountable and Responsive Institutions	We use our influence and proximity to power, often working through networks, to make key institutions accountable and responsive to the people most impacted by human exploitation and violent conflict.
Recognition of Shared Humanity	We support efforts that recognize and advance the shared humanity, interconnectedness, and intrinsic dignity of all human beings.

How Do We Get There?

We are a grantmaking and operating foundation that takes a trust-based approach, honoring the lived experience and agency of those closest to the issues we seek to address. Our work is underlined by a core set of beliefs about the system we are trying to change, and about our role within that system:

- We believe in the intrinsic dignity of all human beings.
- We believe in the interconnectedness of all human beings.
- We believe that enduring change happens when those who are closest to the issues have the agency to act and make decisions about the issues that impact them.
- We believe that current institutions and power structures, if unchecked, exacerbate inequities for those most impacted by violent conflict and exploitation.
- We believe that we are most effective when we play a dual role: shifting power to and supporting the agency of those most impacted by violent conflict and exploitation, *and* holding powerful institutions accountable and advocating for structural change.
- We believe that to be successful, we must embrace and model diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice both internally and externally.

What is the core work we are engaged in and why?

HU's contribution is working at the intersection of human rights, peacebuilding, locally grounded action, and influencing systems to recognize shared humanity.

We focus on two specific portfolios of work: Peacebuilding and Forced Labor & Human Trafficking. In addition, we invest in a cross-cutting Public Engagement portfolio that includes investigative journalism, policy change, and strategic communications as leverage points to try and shift harmful systems and practices towards a recognition of shared humanity.

How Do We Carry Out This Work?

As a private foundation, based in the United States, we are privileged to engage with a wide range of stakeholders around the world. We believe HU has a responsibility to make sure institutions are informed by and responsive to individuals and communities most impacted by violence and exploitation and that those individuals and communities can access systems that impact them. In order to meet the needs of our partners and focus on the conditions we seek to cultivate, we anchor our work in a series of strategic pillars.

1. We work through relationships and networks

As a U.S.-based organization, we prioritize our relationships with people and networks around the world as a key component of our work. Developing diverse partnerships helps us understand the inequities and power imbalances inherent in the issues and systems we seek to shift towards justice and inclusion, and how we can best deploy our resources to do so. By investing in networks, we acknowledge the power of collective sensemaking and action.

Much of our work is locally-driven and network-supported. It is important for HU to be in relationship not only to local communities but also to the communities and networks of advocates and organizations that are also working for enduring peace and freedom in the world. Our organization's credibility derives from the integrity of our relationships and the strength of our networks.

How Do We Carry Out This Work?

2. We practice a philosophy of “accompaniment”

One of the most persistent challenges is the deep inequity of access to financial capital and broken accountability structures that reinforce the power of certain institutions. We acknowledge we are part of that system. It is for this reason that we are on an active journey of devolving power to those who are closest to the issues—within our organization, in the U.S., and around the world.

When we engage in relationship with our partners and grantees, we practice accompaniment – a long-term, multi-year commitment to walking alongside partners closest to the context in which they work, in a way that reinforces the sufficiency, capacity, and power of their own approaches. This means we engage as deeply with our partners as they want us to. Accompaniment isn’t directive and requires a willingness to trust and follow adaptation.

What is Accompaniment?

An accompaniment approach is relationship-centric, and prioritizes the self-awareness to listen, understand, and appreciate the complexity, nuance, and potential that exist in solutions that may emerge from different worldviews or historical contexts. By prioritizing deep relationships and understanding of emergent challenges, accompaniers respond by offering resources or support that are oriented towards ongoing learning, flexibility, and investing in a community’s belief in itself.

Key Pillars of Accompaniment

- Take time to develop and nurture relationships.
- Stay with processes and investment for a sufficient time so that these can increase agency.
- Remain open to learning and adaptation emergent from dynamically evolving contexts, particularly those facing social conflict, historic challenges of poverty, weak governance, and excluded regions and populations.
- Do not try to do it all. Know what you can control and what you can’t.
- Pick a few processes where you are situated to go deep.
- Be willing to take risks and fail, but fail smart with a commitment to learn and adapt.
- Provide the best in human resources for the areas chosen for engagement. Create concrete and clear forms to assure accountable use and reporting on material resources.

3. We are learning-focused, systems-enabled, and people-centered

Our relationships with grantees hinge on forms of mutual learning that are most beneficial to their work. We actively work to shift away from extractive models of learning in philanthropy and towards an approach of cross-pollinating and facilitating shared knowledge. A systems lens helps us better understand the complexity of the environments in which we operate and informs and affects decisions about how to adapt effectively. At the same time, we recognize that systems are made of people, and that complex web of human relationships has the potential to harm, enhance, heal, and solve. Hence, we approach our decisions based on how individuals have to live their lives, honoring the spirit of *ubuntu* (“I am because we are”).

Our program strategies must be emergent, responsive, and inclusive of the communities we serve – those who experience first-hand the exploitation and violent conflict we seek to address.

How Do We Carry Out This Work?

4. We are expansive in our efforts

We are a grantmaking foundation that employs many different tools to support our partners and effect change. Our core strengths, in addition to our ability to fund partners' work, are our people, their collective experience and knowledge, and our expansive relationships. We deploy a flexible set of tools, including financial support, network weaving, advocacy, and strategic communications. We lead specific initiatives when appropriate, but always in partnership.

5. We invest internally so we can grow together with our partners

In service to our mission, we build and maintain a values-based, responsive, and resilient organization that is best positioned to serve our partners over the longer term. HU staff share a purpose, are empowered in their work, and are able to imagine new approaches to the issues we are focused on. We intentionally invest in the people that comprise Humanity United, as well as in a strong and healthy culture, and the core competencies that are vital to this work.