



# ***Report***

## **Philanthropy Ecosystem in Africa: Assessing the philanthropic landscape in Africa to strengthen localisation, identify intermediaries and transform grantmaking**

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and do not necessarily reflect the  
views or opinions of Oak Foundation.*

*“It is time to further connect bottom-up, people-centred practices, initiatives and organisations, which when considered collectively can form the basis of an alternative system, based on distributed networks and shared power...”*

[shiftthepowersummit.org](http://shiftthepowersummit.org)

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# 1. Introduction: Africans are rising to the new challenges for philanthropy in the context of global turbulence

Complex challenges define the philanthropy space, globally and in Africa. Against a backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis, soaring energy costs, rampant inflation, unrelenting climate change, war in Europe, and changing geopolitical dynamics, affluent individuals and family givers, as well as philanthropic actors across the continent, are seeking new ways to address the escalating human needs and the complex challenges that persist and are emerging.

This global turbulence is further exasperated by the uncharted waters of the lasting effects of the **Covid-19 pandemic**, as we all work to find a way towards a “new normal”. Another key factor affecting the sector is the tragedy of **George Floyd’s death** in 2020 that re-centred the issues around racial justice and led to real conversations around our global history of colonisation and its impact and ongoing effects on philanthropic practice. One outcome from these introspections is the amplification of the “**shift the power movement**” as well as the drive towards “**localisation**” of development and humanitarian funding. Compounding this is the existential crisis humanity faces, as the global economy has driven growth that threatens **planetary collapse** from life-threatening hazards and climate change, driven by an endless culture of “more and more”. The poorest and most exposed people are ill-equipped to deal with the collapse of the very systems that underpin all life on Earth. **Sustainability** is on the tips of the tongues of most investors and philanthropists, however, there is a colossal abyss between what “**they say**” i.e., **the intentions** and what “**they do**” i.e., **actions** to disrupt systemic and structural realities.

Philanthropy is often confused with charity since both acts entail giving. However, the main distinguishing factor between the two is that charity tends to occur on a more short-term basis. Philanthropy, on the other hand, is more long-term. It is more organised and more strategic. The main idea behind philanthropy is to promote the welfare of others. It is not just a quick fix to a pressing need. It goes much deeper than that; its aim is to positively impact society.

## **African Philanthropy**

Africa has a rich culture of giving. Many different actors are actively engaged in African Philanthropy as givers of financial and other resources. Drawing on the [African Philanthropy Network](#), we understand African Philanthropy as the giving of African resources – natural, human, financial, social and intellectual that can be tapped into to address Africa’s challenges – by Africans to Africans, and as philanthropy that:

- equates with citizens’ agency – the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own choices,
- includes foundations and funds; family and community based; individual giving and collective solidarity mechanisms – in cash, in kind, or in time; and social investments, and

- is generally characterised by all forms of vertical and horizontal dimensions of giving private resources for the common good; it cannot be refined by a single culture or model of giving.

The philanthropy sector recognises business as usual is not an option. We witness shifts in the mindsets, practice, and priorities of traditional givers and at the same time the emergence of funding innovations and new players in the philanthropy sector – globally and in Africa.

Global philanthropy is experimenting with new approaches, such as issue-based philanthropy, the engagement of intermediaries and new collaborations.

Africans advance new ways to engage global philanthropy. Across the board African organisations reject the idea that they are simply a conduit for charity to those most impacted by global energy, climate and production systems. Africans want to engage as equals and to have reciprocal relationships based on respect. We found that many organisations are open to engage as intermediaries, provided these relationships are reciprocal and based on respect and equality. Many organisations are cautious and express concern that the intermediary relationship falls short of partnerships that meet Africans where they are as leaders and thinkers with a keen ability to address Africa's challenges that centre justice. African Philanthropy networks and support organisations, civil society and community funds and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are exploring how to get more resources to Africans. Their commitment to African Philanthropy – the giving of diverse African resources to Africans to define and solve African challenges – underpins a resolve for independence, resilience, and equality in the relationship with global philanthropy.

African governments and global philanthropy can step up and ensure that the conditions for philanthropy to prosper are created. The **2022 Global Philanthropy Environment Index (GPEI)** reveals that the philanthropic environment showed modest improvement at the global level, but not uniformly so. **Country and regional reports** suggest that a consistent and enabling regulatory environment, state collaboration, and strong philanthropic traditions and societal values are essential to nurture philanthropy.

**Many African countries continue to struggle with creating an enabling environment for philanthropy to thrive** as they face multiple and interlinked challenges such as political instability, state harassment and negative campaigns especially against human rights abuse against certain populations, restrictions on foreign funding and political watchdog organisations as well as lack of tax incentives critical to encourage giving. **Cross-boundary philanthropic flows** are however on the increase, with both government and technological advancements supporting the funding infrastructure.

It is in this turbulent context that the report is set.

## 2. Objectives and approach

This report aims to deepen understanding of the philanthropic environment in Africa and how existing dynamics of power can be shifted. Specifically, it supports philanthropy to enable funding systems that are:

- **respectful** of fund recipients and their organisations,
- **solutions focused**,
- **driven by local communities** and **organisations** that are at the heart of accelerating transformative **systems change** and **are** rooted in the **Global South**, and
- **committed to** environmental, social justice and human rights work.

To these ends, the study unpacks the African context (this report) and profiles the intermediaries in a separate report. This report provides:

### **Analyses of the philanthropy landscape**

- Identifying trends and emerging practice.

### **Insight into the existing dynamics of funding local actors**

- Analysing barriers and enablers to enhance philanthropy practices in Africa.
- Identifying components of a systems-change approach to grantmaking, that centres on localisation.

### **Understanding of the potential of intermediaries in driving systems change**

- Sharing African visions of the intermediary role.
- Providing guidance for building partnerships.
- Highlighting needed skills.

### **Intermediaries for the future**

- Revealing the diversity of possible African intermediaries.
- Highlighting their ability to improve direct funding to Africa and raise the voices and visibility of those at the heart of environmental, social justice and human rights change.
- Guidance for building effective and positive relationships, investing in community and civil society funds and foundations.

### **Guidance on the role of philanthropy in capacity building**

- Emphasising localisation to ensure that philanthropic efforts are culturally relevant, strategically aligned, sustainable and consistent with human rights.

### **Insights and recommendations**

- Proposing changes in funding systems and practice.

The complementary report on African intermediary profiles provides:

- a synopsis of the ecosystem of African Intermediaries,
- guidance on selecting an intermediary partner,
- an overview of the selection of intermediary organisations,
- profiles of proposed intermediaries, and
- a list of other possible intermediary and collaborating organisations.

Our multilingual, all-women team from across Africa worked in all African regions – central, east, southern, west north and the Indian ocean islands – using diverse methods including desk research, focal group meetings and questionnaires to develop an in-depth and broad understanding of the philanthropic ecosystem in Africa and identify key routes for meaningful change that supports transformative grantmaking that recognises local leadership and the imperative of increased funding to Africa. We focus on learning from practice, especially the experience of local actors including African CSOs and established intermediaries to deepen understanding and provide needed guidance to funders. We also systematically scanned the intermediary landscape across all 55 African countries – and our findings are presented in a complementary report.

We initially identified and studied 175 organisations that are part of the philanthropic ecosystem in Africa with potential to serve as intermediary partners. Based on an assessment of their key attributes, including their ability to receive and disburse funding and support the agency of frontline actors, by strengthening voice and making them visible, this list was revised to about 80 potential intermediaries. The final list of 35, though not exhaustive, is of those who approved the inclusion and public display of their profiles. This is complemented by a list of other organisations that may be interested in engaging as intermediaries or in other collaborations that help get funding to organisations at the helm of creating social and environmental change.

The main body of research was carried out between June 2023 and May 2024. This phase was preceded by engaged development of the methodology with Oak Foundation between April and May 2023. The methodology includes the following:

<b>Engaging Oak Foundation and other funders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Discussions with Oak Foundation</li><li>- Insights from Oak Foundation strategies</li><li>- Engagement with other funders including the Climate Funders Table and Congo Basin Funders</li><li>- Discussions with a focus group</li></ul>	<b>Reviewing relevant published materials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Funder publications</li><li>- Publications from African and other organisations</li><li>- Academic research</li><li>- Websites of African organisations</li></ul>	<b>Engaging local actors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Surveys of potential intermediaries</li><li>- Interviews</li><li>- Focal groups with Indigenous Peoples and local communities</li><li>- Focal groups with other local actors</li><li>- Sounding board for insights and recommendations</li></ul>
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## 3. The philanthropy landscape

The philanthropic landscape, which is experiencing dynamic shifts as it grapples with global economic uncertainties, war in Europe, catastrophic environmental change, a digital transformation, and assertive social movements and organisations, is reshaping how giving is conducted globally and in Africa.

### 3.1 Overview of the global landscape

The global philanthropic landscape in 2024 is characterised by several key trends as well as challenges. We are gratified to note that the number of foundations is generally increasing, especially in Europe and in some countries of the Global South. Two key reasons for this are growing wealth and government encouragement of philanthropy to help supplement their budgets. At the same time, there is an upward trend among the wealthy to give without setting up a traditional foundation.

We note the increasing leveraging of technology to foster connections and enhance impact, and a growing emphasis on trust-based, equitable and participatory grantmaking practices, which aim to establish genuine partnerships with grant recipients and involve target populations in decision making processes. This is evident in both individual giving as well as institutional funders.

There is also more intentional use of artificial intelligence (AI) and other technological advancements, offering new opportunities for innovation in the sector. This greater integration also raises questions about ethics, privacy, data protection and ownership and ensuring it is used in ways that support Africa's interests.

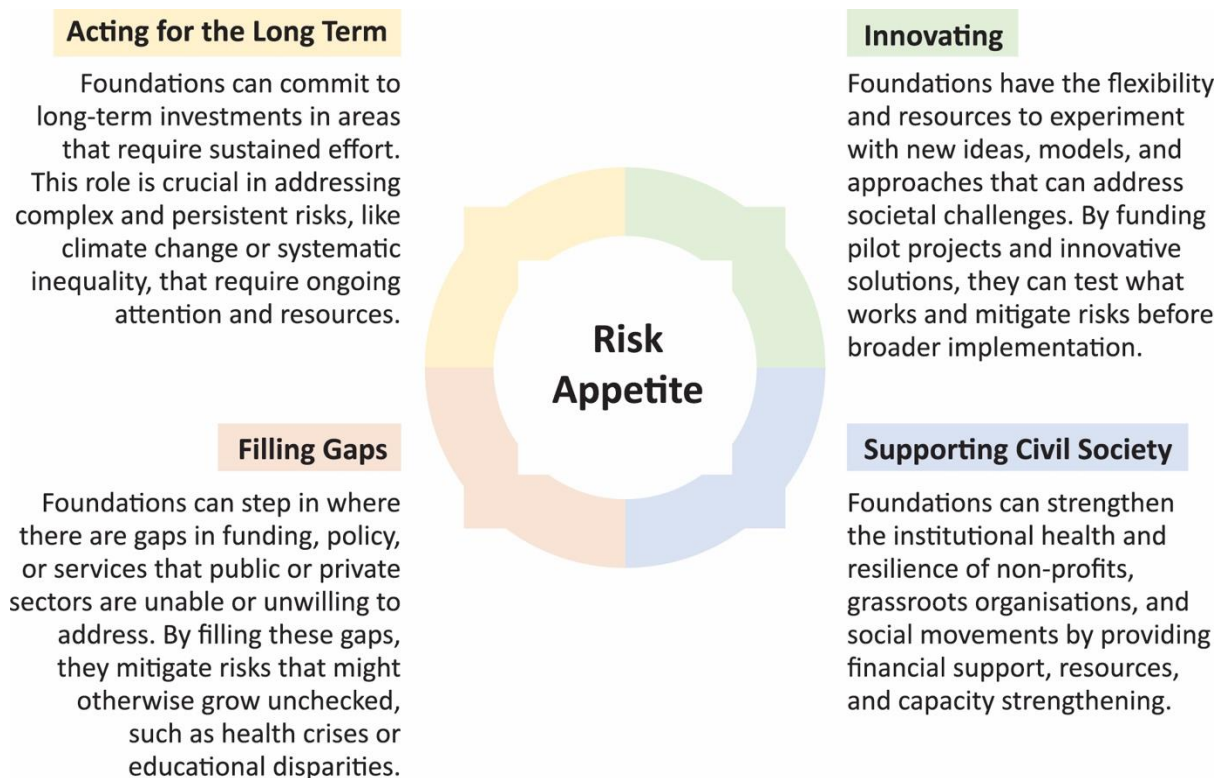
The philanthropic sector is responding to global crises, such as climate change and socio-economic disparities, by increasing collaboration and focusing on systemic change. However, a higher percentage of funders still demonstrate conservative practices of giving to "safe" areas such as education, healthcare and social services. Relatively few foundations are willing to support advocacy or social justice issues.

Corporate foundation giving is largely driven by goals like enhancing brand reputation and fulfilling corporate social responsibility. It involves businesses supporting social, environmental, and community initiatives through donations, sponsorships, in-kind gifts, volunteer programs, matching gift programs and commitments. Corporate giving is inherently risk-averse and focuses on low-risk initiatives that align with company objectives.

Noteworthy is that foundations, despite claiming otherwise, still show significant risk aversion. Initiatives like risk pooled funds, a fast flexible fund for a select group of organisations playing a critical role in society, allow multiple funders to share risks that may derail projects such as natural disasters, economic/policy changes, NGO misfortunes, or funder changes, and leverage their resources to ensure community interventions remain resilient in spite of unforeseeable changes in the ecosystem.



Foundations have the ability to take on four critical roles that can help mitigate against risks, especially for conservative funders. **These four key roles for foundations – innovating, filling gaps, supporting civil society, and acting for the long term** –all depend to some degree on a willingness of foundations to take risks.



### 3.2 Philanthropy in Africa is changing

In Africa, the philanthropic landscape is characterised by unique challenges and opportunities. The continent faces numerous crises, including natural disasters, economic shocks and political instability, which underscores the need for philanthropic interventions.

Philanthropy in Africa is increasingly focusing on local solutions and empowering African organisations. There is a notable shift towards large-scale giving by non-African funders to African NGOs although Global North organisations remain overrepresented as beneficiaries. Challenges such as trust issues and regulatory barriers persist.

Countries like Rwanda are leading in creating structured policies to guide philanthropic activities, while others struggle with regulatory complexities that hinder philanthropic efforts. Tax laws and government relationships with the non-profit sector vary across the continent, affecting ease of philanthropic operations. Despite these challenges, there is a strong emphasis on collaboration, technological integration, and community-driven approaches to addressing the continent's pressing issues.

Within this context, it is evident that the African Philanthropy landscape today is brimming with potential and new innovations are evident. The old traditions of giving, rooted in cultures of solidarity, co-exist with more modern forms of philanthropic institutions and practices, bringing energy and opportunity to unlock more local resources, as well as challenges in terms of coordinating players and reinforcing collaborations; it is characterised by a diversity of actors, practices, and policies. Within this practice, it is noteworthy that much of the climate change funding supports mainstream actions and is non-disruptive of the underlying economic practices underpinning it. Our interviews with civil society organisations showed that criticising “false solutions” and advocating for solutions that create systems change did not attract the same level of funding.

African Philanthropy organisations – both philanthropy networks and community funds and foundations – are shifting the types of funding they rely on and creating opportunity for global philanthropy to invest alongside Africans. Increasingly these organisations promote a mix of funding sources: international, national and local. Philanthropy networks, like the African Philanthropy Network and the East African Philanthropy Network and African foundations such as Trust Africa are actively building African-owned and -run funds. Community foundations are firmly rooted in local communities. Collectively these philanthropy organisations provide an opportunity to ground philanthropy firmly within the communities they seek to serve. By augmenting local-led initiatives new potential can be unleashed. As Shaun Samuels, a community foundations expert and CEO of SGS Consulting notes:

*“Community philanthropy... is a game changer. It encourages communities to utilise their existing resources to tackle their challenges, including money, time, skills, volunteering, networks and trust.”<sup>1</sup>*

This is creating a potentially different entry point for Africans in their relationship with funders:

- **There is a spurt in giving that is local**, as opposed to outwardly accountable and hence a new focus on building collaboration and partnerships among Africans and in determining African priorities and visions.
- The practice of giving is increasingly strategic and inclusive.

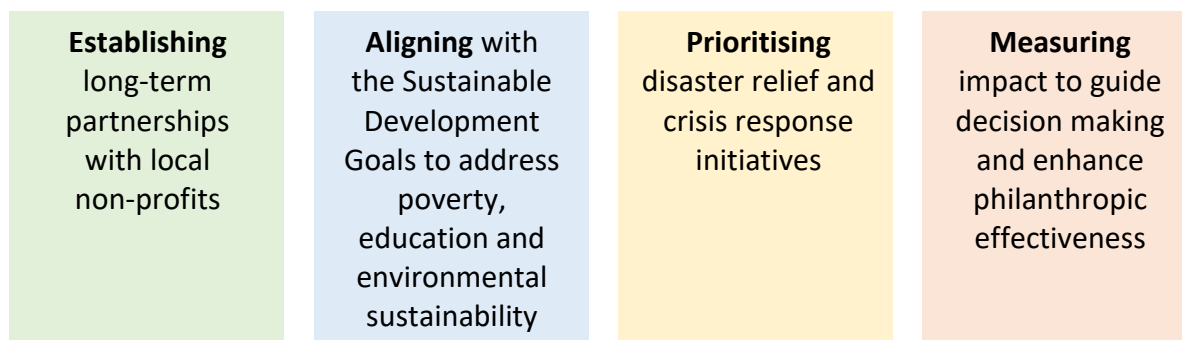
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<sup>1</sup> Pilon 2023

### 3.3 Trends and practice of philanthropy in Africa

Based on our desk research and key informant interviews conducted as part of this research, we identified the following key trends and innovation that are reshaping the sector.

Corporate giving is increasing and is also more strategic, characterised by:



**Strategic philanthropy is also on the rise.** In Africa, this involves a deliberate and systematic approach to giving that aligns philanthropic efforts with broader social, economic and environmental goals. This approach is characterised by a focus on: i) alignment of values and objectives of funders with specific causes, ensuring that philanthropic activities contribute to broader societal goals to enhance sustainability; ii) measuring impact, aiming for specific, measurable outcomes through evidence-based strategies and continuous learning; and iii) collaboration and partnership with various stakeholders, including businesses, governments and local communities, fostering local leadership and strengthening institutions.

#### **Example:**

**Water Infrastructure Projects** Businesses often partner with NGOs to develop sustainable water infrastructure in underserved communities.

*One example of a water infrastructure project in Africa funded by an African NGO is the work done by the **African Water Facility (AWF)**. The AWF is a multilateral fund that provides grants and technical assistance to governments, NGOs, and public-private partnerships to implement sustainable water projects throughout Africa. Although it is a multilateral initiative, it focuses heavily on empowering African organisations and governments to lead water resource development projects.*

*One such project is the **Ruvyironza Multi-Purpose Project in Burundi**: The African Water Facility approved a grant of about €2 million for the development of water resources in Burundi. This project aims to enhance water supply and sanitation infrastructure, which is crucial for improving public health and supporting economic activities in the region.*

**Transformative philanthropy in Africa is also evolving, incorporating innovative approaches like impact investing, crowdfunding and venture philanthropy.** These methods leverage technology and create new opportunities for engaging the African diaspora. By developing clear regulatory frameworks and fostering partnerships between governments and diaspora organisations, African countries can enhance the effectiveness

of philanthropic efforts. This approach not only maximises the impact of donations but also empowers local communities to drive sustainable development ([African Philanthropy Forum](#)).

**Emergent philanthropy** refers to the evolving and innovative forms of giving and social investment that are uniquely rooted in African cultural practices and societal needs. This is usually characterised by a focus on indigenous approaches to giving such as “*Ubuntu*” (South Africa), “*Ujamaa*” (Tanzania), “*Harambee*” (Kenya), which emphasise community solidarity and collective well-being. The practice in Africa seeks to address socio-economic challenges by leveraging knowledge, resources, and leadership, often in collaboration with global philanthropic models.

Key Aspects:

**Cultural roots:** drawing from African values and practices to prioritise community welfare and mutual support over individual gain.

**Local Empowerment:** emphasis on local communities and leaders driving development initiatives ensuring that solutions are culturally relevant and sustainable.

**Collaboration and innovation:** involves partnerships between local and international organisations, combining resources and expertise to solve complex challenges.

A notable example of emergent philanthropy in Africa is the work of the **African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF)**. The AWDF focuses on supporting women’s rights organisations across the continent, promoting gender equality and social justice. By simplifying funding processes and providing grants to grassroots organisations, the AWDF empowers local communities to address issues such as women’s health, education, and economic empowerment. This approach not only supports immediate needs but also fosters long-term systemic change by building the capacity of local organisations and leaders.

**Trust-based philanthropy is an approach that seeks to address the inherent power imbalances between funders and non-profit organisations by emphasising relationship-building, mutual accountability, and systemic equity.** This model moves away from traditional, control-oriented grantmaking practices and instead focuses on providing multi-year, unrestricted funding, simplifying application processes, and engaging in transparent and responsive communication. In the African context, trust-based philanthropy is particularly important as it empowers local organisations to lead initiatives that are culturally relevant and community-driven, leveraging their deep understanding of local needs and contexts.

**Example:**

A prominent example of trust-based philanthropy in Africa is the **African Visionary Fund (AVFund)**. Founded in 2020, AVFund focuses on shifting capital and decision-making power to African-founded and African-led organisations. The fund raises capital from international funders and provides unrestricted grants to local organisations, allowing them the flexibility

to address community needs effectively. This approach not only supports immediate project goals but also fosters long-term organisational growth and sustainability. AVFund's work is characterised by:

- **Trust-based Relationships:** AVFund emphasises building trust with its grantees, referred to as "African Visionary Partners", by co-designing programs and advocating for systemic changes in the philanthropic sector.
- **Empowerment of Local Leaders:** By providing unrestricted funding, AVFund enables local organisations to decide how best to allocate resources, promoting innovation and responsiveness to emergent community needs.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** During crises, such as Cyclone Freddy in Southern Africa, AVFund facilitated collaboration among local partners to deliver disaster relief, showcasing the strength of local knowledge and community ties.

**The rise of dedicated issue-based philanthropy**, particularly among individual philanthropists, with significant growth in areas like environmental conservation ("philanthropy-environmentalists") and disaster relief. These philanthropists are leveraging their resources to influence public policy and address urgent issues. The goal here is often to create significant impact by tackling these issues with strategic interventions, often in collaboration with local communities, governments, and other stakeholders. Within this trend, we see that philanthropic efforts are **increasingly directed towards climate change mitigation** and supporting **sustainable development** initiatives. This focus is driven by the urgent need to address environmental issues and their disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities.

**Example:**

**Graca Machel Trust:** This trust works to address complex socio-economic issues that specifically affect women and children in Africa. As such, they focus on supporting women's economic empowerment, restore and protect children's rights, and nutritional wellbeing. It aims to create a more equitable society by supporting initiatives that enhance the social and economic status of women and children across Africa. The trust collaborates and leverages other strategic partnerships with other organizations to amplify its impact and drive systemic change.

- **Key Practices:**
  - **Empowering Women Entrepreneurs:** Through programs like Women Creating Wealth and the Fair4All Project, the Trust equips African women with the tools, skills, and networks needed to grow sustainable businesses and transform agricultural value chains, advancing gender equity in entrepreneurship.
  - **Advocating for Children's Rights:** The Trust focuses on education and skills development for children, particularly girls affected by conflict. Their advocacy extends to preventing child marriage and gender-based violence through initiatives like Girls Not Brides.
  - **Strengthening Civil Society:** This work galvanizes civil society by fostering networks of leaders and advocates for social and economic change. Through the Foundation for Community Development, they promote access to information and support social justice efforts across Africa.

**Crowdfunding and online fundraising continue to thrive** – and is employed by small and large organisations – enhanced by advances in artificial intelligence and quantum technology, which improve accessibility and efficiency. This trend is expected to grow further as these technologies evolve.

**Example:**

**M-Changa - A Successful Crowdfunding Effort in Africa Platform Overview:** M-Changa, also known as E-harambee, is Africa's largest online fundraising platform, providing a secure, transparent, and convenient way to raise funds for various needs, including medical bills, education, and community projects. It leverages mobile technology to facilitate donations, making it accessible to a wide range of users across the continent. One notable success story on M-Changa related to climate change and the environment is the **Meru For Environment Campaign**. This campaign aimed to restore the natural beauty of Meru, a region in Kenya, by engaging the local community in various environmental activities. The initiative focused on practical actions such as tree planting, which is crucial for combating deforestation and promoting biodiversity.

*Key Elements of the Campaign*

- **Community Engagement:** The campaign actively involved local residents, encouraging them to participate in environmental conservation efforts. This grassroots involvement was essential in fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the local environment.
- **Practical Environmental Activities:** By focusing on tangible actions like tree planting, the campaign addressed immediate environmental concerns while also contributing to long-term ecological health.

**Use of M-Changa Platform:** Leveraging M-Changa's online fundraising capabilities, the campaign was able to reach a wide audience, both locally and internationally, to gather the necessary funds. This approach allowed for efficient mobilisation of resources and increased awareness about environmental issues in Meru.

**Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs) are becoming more popular due to their flexibility and tax benefits.** They are expected to play a significant role in strategic philanthropy, offering a sustainable funding source for non-profits.

**Example:**

Notable examples of a donor-advised fund in Africa are: The initiative by **Amref Health Africa**. Amref Health Africa allows donors to establish donor-advised funds to support their charitable activities, particularly in the health sector across the continent. These funds enable donors to make tax-deductible contributions and recommend grants to support various health initiatives managed by Amref.

1. **CFK Africa (Carolina for Kibera Inc.):** CFK Africa offers donor-advised funds to support their work in fighting extreme poverty in African informal settlements. Donors can recommend grants from their DAFs to support CFK Africa's programs in youth leadership and public health.

2. **BOMA Project:** *The BOMA Project uses donor-advised funds to support its mission of ending extreme poverty in Africa's drylands. Donors can maximise potential tax benefits and invest in BOMA's initiatives to empower women and build resilience in vulnerable communities.*
3. **Community Chest of the Western Cape:** *Based in South Africa, this organisation manages donor-advised funds that support a wide range of social development projects. Donors can direct their contributions to specific areas of interest, such as education, health, or poverty alleviation, within the Western Cape region.*
4. **Southern Africa Trust:** *This organisation facilitates donor-advised funds aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in Southern Africa. It works with local communities and organisations to ensure that philanthropic efforts are aligned with regional development goals and priorities.*

**The engagement of new generations, particularly the youth in Africa, is needed.**

Harnessing their energy through linking philanthropy with volunteerism can further enhance and sustain philanthropic efforts. The youth organisations, along with organisations run by young people that we interviewed and surveyed, tend to have small budgets, project-focused funding, and lack of investment in organisational and personal development. On the global scene, we see a trend for “generational wealth transfer”, with the transfer of wealth from baby boomers to younger generations presenting new opportunities for philanthropy. **Younger donors are becoming more prominent, bringing fresh perspectives and a focus on systemic change.**

Data analysis and quantitative research are being leveraged to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of philanthropic activities. Organisations like the Centre for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) use rigorous quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and analyse large-scale data sets, providing insights that guide strategic decisions in capacity building, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. This empirical approach is intended to support unbiased decision-making, ensuring resources are allocated where they can achieve the most impact. Additionally, data analytics can improve funder engagement and fundraising strategies by identifying potential major funders and personalising outreach efforts, thereby optimising the use of philanthropic resources.

Capacity strengthening remains a focal point in philanthropy, with increasing emphasis on redefining what it entails and determining the most effective leadership for these efforts. This rethink aims to make capacity-building initiatives more relevant and impactful by focusing on developing internal structures, processes, and leadership skills within organisations, based on their priorities for self-strengthening. The goal is to empower non-profits to be more effective, sustainable, and scalable, ensuring they can better serve their communities and achieve lasting impact.

This involves strategic planning, professional development, and fostering a collaborative environment where organisations can share best practices and learn from each other.

### **Capacity Building in African Philanthropy**

A prominent example of capacity building in African Philanthropy is the work of **Donors for Africa**, an organisation dedicated to empowering non-profit professionals and social innovators across the continent. Donors for Africa focuses on developing leaders' technical expertise to ensure sustainability. They offer various programs, such as the Social Innovators Bootcamp, Donor Engagements, and the Small Grants Program. These initiatives have collectively raised significant funds for local projects, trained thousands of African women, and facilitated essential training for development actors. Their goal is to build strong, resilient institutions with the necessary internal structures and processes to drive impactful change.

Another notable effort is by **Thrive Philanthropy**, which invests in the leadership of fund recipients, management development, and strategic network expansion through its Thrive Africa Accelerator program. This program supports funding recipients by offering tailored consulting, strategic planning courses, and leadership development, thereby enhancing their capacity to achieve their missions effectively and sustainably.

Additionally, the **African Philanthropy Network** plays a crucial role in capacity building by promoting domestic resource mobilisation and fostering innovative partnerships for development. This network supports various forms of giving, from individual contributions to collective solidarity mechanisms, and aims to build a robust philanthropic community across Africa that can address the continent's social and economic challenges. Furthermore, a growing number of regional philanthropy networks and civil society support organisations, such as **EPIC Africa**, **Sivio Institute**, and the **West Africa Civil Society Initiative**, provide similar services. These organisations focus on generating knowledge to support civil society capacity initiatives.

### **Other Initiatives in African Philanthropy**

- **Africa Evidence Network (AEN)**: Focuses on building capacity for evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) across Africa. AEN supports indigenous approaches to capacity development, emphasising collaboration with local institutions to ensure sustainable outcomes.
- **Minority Rights Group (MRG)**: Works to strengthen the capacity of African minorities and indigenous peoples to advocate for their rights at both regional and international levels. MRG offers training, advocacy support, and research to empower indigenous communities across Africa.
- **Indigenous-Led Funds**: These funds, including those part of the Global Alliance of Indigenous-Led Funds, provide direct financial assistance and capacity development to grassroots organisations. They focus on fostering self-determination and resilience in indigenous communities by supporting initiatives that align with indigenous worldviews and cultural practices.
- **Ford Foundation's BUILD Program**: Works with indigenous, Afro-descendant, and traditional organisations in Africa to strengthen their institutional capacity. The BUILD initiative supports long-term resilience by emphasising community governance, cultural continuity, and collective decision-making.



**Interest in the systems change approach to funding is growing, despite gaps in understanding and application complexities.** This approach seeks to address the root causes of social problems rather than just the symptoms and aims for long-term, sustainable impact. Efforts are underway to define and clarify the concept, making it more practical for implementation. This involves developing frameworks and strategies that help funders and non-profits understand how to effectively drive systemic change and measure its impact.

**Diversity and inclusion are increasingly prioritised within philanthropic systems,** with organisations urged to integrate these values proactively. This involves ensuring diverse leadership structures and inclusive funding portfolios that reflect and incorporate the voices of the communities they aim to support. This includes addressing the "glass cliff" phenomenon where leaders of colour are given power during times of crisis, where the risk of failure is higher. By embracing diversity, philanthropic organisations can enhance their understanding of the unique challenges faced by different groups and tailor their strategies to be more effective and equitable. Efforts include setting diversity goals, implementing inclusive policies, creating inclusive decision-making structures, and fostering environments where diverse perspectives are valued and heard.

Support for small, locally led organisations is increasingly encouraged in the philanthropic sector due to a deepening understanding of local challenges, close community ties and agility in responding to issues. These organisations are often more effective in addressing localised problems because they have first-hand knowledge of the community's needs and can adapt quickly to changing circumstances. By funding these grassroots organisations, philanthropists can ensure that their resources are used efficiently and have a greater impact. This approach also empowers local leaders, fosters community ownership, and builds capacity within the community, leading to more sustainable and resilient outcomes.

Impact investing, which seeks to generate social and environmental benefits alongside financial returns, is gaining significant traction. This approach directs investments towards projects that address critical challenges such as poverty, healthcare, and sustainable agriculture, particularly in the Global South. By funding initiatives that offer both financial and societal returns, impact investors are contributing to sustainable development and helping to solve pressing global issues. This trend is supported by a growing number of investors who recognise the potential for positive change through strategic investments in areas that need it most.

**The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) continue to serve as a common framework for philanthropic efforts,** guiding organisations to align their giving with global priorities. Many philanthropic entities are focusing their resources on achieving these goals, particularly in the Global South, where challenges such as poverty, healthcare, and education are most pressing. By aligning their strategies with the SDGs, these organisations aim to contribute to sustainable development and address critical issues in targeted regions, thereby maximising their impact and ensuring their efforts are part of a larger, coordinated global initiative.

There is increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI), advanced data analytics, and digital wallets to enhance philanthropic giving. AI is being leveraged to enhance productivity, data governance, and personalisation in donor engagement, which significantly improves fundraising strategies and grant management. Advanced data analytics allow organisations to gain deeper insights into donor behaviours and the impact of their contributions, enabling more tailored and effective philanthropic efforts. Additionally, digital wallets like Mpesa, Apple Pay and Google Pay are being integrated into donation platforms to make giving more accessible and convenient for donors. Other key tech interventions include:

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><u>Epic Africa</u></b>	One stop shop for access to data, actionable insights, learning materials for CSOs and their funders. Access to networking opportunities. Another similar initiative is <a href="#"><u>Kujalink</u></a> .
<b><u>Giving Tuesday</u></b>	Interweaves the generosity of the giving during the holiday season with the leverage of social media. Connects and engage people worldwide in a movement. Supports the public good. Other similar initiatives include the Kenya based platform <a href="#"><u>mchanga</u></a> .
<b><u>The C'Mon Team!</u></b>	Media creatives volunteer time and talent to tell the stories of CSO and spread the word in the spirit of community.
<b><u>GoFundMe</u></b>	Allows people to raise money for personal realities from graduations to illness. Other examples include of crowdsourcing platforms include <a href="#"><u>Kickstarter</u></a> and <a href="#"><u>IndieGogo</u></a> .
<b><u>Social media 4 Non-profits</u></b>	Provides social media training through events and resources to help non-profits leverage social media for cause awareness, engagement with stakeholders, fund raising and advocacy. Covers diverse topics, such as “how to increase event engagement” and “the value of a Facebook fan”.

Collaborations in philanthropy are increasingly prevalent as organisations seek to pool resources and expertise to achieve greater impact and effectively tackle social and environmental challenges. They play a crucial role in addressing complex social issues and maximising impact. These partnerships allow funders, organisations and stakeholders to pool resources, expertise and networks to tackle challenges more effectively than they could individually.

The need for collaborations in philanthropy arises from several factors:

- **Amplified resources:** By combining funds and assets, collaboratives can undertake larger-scale projects and spread risks, potentially achieving a higher return on investment for each philanthropic dollar spent.
- **Diverse expertise:** Collaborations bring together various perspectives and skill sets, fostering innovative solutions to complex problems.
- **Efficiency:** Working together helps reduce duplication of efforts and streamlines resources, ensuring more efficient use of philanthropic funds.
- **Systemic change:** Collaboratives are better equipped to address large-scale, systemic challenges that require coordinated efforts across multiple sectors.
- **Sustainability:** Collaborative efforts tend to be more resilient to external changes, ensuring the longevity of philanthropic projects.
- **Learning opportunities:** Funders can learn from each other, gain access to shared resources, and improve their grantmaking strategies through collaboration.

As the philanthropic landscape evolves, collaboratives are becoming increasingly popular among funders, including high-profile philanthropists like Melinda French Gates and MacKenzie Scott on the global plane. These partnerships can offer a more inclusive and collective approach to giving, allowing funders to achieve greater impact without necessarily creating their own foundations or institutions. Collaborations in philanthropy represent a shift towards more strategic, efficient, and impactful giving, addressing the complex challenges of our time through collective action and shared resources.

**Trust Africa**, along with global and African philanthropists, is collaborating in developing issue-based funds that are also place-based. An important example is the collaboration between Trust Africa and the Agroecology Fund to establish regional funds focused on promoting agroecology. These co-managed funds aim to:

- Offer funders a simple way to fund grassroots organisations, networks, and emerging enterprises that are critical to scaling agroecology up across Africa.
- Ensure that organisations representing Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth receive the support they need to advance agroecology and uphold their rights.
- Support grantee organisations in monitoring their progress against sought outcomes.
- Contribute to regional learning, and to knowledge generation and exchanges, to deepen grassroots evidence for agroecology, and to adjust and improve strategies for scaling up agroecology.

## The Rise of Collaborations

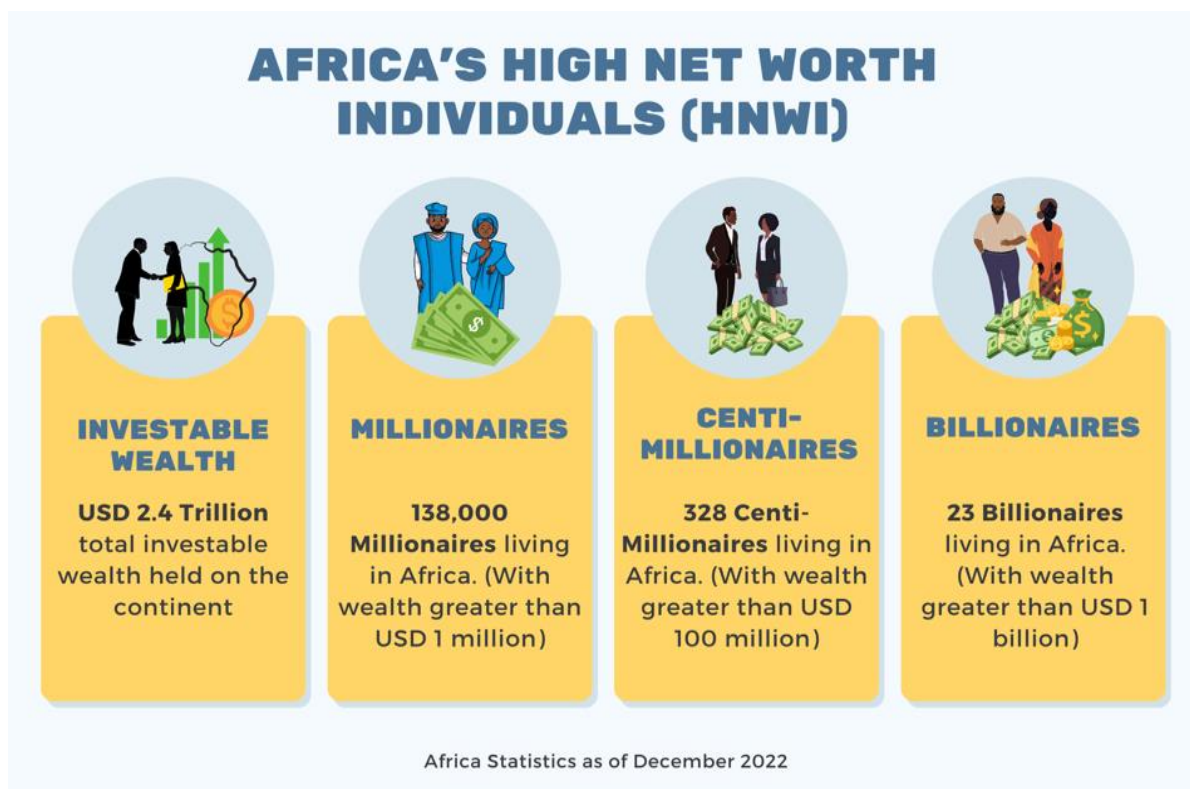
Who is collaborating	Motivation and modes of collaboration
Partnerships with other Philanthropy Organisations	<p><b>Why</b> → To pool resources and expertise to achieve greater impact.</p> <p><b>How</b> → Co-funding initiatives, co-developing programs, and sharing resources and expertise.</p>
Philanthropy Organisations and Businesses	<p><b>Why</b> → Leverage business resources, expertise, reach and influence to drive greater social and environmental change.</p> <p><b>How</b> → Gain funding, in-kind support and technical expertise.</p>
Collaboration with Governments	<p><b>Why</b> → Ensure alignment with priorities and needs of government and communities and leverage resources and expertise.</p> <p><b>How</b> → Support government programs or initiatives; and collaborate in developing and implementing policy solutions to social and environmental challenges.</p>
Civil Society Organisations	<p><b>Why</b> → Help amplify impact of philanthropic efforts and ensure they are aligned to community needs and priorities.</p> <p><b>How</b> → Funding support to CSOs to implement in various forms of funding models.</p>
Universities and Research Institutions	<p><b>Why</b> → Gain valuable insights and expertise and ensure that efforts are informed by latest research and evidence.</p> <p><b>How</b> → Support research initiatives or collaborate to develop and implement solutions to community challenges.</p>
Collaboration with the Media	<p><b>Why</b> → To raise awareness of social and environmental challenges and to promote their work.</p> <p><b>How</b> → Media partnerships to amplify messages to reach a wider audience through strategies like media interviews and features, press releases, op-eds and guest articles etc.</p>
Grassroot Organisations	<p><b>Why</b> → To gain insights and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing communities in Africa.</p> <p><b>How</b> → Ensures that efforts are aligned with priorities and needs of communities and that the impact of these efforts can be amplified through funding support.</p>

### Examples of Funder Collaboratives in Africa:

1. ***Africa No Filter*** is a funder collaborative founded in May 2020. It includes funders such as the *Ford Foundation*, *Bloomberg*, *Mellon Foundation*, *Luminate*, *Open Society Foundation*, and *Comic Relief*. This collaborative focuses on changing stereotypical narratives about Africa by supporting storytellers, media platforms, and cultural institutions across the continent.
2. ***East Africa Philanthropy Network (EAPN)*** connects trusts, foundations, grantmakers, and non-grantmakers to promote a culture of giving in East Africa. EAPN focuses on capacity building, alliance building, and promoting local philanthropy to drive transformative change.
3. ***Co-Impact's Foundational Fund*** supports systems change in health, education, and economic opportunity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It provides large, long-term grants and non-financial support to locally-rooted organisations and coalitions. This fund convenes over 40 funders from more than 16 countries.
4. ***African Philanthropy Network (APN)*** is a continent-wide network promoting philanthropic giving in Africa. It serves as a platform for African institutions to engage in resource mobilisation and distribution, aiming to foster transformative change across the continent.
5. ***We Are Purposeful*** is an Africa-rooted global hub for girls' activism, focusing on funding and resourcing young feminists to transform the world. One of its key initiatives is the "With and For Girls Fund", which serves as a participatory grantmaking hub that integrates various feminist funding initiatives. This fund is supported by a collective of founding partners, including organisations like the *Ford Foundation*, *Comic Relief*, and the *Wellspring Philanthropic Fund*.
6. ***The African Women's Development Fund*** is a Pan-African grantmaking organisation that supports women's rights organisations and feminist movements across Africa. It focuses on capacity building, knowledge sharing, and movement building, aiming to promote gender justice, freedom, and dignity.

### 3.4 Snapshot of Africa's High Net Worth Individuals (HNWI)

In 2024, Africa's High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs) are increasingly influential in philanthropy, marked by significant patterns and innovative practices. The continent hosts over 177,000 HNWIs, collectively holding a net worth of approximately USD 1.7 trillion. This wealth is not only shaping economic landscapes but also driving substantial philanthropic efforts focused on local and continental development.



According to the 2023 edition of the Africa Wealth Report, the “**Big 5**” wealth markets in Africa—**South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya, and Morocco**—collectively account for 56 percent of Africa’s HNWIs and over 90 percent of its billionaires. Countries like Mauritius, Rwanda, Namibia, the Seychelles, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are also gaining ground rapidly.

#### **Patterns of giving**

High net worth individuals (HNWIs) in Africa exhibit unique patterns of philanthropic giving, shaped by cultural, social, and economic factors. According to our extensive desk research on recent data released on HNWI giving, here are some key patterns observed in their giving behaviours.

1. **Community and Social Development Focus:** HNWIs in Africa tend to prioritise community and social development projects. This includes funding for education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation initiatives. The focus is often on addressing immediate needs within local communities, reflecting a strong sense of social responsibility and commitment to societal improvement.

2. **Informal Giving Structures:** Many African HNWI's engage in philanthropy through informal channels rather than structured entities like foundations or trusts. This informal approach is often rooted in cultural traditions of mutual support and community solidarity, such as the concept of *Ubuntu*.
3. **Localised Giving:** Philanthropic efforts by African HNWI's are often localised, with a preference for supporting initiatives within their own countries or regions. This localised focus is partly due to a desire to have a direct impact on their communities and to address specific local challenges.
4. **Limited Support for Advocacy:** Despite the important work done by advocacy groups, they receive relatively little funding from African HNWI's. This may be due to a focus on tangible outcomes and direct service provision, as well as potential political sensitivities associated with advocacy work.
5. **Response to Crises:** African HNWI's have shown a capacity for significant philanthropic response during crises. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a notable increase in large-scale giving to support healthcare and economic recovery efforts across the continent.
6. **Religious and Cultural Influences:** A substantial portion of giving by African HNWI's is channelled through religious institutions, such as churches and mosques. This reflects the deep cultural and religious roots of philanthropy in Africa, where giving is often intertwined with spiritual and communal values. These patterns highlight the diverse motivations and methods of giving among Africa's wealthy individuals, underscoring the importance of cultural context in shaping philanthropic practices on the continent.

In general, despite a 12 percent decline in the number of HNWI's in Africa between 2012 and 2022, largely due to underperformance in South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria and emigration, African philanthropists are increasingly channelling their wealth into structured philanthropic initiatives, often through family foundations and trusts.

These entities allow for more organised and impactful giving, addressing critical areas such as education, health, entrepreneurship, and livelihoods. For instance, the **Tony Elumelu Foundation** has committed USD 100 million to empower 10,000 African entrepreneurs, a program that has already supported over 9,000 entrepreneurs across the continent. Similarly, other foundations like the **Dangote Foundation** and the **Higherlife Foundation** focus on job creation, healthcare, and education, leveraging their resources to create sustainable change.

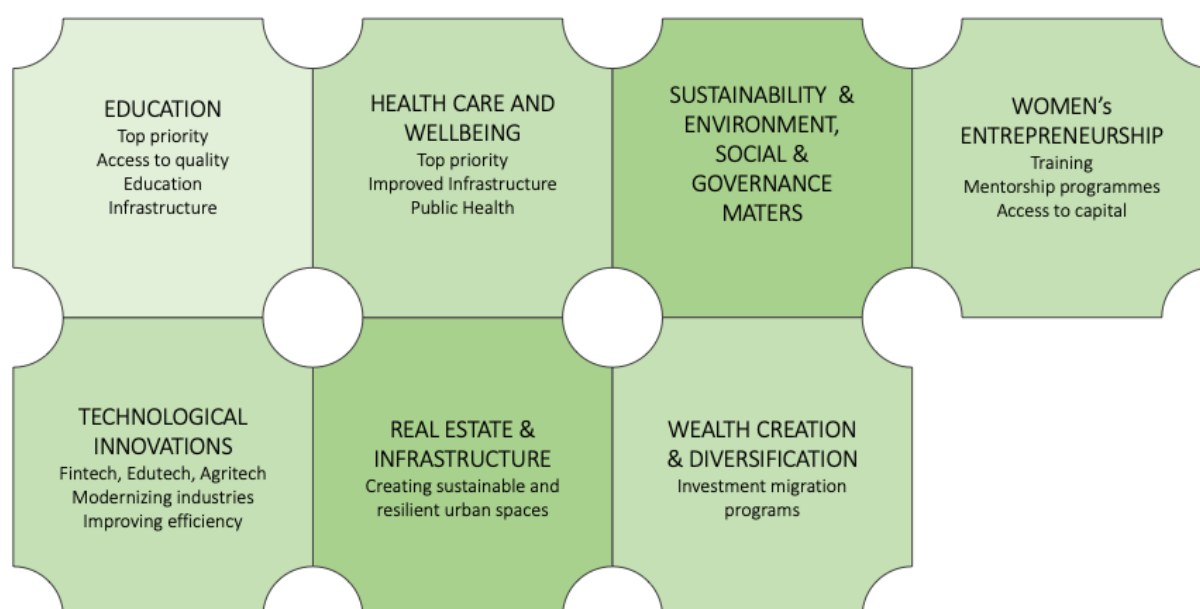
Several factors are driving wealth growth in Africa's wealth markets:

- **Developed Financial Systems:** Well-developed banking systems and stock markets in countries like Mauritius, South Africa, and Kenya promote local investments and wealth creation.
- **Safety and Security:** Countries like Mauritius and Namibia offer a strong sense of safety and security, attracting investments.

- **Sectoral Growth:** Key sectors such as technology, mining, manufacturing, and tourism, which bring in foreign exchange, are thriving.
- **Media Freedoms:** Free media in countries like South Africa provides critical information that influences investor decisions.
- **Property rights:** The ability to own property is crucial for encouraging investment and infrastructure development.
- **Favourable Tax Rates:** Competitive tax rates in places like Mauritius encourage business formation.
- **Wealth Migration:** The migration of HNWI into Africa increases foreign exchange inflows, boosting wealth growth.

### Investment priorities

In 2024, Africa's HNWI are focusing their investments on sectors that not only promise financial returns but also address significant social and environmental issues, including:



### Impact and future directions

The collective efforts of Africa's HNWI are poised to accelerate the continent's development. By focusing on long-term, systemic changes rather than short-term fixes, these philanthropists are addressing the root causes of social and economic challenges. Their investments in education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship are not only improving immediate living conditions but also fostering an environment for sustainable growth and innovation. Although environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations play an increasingly important role in HNWI investment decisions, most are still investing largely based on personal interests and direct connections to the issues they give to.



### High profile African Philanthropists:

- **Aliko Dangote (Nigeria):** As the president of the Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote has made significant contributions to various causes, including flood relief, housing, and education in Nigeria.
- The **Dangote Foundation** has contributed over USD 100 million in charitable funds to Nigeria and Africa to causes encompassing healthcare, education and economic empowerment.
- **Strive Masiyiwa (Zimbabwe):** Founder of Econet Wireless, Masiyiwa has established trusts and supported organisations that focus on education and orphan care across several African countries.
- **Strive and Tsitsi Masiyiwa's Higherlife Foundation** has one of the largest support programs for educating orphans in Africa and encompasses healthcare, medical assistance, crisis response, leadership development, food insecurity and building rural economies.
- **Francois van Niekerk's Mergon Foundation** valued at USD 170 million funds education, health and skills-building initiatives.
- **Tony Elumelu (Nigeria):** Founder of the Tony Elumelu Foundation, Elumelu is known for empowering young African entrepreneurs through his entrepreneurship program, which has disbursed over USD 100 million in direct funding.
- **Mo Ibrahim (Sudan/UK):** Known for his philanthropic work on governance and leadership in Africa, Ibrahim has established the Mo Ibrahim Foundation and offers a significant prize for African leaders who excel.
- **Patrice Motsepe (South Africa):** Through the Motsepe Foundation, Motsepe has focused on uplifting impoverished communities in South Africa and beyond.
- **Theophilus Danjuma (Nigeria):** Founder of the TY Danjuma Foundation, Danjuma has made substantial donations to support education, health, and poverty alleviation initiatives.
- **Jim Ovia (Nigeria):** Founder of Zenith Bank, Ovia has contributed to youth empowerment and ICT initiatives in Nigeria.
- **Mark Shuttleworth (South Africa):** After selling his digital security company, Shuttleworth invested in open-source software and funds projects aimed at societal change through the Shuttleworth Foundation.
- **Francois van Niekerk (South Africa):** Founder of the Mertech Group, van Niekerk has contributed significantly to education, health, and skills-building through the Mergon Foundation.
- **Donald Gordon (deceased, South Africa):** Established the Donald Gordon Foundation, which supports higher education and the arts.
- **Naguib Sawiris (Egypt):** Naguib Sawiris is a prominent Egyptian businessman and philanthropist. He is known for his contributions to education and social development in Egypt through the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development, which focuses on education, employment, and social empowerment.
- **Onsi Sawiris (Egypt):** Onsi Sawiris, the patriarch of the Sawiris family, has been involved in various philanthropic activities through the Sawiris Foundation, supporting initiatives in education, health, and social development.

- **Manu Chandaria (Kenya):** Manu Chandaria is a well-known Kenyan industrialist and philanthropist. He has supported numerous initiatives in education, health, and social welfare through the Chandaria Foundation, which focuses on improving the lives of communities in Kenya.
- **James Mwangi (Kenya):** James Mwangi, CEO of Equity Group Holdings Plc, was included among The Financial Times' 2009 list of the top 50 thought leaders of emerging markets and the top 20 most influential people in Africa.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021/22 Women's Entrepreneurship Report reveals that women are more likely than men to be entrepreneurs, and as such, are contributing significantly in multiple ways to general wealth creation on the continent, for example, through consumer spending, workforce participation, and business ownership. Women entrepreneurs drive innovation and economic growth. Several institutionalised individual givers are exploring investing in women entrepreneurship.

Looking ahead, the continued growth of Africa's high net worth individuals (HNWIs) and their increasingly strategic approach to philanthropy suggest a promising future for the continent. By leveraging their wealth and influence, these individuals are poised to play a critical role in fostering a more equitable and prosperous Africa.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, African Philanthropy is emerging as a crucial driver of the continent's economic development, with greater self-direction and local accountability.

It has the potential to overcome the limitations imposed by foreign development assistance and is becoming a key component of government policy in many countries, significantly contributing to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the continent. Government support plays a vital role in this growth; for example, the Kenyan government has implemented a policy that recognises charitable donations as tax-deductible, thereby creating an enabling environment for the sector to flourish.

A report released by the Philanthropy Circuit<sup>2</sup> in early 2022, noted that:

*“African Philanthropy as an emerging form of development funding has had a unique impact on transformational change on the continent in many ways. This distinct force has fostered social, economic, and political change in Africa.”*

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<sup>2</sup> African Philanthropy and Policy – Insights on Achieving Sustainable Development; Philanthropy Circuit - 2022

## 4. Dynamics of “localisation” in the philanthropy sector

A new focus on localisation is driving novel initiatives and partnerships while simultaneously exposing tensions within funding relationships. Importantly this tension creates fresh opportunities for creative relationship building premised on trust and mutual respect, which in turn increases the possibilities for sustainable and transformative funding.

### 4.1 What is localisation?

Localisation in Africa's philanthropy sector refers to the process of empowering and prioritising local actors, both state and non-state in the design, implementation, and management of development initiatives.

Localisation:

- Emphasises **the ownership, agency and knowledge of local communities**, aiming to achieve sustainable, inclusive and context-specific development outcomes.
- Seeks to address **power imbalances** by ensuring that fund recipients set their own priorities, which leads to more effective and efficient responses to development challenges. This concept has gained renewed attention due to the need for more resilient and adaptive development practices, particularly highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic and the push for decolonising development approaches.
- Requires shifting decision-making power and resources to local organisations, fostering local leadership and building the capacity of local institutions.
- Entails **creating mechanisms for accountability and collaboration among local stakeholders**, which helps in tailoring development interventions to the specific needs and contexts of local communities.
- Necessitates funder-fund recipient relationships that encompass multidirectional accountability, transparency, collaboration and respect.

Localisation matters, as Martin Seychell, Deputy Director General at DG International Partnerships European Commission, noted during a Roundtable on Boosting Domestic Philanthropy and Giving in and for the Global South in 2019, because:

*“...local organisations and local philanthropy bring on the ground knowledge and skills, access, and presence...analysis, and help us understand the local context and connect to local communities. Without this, there is a big risk that we do things that exist only on paper.”*

The relevance of localisation from the perspective of civil society actors is well captured in the sentiment below from an interviewee:

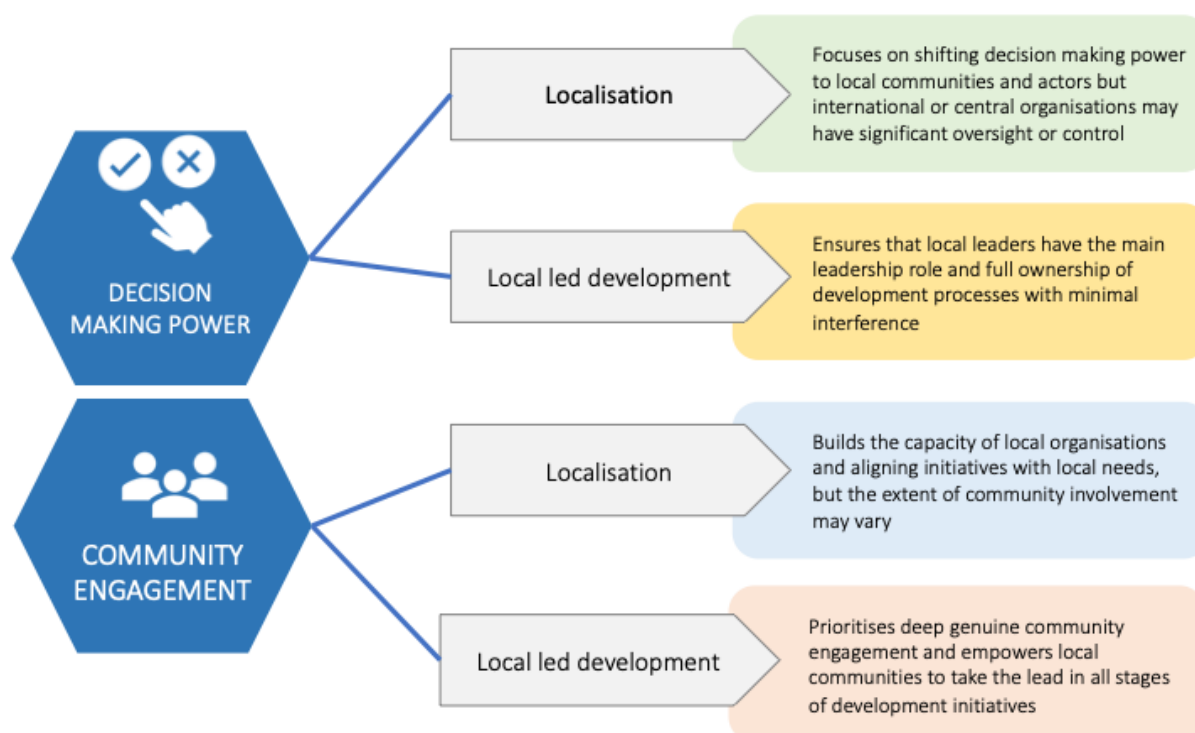
*“There has been a growing recognition among philanthropic organisations of the importance of supporting locally led initiatives and solutions in the Global South. Many donors are shifting their focus from top-down approaches to more participatory and community driven projects. These have been known to differ from one donor to another in terms of levels of engagement with the local players.”*

#### 4.2 A reality check is needed

**While policy makers clearly articulate the need and purpose of localisation, the implementation on the ground tells a different story.** Despite the ambitious projections at the policy level, the actual work being done shows a staggering disparity that needs to be addressed to fully realise the potential of localisation efforts.

A starting point is distinguishing between localisation and locally led development, both conceptually and in practice.

#### Key differences in localisation and local-led development practice



Localisation in the context of philanthropy refers to the process of shifting decision-making power, resources and responsibilities from international or central organisations to local actors within the regions where development projects are implemented. This approach emphasises the importance of local ownership and aims to ensure that development initiatives are more relevant, efficient and sustainable by leveraging local knowledge, expertise and cultural understanding. Localisation often involves building the capacity of local organisations to manage and execute projects independently, fostering an environment where local entities lead the planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities.

Key aspects of localisation include:

- transferring decision-making power and resources to local entities,
- strengthening the capacity of local organisations to manage projects independently, and
- ensuring that development initiatives are aligned with local needs and contexts.

Local-led development, on the other hand, goes a step further by not only emphasising local participation but also ensuring that local communities and organisations have the primary leadership role in identifying, designing, implementing and evaluating development projects. This approach is rooted in the principle that those who are directly affected by development challenges are best positioned to drive the solutions. Local-led development prioritises genuine community engagement and seeks to empower local leaders and organisations to take full ownership of development processes, fostering long-term sustainability and resilience.

Key aspects of local-led development include:

- empowering local communities to lead and drive development initiatives,
- prioritising genuine community engagement and participation, and
- ensuring that local actors have the primary role in project identification, design, implementation and evaluation.

While the concept is essential for effective and sustainable development, several factors can act as barriers or success factors in its implementation.

### 4.3 Barriers to localisation

There are at least four sets of barriers to localisation that must be addressed. These are:

#### ***Systemic/Structural Barriers***

- **Regulations and Restrictions:** Many governments in Africa impose regulations that may undermine or slow efforts towards financial independence from international funding sources. There is, for example, little support by governments for models of endowment-building.
- **Competition with International CSOs:** Local CSOs face competition with international CSOs, which have more resources, technical expertise, and advocacy power, making it difficult for local CSOs to compete on an equal footing.
- **Resource Inadequacy:** Local organisations often lack adequate funding, technical expertise, and capacity to take on larger roles and implement complex projects.

- **Complex Bureaucratic Processes:** Bureaucratic and regulatory barriers can complicate or delay efforts to channel resources and decision-making to local entities.
- **Donor Country Initiatives:** These initiatives can disrupt natural local collaborations and networks among African CSOs, leading to the formation of "artificial" consortiums driven by funders.
- **Overreliance on External Funding:** This can undermine local ownership and sustainability, as organisations may feel compelled to align with funder priorities.

#### **Mental Barriers**

- **Risk Aversion:** There are tendencies to be risk-averse and hesitant to shift responsibilities to local organisations due to fears of potential failures or mismanagement.
- **Inadequate Skills and Knowledge:** Local organisations may lack the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to manage and implement complex development projects effectively.
- **Unfavourable Mindsets:** Some stakeholders may be resistant to change, holding on to traditional ways of working that do not support localisation efforts.

#### **Relational Barriers**

- **Unequal Power Dynamics:** The power imbalance between international funders and local organisations can hinder localisation efforts, with funders retaining control over funding and decision-making.
- **Preferences and Requirements:** Specific preferences, reporting requirements, and procedures imposed by partners can make it challenging for local organisations to implement local solutions fully.
- **Lack of Mutual Trust:** A lack of mutual trust and understanding between international funders and local organisations can hinder effective collaboration.
- **Cultural and Communication Differences:** Differences in culture, language, and communication styles can create misunderstandings and hinder cooperation.
- **Limited Safe Spaces:** Local CSOs have limited "safe spaces" where they can openly share their problems and craft solutions with their funding partners.

#### **Psychosocial Barriers**

- **Stress and Burnout:** The high demands and pressures placed on local organisations can lead to stress and burnout among staff, affecting their efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Motivation and Morale:** The challenges and frustrations of dealing with systemic and relational barriers can lower motivation and morale among local CSO staff.

### **4.4 Localisation enablers**

Funders can take deliberate and focused actions to move forward with localisation. These enablers address the four key barriers identified above.

#### **Systemic/Structural Enablers**

1. **Flexible Funding:** Providing funding that allows local organisations to adapt strategies and allocate resources according to local needs.

- **Capacity-Strengthening Support:** Offering training, technical assistance and capacity-building support empowers local organisations to take on larger roles and responsibilities.
- **Policy Reinforcement:** Instituting policies that reinforce a systems-change approach, such as those around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, sustains the positive mindset changes required within funder organisations.
- **Local Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation:** Encouraging local fundraising helps reduce dependency on external funding and promotes sustainability.
- **Engagement in Policy and Advocacy:** Supporting local organisations in local/national policy and advocacy efforts amplifies their impact and contributes to systemic change.
- **Adapting Donor Procedures:** Funding actors adapting their procedures, reporting requirements and expectations to the local context facilitates localisation. Initiatives such as the “[radical flexibility](#)” project help with this. Another notable initiative is the “**Compliance Conundrum Collaborative**” an initiative born from a session at CCW23 (Catalyst 2030 Week 2023); and is a transformative force that has evolved into a dynamic alliance aimed at creating an integrated ecosystem for localisation. The collaborative envisions a future where funders and civil society work together seamlessly. The initiative has convened *Techsoup*, *Kujalink*, *Epic Africa*, *Hilton Foundation* and *Warande Advisory Centre* to form a collaboration tackling issues of risk and compliance.

#### **Philanthropy supporting capacity strengthening**

The ***African Venture Philanthropy Alliance (AVPA)*** emphasises the importance of local leadership and capacity building. AVPA's initiatives are designed to support local social enterprises and non-profits by providing them with the resources, networks and expertise needed to scale their impact. Through partnerships with local and international funders, AVPA works to ensure that funding is directed to African-led organisations, fostering a more equitable and sustainable philanthropic landscape.

A foundation that invests significantly in the capacity building of local entities in Africa is the ***African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)***. Established in 1991, ACBF focuses on developing sustainable human and institutional capacities to support Africa's development. Their initiatives include offering comprehensive training programs, technical assistance, and financial support aimed at strengthening the capabilities of both state and non-state actors across the continent. For example, ACBF has been instrumental in advancing climate adaptation efforts by strengthening the landscape of African partners working in this field. The foundation's support extends to diverse sectors including agricultural development, governance, public health and economic policy, reflecting a holistic approach to capacity building.

## Mental Enablers

**Top-Leadership Buy-in:** Leadership plays a critical role in introducing and rooting new working principles in practice, driving systemic changes within funding organisations. They play a critical role in “rocking the boat” by not only introducing new desired principles of working, but they should also translate them into practice, and more importantly root them in new policies.

### Supporting leadership in localisation

A notable example of leadership in localisation within the philanthropy sector is the work of the ***Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa (IPASA)***. IPASA is a membership-based organisation committed to transforming philanthropy in South Africa by promoting independent philanthropy, facilitating connections, and encouraging knowledge sharing and collaboration among funders. Their approach includes innovative funding practices and a strong emphasis on localisation.

IPASA supports local leadership by implementing initiatives that directly engage and empower local organisations. For instance, their Funder Collaboration initiative facilitates collaboration among funders and local stakeholders to maximise the impact of philanthropic efforts. They also run specialised support programs, such as the Climate Change Funder Support and Education Funder Support initiatives, which provide local funders with the knowledge and tools needed to address specific challenges effectively.

By fostering an environment of collaboration, IPASA helps ensure that local voices and perspectives are central to decision-making processes. This approach not only enhances the relevance and impact of philanthropic activities but also promotes sustainability by building local capacity and reducing dependency on external funding.

**Adaptive Management Approach:** Embracing an adaptive management approach allows for adjustments based on local feedback and changing circumstances, promoting responsiveness and innovation.

### Being responsive, adapting to reality

The ***Heron Foundation*** exemplifies this approach. They realised the importance of deeply listening to communities to achieve their mission of helping communities help themselves. This led them to shift from extracting community knowledge for grantmaking strategies to empowering local communities with funds and decision-making power, thereby creating more equitable and impactful partnerships.

**Education and Awareness:** Intentional education of funder communities and funding institution staff about the realities of the local context, including cultural sensitivities and economic and political realities, helps bridge understanding and support.



### Supporting funder action

**Giving Compass** connects funders with resources and community-led solutions, emphasising the importance of understanding local contexts and engaging in power-sharing approaches to philanthropy. This platform provides practical lessons and curated content to help funders learn from the experiences of local organisations and adjust their practices accordingly.

### Relational Enablers

**Alignment of Goals and Values:** Ensuring that international and local partners share aligned goals and values is essential for successful collaboration and localisation. The *Humanitarian Advisory group* has developed [tools to help measure and work towards localisation](#).

**Building Long-Term Relationships:** Developing relationships based on trust, mutual respect, and open communication leads to more effective localisation. Tools and templates to support funders with this are available on <https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/>.

**Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensuring that decision-making processes are inclusive, and representative of diverse perspectives enhances ownership and buy-in. Emerging practice is funder organisations instituting advisory boards resources by representatives from the people/countries where they work. *Kings College* has pioneered [a decision making tool](#) that supports the efforts to identify and measure progress being made in shifting decision making to local entities.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Acknowledging and respecting local cultural norms, values, and practices fosters more inclusive and effective partnerships.

**Creating Safe Spaces:** Moving beyond a finance-focused relationship to create spaces for open engagement helps both parties understand each other's strengths, challenges, and realities.

**Recognising Local Expertise:** Valuing and recognising the expertise of local organisations contributes to more equitable partnerships.

**Empowering Local Organisations:** Empowering local organisations to drive the development agenda and make decisions fosters ownership and sustainability.

### Cultural sensitivity

An example of cultural sensitivity in philanthropy is seen in the approach taken by the **Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF)**. This organisation places a strong emphasis on understanding and respecting local cultural norms, values, and practices to foster more inclusive and effective partnerships. For instance, KCDF integrates the concept of "harambee", a traditional Kenyan practice of community self-help and collective action, into its philanthropic activities. This practice not only aligns with local cultural values but also strengthens community bonds and ensures that initiatives are culturally relevant and well-received by the local population.

Additionally, the ***Giving Tuesday Africa Hub*** highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity by tailoring philanthropic messages to resonate with local values and priorities, such as the Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasises the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of community. By doing so, they build trust with local communities, making them more receptive to philanthropic efforts and ensuring that the initiatives are sustainable and impactful.

### ***Innovation and learning***

**Encouraging Experimentation:** Creating an environment where experimentation and learning from challenges and failures are encouraged promotes innovation and local-led solutions.

#### **Encouraging experimentation**

An example of a private foundation that encourages experimentation and learning from challenges and failures is the ***Rockefeller Foundation***. The foundation has a history of funding innovative approaches and allowing for flexibility and mid-course corrections in its philanthropic endeavours. This approach is likened to investing in research and development (R&D) in the business world, where the foundation encourages fund recipients to dream big and experiment with novel solutions. The Rockefeller Foundation's initiatives often include a built-in flexibility that allows for adjustments based on feedback and changing circumstances, promoting an environment where innovation and local-led solutions can thrive. This method helps to identify and correct flaws in their approach early on, ensuring that the funded programs are as effective as possible.

Another notable example is the ***Heising-Simons Foundation***, which integrates elements of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) into its grantmaking. This framework encourages fund recipients to consider the societal implications of their research and adapt their approaches to meet broader social goals, fostering a culture of experimentation and responsiveness to new challenges.

**Facilitating Storytelling:** Collecting and facilitating storytelling from those with lived experience ensures that local communities can shape their own narratives, contributing to more authentic and impactful initiatives.

#### **Changing the narrative**

An excellent example of a foundation that supports storytelling is the ***Ford Foundation*** through its *JustFilms* initiative. *JustFilms* funds social justice storytelling and supports 21st-century arts infrastructure. This program focuses on reducing inequality by supporting independent film, video, and emerging media projects that explore urgent social justice issues. By investing in these storytelling efforts, *JustFilms* aims to challenge stereotypes, amplify marginalised voices, and inspire civic engagement.

Another prominent example is ***Africa No Filter***, a funder collaborative that aims to shift harmful narratives about Africa by supporting nuanced and contemporary storytelling. They fund artists, scholars, authors, and media organisations that challenge stereotypes and produce content that reflects the diversity and creativity of Africa. Africa No Filter partners with several major foundations, including the Ford Foundation, to build a robust ecosystem of storytellers who can effectively reshape perceptions about the continent.

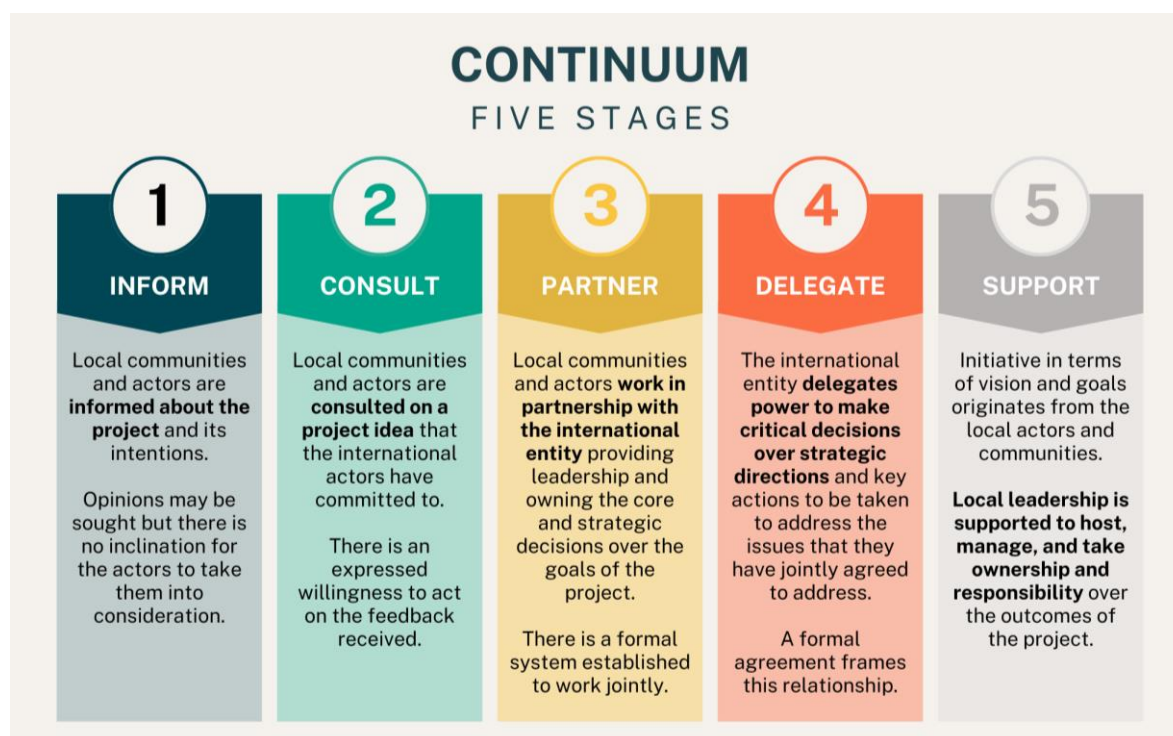
***Conrad N. Hilton Foundation*** has made deliberate efforts to improve ethical storytelling in the development sector. The foundation, in collaboration with ***M&C Saatchi***, developed a toolkit to help stakeholders and actors in the international development space navigate conversations about ethical storytelling. This initiative is part of their broader strategy to enhance representation and participation in the storytelling process, ensuring that the voices of people with lived experiences are elevated and accurately represented. It brought together industry specialists from the continent to document the toolkit and launch a campaign dubbed “Better Conversations about Ethical Storytelling”.

These initiatives highlight the importance of storytelling in philanthropy, showcasing how strategic support for local narratives can foster a deeper understanding and drive social change.

#### 4.5 The role of philanthropy in advancing Local-led development in Africa

Localisation and local-led development are gaining recognition as crucial for sustainable philanthropic efforts. This involves funding local organisations directly and decentralising decision-making power to target countries, shifting away from the traditional Global North-centric funding models. This approach prioritises sustainability, equity, and the inclusion of local perspectives, leading to more effective and culturally relevant solutions. From our research, getting to locally led development can move along a continuum from being less locally led to substantially locally led. This progresses loosely along the following five stages or continuum, which **suggests a progressive evolution of how funding relationships can be transformed over time, with shifts in mindsets and practices that lead to a more local-led engagement.**

This progresses loosely follows these five stages:



Philanthropy plays a crucial role in advancing local-led development in Africa by empowering communities to take charge of their own development initiatives.

The key roles of philanthropy in local-led development can be summed up as follows:

**Empowerment and Ownership:** Philanthropy enables communities to take ownership of their development processes, fostering a sense of agency and responsibility, thereby enabling community driven solutions. By providing resources directly to local organisations, philanthropic efforts support initiatives that are tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities within each community. By investing in local capacity, foundations help foster leadership that is more in tune with the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts of the communities they serve. Local ownership of solutions increases their chances of long-term success.

**Flexible Funding and Risk-Taking:** Unlike other forms of development aid, philanthropy often has the flexibility to fund innovative and experimental approaches that might not yet have established track records. This flexibility allows philanthropic organisations to take risks on locally led initiatives that might be overlooked by more traditional funders, helping to incubate new and transformative solutions.

**Strengthening Long-term Capacity:** Philanthropy often involves building the capacity of local organisations and leaders. Philanthropy can provide not only financial support but also training, tools, and networks. This helps local organisations to grow and sustain themselves, enhancing their ability to address future challenges without being reliant on external aid.

**Facilitating Partnerships, Networks and Collaboration:** Philanthropy can serve as a bridge between local communities and global networks, facilitating partnerships that bring together diverse stakeholders, including governments, businesses, and other non-profits. These partnerships can enhance the impact of local-led development efforts by providing additional resources, expertise, and visibility. This ultimately helps in addressing complex issues more effectively and ensures that solutions are grounded in local realities.

**Promoting Equity and Inclusion:** By centering local voices and perspectives, philanthropy promotes more equitable development outcomes. This approach ensures that marginalised and historically excluded communities have a say in the development processes that affect them, leading to more inclusive and just outcomes.

**Advocacy for Local Autonomy:** Philanthropy can advocate for policies and practices that prioritise local leadership and decision-making in development. By influencing broader development paradigms, philanthropic organisations can help shift power and resources to local actors, promoting more equitable and sustainable development outcomes.

Overall, philanthropy's role in advancing local-led development in Africa is about shifting power and resources to local communities, fostering sustainable and context-specific solutions, and building a more equitable development landscape.

## 5. Understanding the potential of intermediaries

Funding organisations are seeking out intermediary organisations more frequently to help them reach a larger set of recipients. As more funders engage in consortiums that pool funds for issue-specific giving, their need for intermediaries is increasing. A key issue from the perspective of African Philanthropy and civil society organisations is how this will change funding systems and if this intervention can be designed to drive transformations that strengthen the philanthropy and civil society ecosystems and support effective action to address the major social, human rights and environmental challenges they face.

### 5.1 What are intermediaries?

Intermediaries are organisations that help bridge the gap between foundations/funders and fund recipients with a view to strengthening the philanthropy ecosystem.

Intermediaries have frequently been viewed as organisations that specifically support the funder in its operations by **undertaking roles the funder is poorly equipped to carry out** and/or by providing key resources, networks and knowledge. For example:

- Ensure funding reaches more African organisations directly, including by disbursing funds to small or community groups in places that are out of the funder's footprint and by reducing the risks inherent in funding organisations that are not registered or lack the operational systems the funder requires.
- Strengthen the capacity of civil society organisation and the overall civil society ecosystem to ensure more effective use of funds.
- Fill gaps in their networks and help identify local fund recipients that share the funder's programmatic perspectives and objectives.
- Bring needed expertise or knowledge into their decision-making to address a gap or strengthen their credibility.

However, Africans increasingly see the role of intermediary organisations as one of not only supporting the funder, but also the fund recipient – and **actively strengthening the civil society ecosystem**. Prominent African intermediaries such as Southern Africa Trust, the Foundation for Human Rights and Trust Africa engage as intermediaries as part of their overall strategic and programmatic work to strengthen the civil society ecosystems.

This approach:

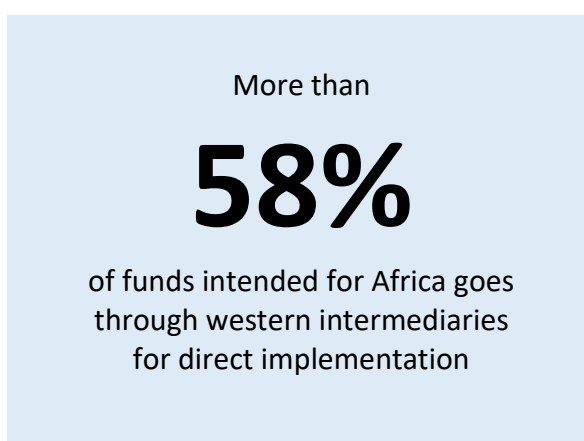
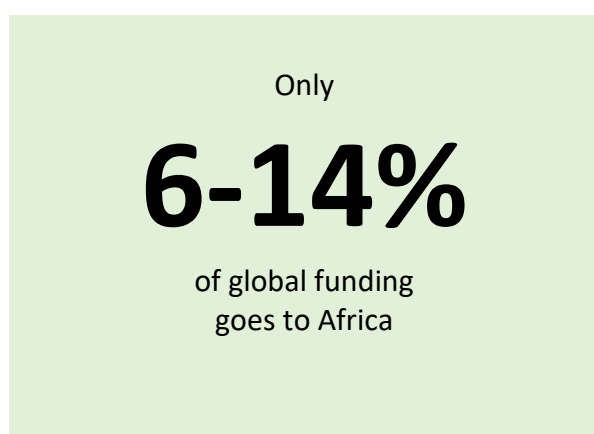


## 5.2 Why engage intermediaries?

The **political context of funding is changing**. As discussed, localisation and local-led development are reshaping the philanthropic landscape as African civil society and social movements grow and demand that funders recognise their leadership in shaping the solutions to challenges faced by Africans.

Funders have a growing awareness of their human rights commitments, and the slow progress made towards meeting agreed localisation targets. Nevertheless, progress remains inadequate and persistently slow.

Research from multiple sources indicated that in the decade, 2010 -2019 **only 6-14 percent of funds went to African organisations**. New research suggests that in the immediate post-Covid-19 pandemic period there was a dramatic increase in funding with 57 percent and 56 percent of global funding in 2022 and 2023, respectively, going to African organisations.<sup>3</sup> This was as a result of significant funding increases from the *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation* and the *Mastercard Foundation*. However, our interviews in the civil society ecosystem suggested no immediate or sustained changes. This could be partially explained by the fact that in this period USD 235 million of funding for Africa from the *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation* went to the pro-agroindustry, *Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa*. While both these funders are reported to have increased funding to local organisations, another 27 large givers (with gifts of over USD 10 million) decreased their funding to Africa from 16 percent in 2010 to zero in 2022 and 2023.<sup>4</sup> The Bridgespan research concluded that there has been no significant impact in funding patterns.



<sup>3</sup> Nene N, Hayi-Charters S, Nyati S, Pillay N, R Porteous. 2024. The changing landscape of large scale giving in Africa by non-African Philanthropists. Bridgespan

<sup>4</sup> Nene N, Hayi-Charters S, Nyati S, Pillay N, R Porteous. 2024. The changing landscape of large scale giving in Africa by non-African Philanthropists. Bridgespan

**There are multiple reasons for these ongoing negative patterns.**

Some funders attribute this to requests by African organisations to direct funding through western intermediaries for safety and security concerns. While this is the case for some organisations, it does not serve the development of African civil society in the long term. Some local activists from conflict areas, including in central and southern Africa, suggest that these decisions are at times made outside the continent and look for the easiest solution, rather than invest in the resilience of the sector. An approach that focuses on building African philanthropy infrastructure might include investing in security and safety training for African intermediaries and making flexible funds for urgent support for attacks on personal and organisational security. Greater support for legal funds, such as those of *Natural Justice* and the *Urgent Action Fund* is an option. A relatively secure option would be to engage intermediaries in African countries where intermediaries are not routinely targeted.

However, as discussed in earlier chapters of this report, the barriers to funding African organisations exist across funding systems.

Research, including our own, overwhelmingly suggests that the reluctance of funders to fund African organisations directly or engage African intermediaries stems from, among other factors:

- Legacies of mistrust, based on perceptions that NGOs are poorly skilled or lack accountability. Frequently this is embedded in entrenched colonial and persistent racism and is not a reflection of practice on the continent.
- The limited number of African organisations working at the scale funders desire and a lack of willingness to adjust to the realities of the field.
- Inadequate investments in organisational development and a pattern of funding short term projects.

The ongoing funding disparity not only maintains a situation in which solutions are externally determined, but one that militates against achieving strong impact. There is now overwhelming evidence, including from funder collaboratives such as the Human Rights Funders, that being proximate – physically, culturally and politically – endows organisations with assets including understanding of the context, credibility, and connection that allows them to achieve continuous and sustained impact.

Addressing this funding gap requires that funders develop targeted strategies to fund African organisations. These strategies need to start from the sourcing processes. This will remedy the reality of not being seen (to use an expression common to many African languages).

The idea put forward here is that “seeing” the potential of African intermediaries is one step to seeing (and funding) African organisations. This moral and ethical imperative to address racial and colonial injustices, achieve localisation and shift the power can learn from the successful practice of many global and African funders and the insights of African experts and organisations. The question we address is whether partnerships with intermediaries are instrumental to these needed transitions and if so, how to craft them.



Our interviews with civil society organisations and focal groups show that these actors would value intermediaries that can:

- Get funds to African organisations that are on the frontline of addressing the complex social and environmental problems.
- Strengthen local leadership.
- Improve the visibility of civil society actors.
- Enhance the voice and agency of civil society actors.
- Help strengthen the capabilities of civil society actors.

We focus on identifying **African intermediaries** given their proximity, local knowledge and experience in the CSO ecosystem. African intermediaries have a key advantage in being able to build respectful and trusted relationships among key actors.

We understand African intermediaries to be:

**African organisations** that are:

- registered, governed and working in Africa, and
- whose vision, key operational and policy decisions are made in Africa, by Africans and for Africans.

**African-led organisations** that are:

- not registered in Africa, but work in Africa, and
- with key operational and policy decisions made in Africa, by Africans and for Africans.

### 5.3 Working with intermediaries

Our engagement with key actors, particularly in Africa, reinforces the findings of a growing body of research that intermediaries are most effective when there is a move away from framing the funding relationship as one directional – moving resources from funders to grantees – towards recognising the diverse assets each actor brings to the success of philanthropy.<sup>5</sup> Our interviews reveal that local actors value supportive relationships that build individual civil society organisations and social movements, allowing them to be more effective and to achieve their goals – and they expect this catalytic support from both intermediaries and funders. Creating reciprocity and better aligned goals requires working from the basis of equality and mutual respect and recognising the assist each brings.

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<sup>5</sup> Gibson C and Motala M. 2023. Working with intermediaries strategically. (Adapted from a report of the Robert Wood Johnston Foundation). Cynthesis Consulting

These include:

Philanthropic Partner	Intermediary Partner	Civil Society Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technical expertise</li><li>• Flexible, unrestricted funding</li><li>• Accessibility</li><li>• Ability to mobilise resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to convene, facilitate and catalyse action</li><li>• Knowledgeable navigation of processes and regulations</li><li>• Effective grant management</li><li>• Fiscal sponsorship</li><li>• Risk absorption</li><li>• Ability to help strengthen capacity of fund recipient</li><li>• Solidarity</li><li>• Knowledge of field and ecosystem</li><li>• Trusted intermediation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deep knowledge of issues, regions and local actors</li><li>• Ability to convene or organise people and organisations</li><li>• Trusted credible experience of community needs</li></ul>

#### 5.4 Redefining a role for intermediaries

Given the push to greater equity and power sharing – as expressed in the “shift the power” movement and funder commitments to localisation, human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals – it is time to re-think the role of intermediaries (and fund recipients) in the philanthropic ecosystem. It is important that this doesn’t simply become another layer of bureaucracy.

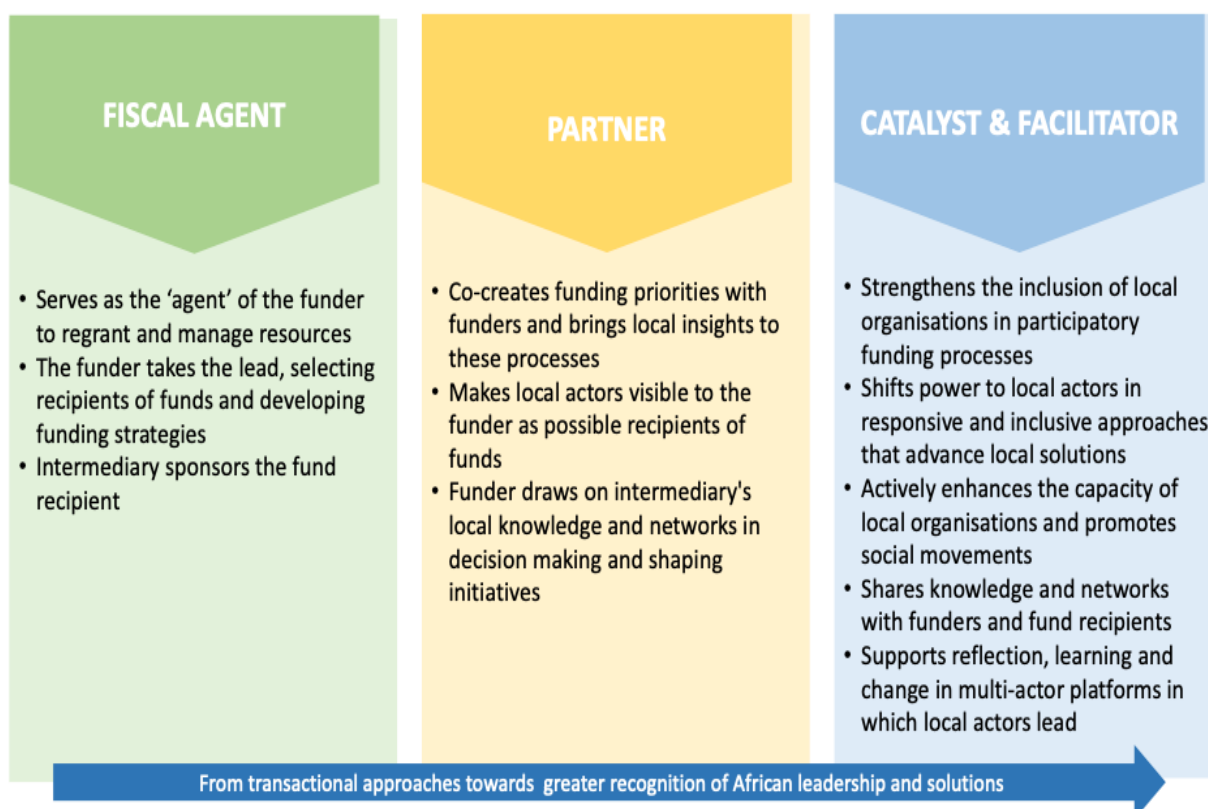
An essential starting point is recognising and respecting that African intermediary organisations and civil society organisations have:

- Visions of needed change. This is coupled with clear goals underpinned by their values and interests.
- Demonstrated commitment to African solutions and leadership.
- Experience in and understanding of how to strengthen the civil society ecosystem and the philanthropic landscape.

Working from this premise can help strengthen allyship and more effective, collaborative approaches to problem solving among all partners.

We envisage change in how intermediaries are engaged, in which they move from roles that focus solely on support to the funder to roles that support civil society actors and strengthen the civil society ecosystems. Trust Africa, for example, conceptualises their role to be a convenor, facilitator and catalyst, bringing different actors together to share knowledge and expertise, strategies, and design and implement solutions for Africa’s pressing challenges and to strengthen African Philanthropy and civil society.

**Three different kinds of roles for intermediaries:**



Many CSOs envisage futures in which their dependence on intermediaries comes to an end and where they can mobilise resources in their own name. The relationship with intermediaries should not be “forever”, instead it should help capacitate organisations and then allow them to move on and create space for others to benefit from the partnership with intermediaries. Local actors also point out that this “relay” would allow so many more organisations to build their capacities and contribute to the resilience of social movements and their impact.

**5.5 Who decides on the intermediary?**

Recipient organisations believe that they should be actively engaged in selecting intermediaries and in defining their roles or at the very least provide a check on the funders’ choices and can evaluate performance. This will help build mutual trust and respect, which are key factors for the success of philanthropy. Local actors also want to be engaged in selecting intermediaries to ensure responsiveness and accountability.

Many interviewees in this study aspire to a funding future where participatory funding systems are the norm and civil society actors are included in decision making, like defining priorities. The current reality is quite different. Frequently CSOs find themselves trying to fit into the requirements of “calls” for funding. Funders can address this by having more open calls, so applicants can frame proposals in ways that are useful for them. Local actors also want funding to help build social movements and the sustainability of individual CSOs including by strengthening resource mobilisation and operational capacities. Intermediaries can play a key role in developing systems that are more responsive to local actor needs.

## 5.6 What skills and assets do intermediaries need?

To meet these expectations, intermediary organisations need to have a diverse set of skills and assets and be knowledgeable, yet humble leaders committed to solidarity and working with respect. They need to be responsive and accountable to both funders and local actors.

**Six sets of skills and assets help intermediary organisations be effective:**

1. **Well-established, flexible funding and management systems** underpinned by good financial management to support:
  - **Meaningful identification of fund recipients** including by having: (1) substantial networks, (2) knowledge of the “ecosystem of civil society actors” within the parameters of funding, the different roles they play in social change and the interactions among them, and (3) transparent methodologies for selecting recipients.
  - **Due diligence that is not onerous and is tailored to recipient realities.**
  - **Systems that are responsive to local needs and priorities.**
  - **Monitoring, evaluation and learning systems** that match fund recipient capabilities, including innovative approaches if needed.
  - **Working with diverse fund recipients**, such as community foundations, to get funding to the right actors.
  
2. **Organisational development skills and expertise** to bolster the capacity and agency of local actors. This includes the ability to:
  - **Strengthen capacities** for grant management, resource mobilisation, strategic planning and resilience.
  - **Enhance voice** – the ability and opportunities for local actors to speak for themselves – and **agency** to shape their own futures.
  - **Adapt to different organisation realities and forms.** Increasingly civil society organisations work in coalitions and networks to address complex problems, and skill is required to **bolster these networks.**
  - **Provide resources to bring in needed skills.**
  
3. **Transparent and inclusive governance systems for multi-directional accountability**, including financial through effective oversight to funders and fund recipients. This governance framework may include boards, project advisory committees and collectives of fund recipients.
  
4. **Leadership that is innovative and open to learning, respectful, empathetic, skilled in building relationships with CSOs** that are respectful, mutually accountable and equitable is critical, because “fostering chemistry and trust between organisations and consultants matter as much as expertise” (SGS Consulting). This encompasses:
  - **Valuing the knowledge, expertise and roles of fund recipients as change agents.**
  - **Understanding power imbalance** within the philanthropic ecosystem and taking meaningful action, such as:
    - Being innovative in finding new solutions,

- Taking risks in selecting fund recipients, for example by prioritising integrity and ability to deliver over grant reporting systems, and
  - Bringing insight from local actors into funders' strategies and priorities through co-learning strategies that centre the perspectives and solutions of local actors.
5. **Commitment to ethics and human rights** values in management and operations and in relationships with fund recipients. Mechanisms for fund recipients and other impacted people to address concerns should be provided.
  6. **Deep and broad knowledge and expertise** to operate nimbly and astutely in complex social, political and legal circumstances, including to manage and respond to political risk and to support fund recipients as needed.

## 6. Intermediaries for the future

Africa has a rich culture of giving. Many different actors are actively engaged in African Philanthropy as givers of financial and other resources. Drawing on the African Philanthropy Network, we understand African Philanthropy as the giving of African resources – natural, human, financial, social and intellectual – that can be tapped into to address Africa’s challenges – by Africans to Africans, and as philanthropy that:

- Equates with citizens’ agency - the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own choices
- Includes foundations and funds; family and community based; individual giving and collective solidarity mechanisms – in cash, in kind, or in time; and social investments.
- Is generally characterised by all forms of vertical and horizontal dimensions of giving private resources for the common good; it cannot be defined by a single culture or model of giving.

### 6.1 Five clusters of intermediary actors

We identify five clusters of African organisations engaged in “giving” – from resources raised in communities, nationally, across the continent and from funders globally. These are professional intermediary organisations, civil society support organisations, civil society funds, community funds and civil society organisations. In addition, many individuals are also active givers as volunteers and givers of personal wealth including in religious communities, from the African diaspora and from high-net worth individuals (who may also have organisations through which they give). We focus on the potential of African organisations as intermediaries, as they have a key advantage of being embedded in African society and more likely to have valuable knowledge of the context, established networks and cultural sensitivity that enables them to build respectful and trusted relationships among key actors.

### Characteristics of potential intermediary organisations

<b>Professional Intermediaries</b>	<b>Purpose</b> Supports funders, CSOs and builds CSO ecosystem		
	<b>Approaches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regrants</li> <li>• Provides services</li> <li>• Enhances capacity, voice and agency</li> </ul>	<b>Reach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pan-African</li> <li>• Regional</li> </ul>	<b>Examples</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Southern Africa Trust</i></li> <li>• <i>Trust Africa</i></li> <li>• <i>Foundation for Human Rights</i></li> </ul>
<b>Civil Society Support Organisations</b>	<b>Purpose</b> Supports funders, CSOs and builds philanthropy ecosystem		
	<b>Approaches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops resources</li> <li>• Builds philanthropic infrastructure</li> </ul>	<b>Reach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pan-African</li> <li>• Regional</li> <li>• National</li> </ul>	<b>Examples</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>West Africa Civil Society Institute</i></li> <li>• <i>PureTrust Foundation</i></li> <li>• <i>EPIC Africa</i></li> </ul>
<b>Civil society funds</b>	<b>Purpose</b> Provides grants to CSOs and builds CSO ecosystems		
	<b>Approaches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pools funds</li> <li>• Grants and re-grants</li> </ul>	<b>Reach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pan-African</li> <li>• Regional</li> <li>• National</li> </ul>	<b>Examples</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Africa Women's Development Fund</i></li> <li>• <i>Consortium of African Funds for the Environment</i></li> </ul>
<b>Community funds and foundations</b>	<b>Purpose</b> Provides funds and other resources to community and solves community challenges		
	<b>Approaches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pools resources</li> <li>• Provides resources</li> <li>• Leads</li> </ul>	<b>Reach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pan-African</li> <li>• National</li> <li>• Sub-national</li> </ul>	<b>Examples</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Panaretugri Fund</i></li> <li>• <i>Kenya Community Development Fund</i></li> </ul>
<b>Civil Society Organisations</b>	<b>Purpose</b> Defines and delivers social, economic and environmental solutions and builds social movements		
	<b>Approaches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides funds for common goals</li> <li>• Leads, advocates, solves</li> </ul>	<b>Reach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pan-African</li> <li>• Regional</li> <li>• National</li> </ul>	<b>Examples</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee</i></li> <li>• <i>Associação Moçambicana para Desenvolvimento da Família</i></li> </ul>

These five clusters of organisations are engaged in giving in different ways and there are key differences in their focus and objectives, and consequently their relationships with Global North funders. Importantly across these clusters, organisations value funding relations based on equality, respect and reciprocity.

We focused on organisations that work at regional and pan-Africa reach but recognise that in numerous contexts national and community organisations are invaluable in getting funds and other resources to where they are needed. More so when countries are large or have weak communications and organisational networks that are superficially included in regional and pan-African organisations.

### **Professional intermediary organisations**

The cluster of organisations engaged as professional intermediaries are actively engaged in regranting for global funders but may also host independent endowments or funds in which they determine how grantmaking should take place.

We limited our selection to organisations that also support capacity enhancement, voice and agency in the civil society ecosystem. We found that many of these organisations – such as the *Foundation for Human Rights, Trust Africa, and Southern Africa Trust* – are actively engaging in finding new ways to reach organisations on the frontline of driving change and are also developing participatory grantmaking systems.

#### **Working with community foundations to reach frontline communities**

The *Southern Africa Trust* is working with community foundations in Southern Africa. These are grantmaking organisations dedicated to improving the lives of people in defined local geographical areas. They play a vital role in identifying and solving community problems. In South Africa, these community funds include the *Community Development Foundation Western Cape (CDF-WC), Initiative for Community Advancement (ICA), Cederberg Social Development Foundation (CSDF), Namakwa Ontwikkeling (NAMKO) and Uthungulu Community*.

### **Civil society support organisations**

Civil society support organisations primarily focus on (1) strengthening the civil society ecosystem through capacity enhancement, voice and agency, and may also be engaged in grantmaking or regranting or (2) strengthening the philanthropy ecosystem.

These include diverse types of organisations including philanthropy networks such as *African Philanthropy Network, East African Philanthropy Network, IPASA South Africa, Philanthropy Circuit*, research organisations such as the *Sivio Institute*, philanthropy infrastructure organisations such as *Epic Africa* and capacity and network organisations such as the *West African Civil Society Institute* and *CGS Consulting*.

### **Civil society funds**

Civil society funds are established by civil society or civil society organisations and work at pan-African, regional, national and local levels to help organisations address key challenges,



including access to funding. The underpinning idea is collaborative or to, “lift while she climbs”. To do this they pool funds and provide funding in specific geographies or for specific issues. For example, the *Africa Women’s Development Fund* is a pan-African feminist fund established by African women in 2000, to support women as change agents through grantmaking, capacity building, knowledge sharing and movement building. *Mayekoo*, an online crowd-sourcing initiative engages the global community to fund local solutions that improve health, education, environmental sustainability and more to contribute to eradicating poverty. Their project partners include schools, clinics and foundations. They also provide management training services and capacity building.

Funds working at a national level can also be valuable intermediaries. An example of a national fund is the ***Nigeria Youth Futures Fund*** formed in 2021, which is an offshoot of the social movements and activism championed by young people.

The ***Nigeria Youth Futures Fund (NYFF)*** aims to address the funding gap that youth organisations face in their work. Formed in 2021, the NYFF is an offshoot of the social movements and activism championed by young people. The ***MacArthur and Ford Foundations***, in collaboration with ***LEAP Africa***, came together to support the launch of the fund. The fund identified regional hubs in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria to catalyse the activities of other grantees. The first grant cycle was launched in November 2022 where 130 grantees (individuals and organisations) were selected across the 36 states of Nigeria. The grantees address the major issues young people experience.

*Source: Afolabi 2023*

### Community foundations and funds

Community foundations and funds are an expression of local philanthropy that includes contributing money, goods, time, assets, resources and skills, dedicated to improving the lives of people in local areas. They play an important role in identifying and solving community problems through leadership and collaboration in their communities. They are community-developed and -led organisations with deep and broad local knowledge, strong local ties and relationships in communities.

Most community foundations and funds operate at village or district levels, although there some national networks, such as the *Kenya Community Development Fund* or the *Foundation for Civil Society* in Tanzania. Community funds may source funds directly from communities, through crowdsourcing, or from funders.

Community funds are relatively well established in eastern and southern Africa but have only been more recently established in western Africa:

- In 2020, the initiative *Panaretugri pour le bien-etre de la femme* in Burkina Faso launched the *Panaretugri Fund*. This is the first community fund in francophone West Africa. It mobilises resources for organisations of young women and girls in the region.
- Ghana has seen a rapid growth of community funds. This includes the *Kpedzeglo Community Foundation* in the Volta Region, which focuses on livelihoods,

empowerment, education and other issues related to overall wellbeing. Multiple other community funds have since been initiated.

Many of these organisations have broadened their funding base beyond the communities in which they are based, to include among others, northern funders.

### **Civil society organisations**

Civil society organisations are primarily focused on creating needed change. Many seek to enhance the agency, voice and capacity of national and local organisations and have significant impact, either at national, regional, pan-African or global levels.

Further, these organisations have established relationships with Global North funders and already carry out some intermediary roles including regranting., making them important potential intermediaries for funding approaches that aim to unlocking the power of people in advancing transformative change.<sup>6</sup>

## **6.2 Opportunities for engaging these organisations as intermediaries**

As with all organisations, the proposed intermediaries bring valuable assets into the philanthropy ecosystem and have specific needs.

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Oak Foundation. 2022, “[Advancing People’s Power and People Centred Approaches](#)”

**Core assets of these clusters are set out below:**

**Professional Intermediaries**

- Established grantmaking systems underpinned by well-developed financial systems
- Ability to act as a fiscal agent
- Extensive experience in intermediation and re-granting, and frequent willingness to assume risk of granting to small organisations
- Deep and broad knowledge of socio-political-economic realities
- Pan-African or regional scope with strong networks including links into civil society and governments
- Skilled in supporting capacity and organisational development, agency and visibility of civil society actors
- Effective governance
- Committed to building African Philanthropy

**Civil Society Support Organisations**

- Provides knowledge, resources and learning opportunities for local actors to be more impactful and reshape relationship with funders
- Develops infrastructure for philanthropy
- African Philanthropy
- Provides support information to funders
- Grantmaking experience underpinned by developed financial systems
- Work at different levels from sub-national to Pan-African, with far-reaching civil society networks
- Effective governance
- May house specific funds
- Committed to building African Philanthropy

**Civil Society Funds**

- Manages pooled funds
- Grantmaking systems underpinned by developed financial systems
- Enhances capacity, voice and agency of African civil society and partners
- Extensive and expert knowledge of sector or constituency
- Operating at different levels from national to Pan-African
- Effective governance
- May house specific funds
- Committed to building African Philanthropy

**Community Funds**

- Embedded in local communities
- Leadership and ability to organise communities
- Capacities in delivering solutions
- Significant local networks
- Thematic expertise and/or deep understanding of specific constituencies
- Some require support to strengthen financial, grantmaking, and management
- May require additional capacities to take on intermediary roles
- Some support capacity strengthening, agency and voice
- Committed to building African Philanthropy

**Civil Society Organisations / Focus: Driving social change**

- Strong local ties

- Leadership and ability to organise, build movements
- Capacities in delivering solutions
- Significant networks with other CSOs and partners including governments
- Works at all levels, including pan-African, regional, and national networks and membership organisation
- Thematic expertise and/or deep understanding of specific constituencies
- Financial, grantmaking, and management systems that meet funder requirements
- Some regrant, ability to act as fiscal agent for consortiums, or manage special funds
- Some may require additional capacities to take on intermediary roles
- Some support capacity strengthening, agency and voice

These assets create valuable opportunities for engaging these clusters as intermediaries; they are able to:

#### **Centre social justice**

They have well-defined areas of interests that centre social, economic and environmental justice, and consequently prioritise relationships with civil society actors.

#### **Support civil society actors**

They have well-developed systems or experience to grow civil society actors including:

- Creating knowledge and tools to build needed capacities. E.g. EPIC-Africa has a data base in which CSOs are profiled creating visibility to funders.
- Nurturing CSO as they develop, eventually bringing them to the attention of funders as Trust Africa has done.

#### **Get funds to where they are needed**

Extensive experience in grant-making underpinned by clean finances and monitoring, evaluation and learning systems with:

- Due diligence that embraces integrity.
- Willingness to assume the risk of funding organisations that don't match funder requirements. E.g. Southern Africa Trust works with small community funds. AMODEFA has needed resources for unregistered LGBTQI+ organisations.
- Participatory process to allow fund recipients to bring insights and guidance to grantmaking.

#### **Catalyse action**

- Co-learning and co-creation.
- Bring civil society into global and national decision making. E.g. IPACC ensures indigenous people are active in United Nations processes.

#### **Share power**

- Sharing power with fund recipients to drive local led development.
- Have governance systems that bring in expertise and local representatives to develop policy and ensure oversight.

#### **Build relationships with funders**

- Established positive relationships with funders.
- Provide information.
- Make local actors visible.

There is an immediate opportunity to engage with organisations that already work as professional intermediaries or civil society support organisations, and civil society funds:

- In general, these organisations are **knowledgeable and innovative**, with **well-established funding and grantmaking systems**. All organisations have significant experience in managing grant portfolios. Many have experienced a reduction in their portfolios especially since the war in Europe.
- Most have **no pressing organisational development needs**, but, depending on the size and extent of new agreements, may require additional investments in strengthening capacity. Organisational and personal development should be seen as continuous processes that respond to new conditions.
- Most place a **high value on being able to bolster collaborative learning** with fund recipients, partners and funders to strategise and implement more effectively, and to redesign systems as needed. To undertake this, intermediaries will appreciate having sufficient resources for all actors to take learning on board.
- Many face challenges in retaining talent and in succession planning, particularly when competitive salaries are not available.

### The hidden opportunity of civil society organisations

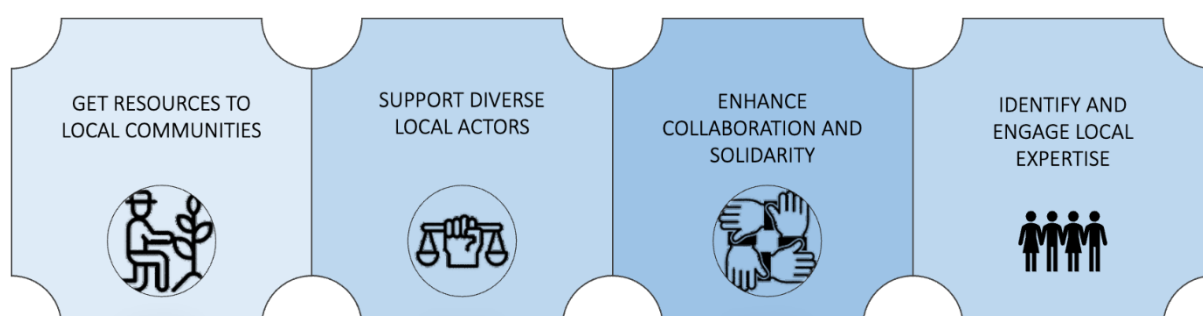
Civil society organisations have vast, unrecognised potential to take on roles as intermediaries – some, immediately and others with support for organisational development, especially in resource mobilisation and monitoring, evaluation and learning.

These organisations are embedded at the heart of the struggle for social, economic and environmental justice. They bring critical insights to designing effective and just solutions and taking needed action and have well-documented successes. They are resilient and astute in surviving in challenging socio-political and economic contexts.

However, they have different abilities to move funds as well as different kinds of organisations they can support. The organisations with smaller budgets all show significant potential as intermediaries, with regranting experience and impressive commitment to voice, agency, movement building and solidarity.

To strengthen their organisations, investments in network development through improved communication, information technology, and the implementation of organisational strategies may also be needed.

By engaging CSO networks, consortiums or membership organisations, whether they work at national, regional or Pan-African levels, funders can **back local solutions and approaches rooted in frontline actions that contribute to building social movements and:**



As with all intermediaries, working with civil society organisations must start from the basis of mutual respect and recognition of the assets they bring to the funding relationship. This includes taking steps to strengthen local leadership in decision making and having approaches based on collaborative learning. A recurrent issue raised by interviewees is that funders often suggest transforming their networks or consortiums into traditional NGOs to lower costs. Network governance is multi-scalar ensuring members are engaged in policy development and oversight. Boards are frequently appointed or elected to bridge the two- or three-year gaps between members' assemblies. Transitioning to simpler organisation forms could put their extensive networks and ability to work at scale at risk. Consequently, respecting their chosen organisational forms is important for civil society organisations.

### **Intermediary organisation profiles**

Our complementary report on Intermediary organisations provides insight into selecting intermediary organisations and offers a listing of potential intermediaries and other organisations, that we urge funders to collaborate with in getting funds to African organisations.

These listings were produced through a process of analysing and engaging over 300 African organisations. We initially identified and studied 175 organisations that could serve as intermediary partners. We sought to identify organisations that have the capacity and interest to strengthen the philanthropic landscape in Africa to support:

- Foundations to make meaningful investments that facilitate local solutions that drive systems change and contribute to the realisation of local priorities.
- Local actors to grow their organisations and social movements, and forge resilient paths to effective change that allow people and planet to prosper.

Based on an assessment of their key attributes, including their ability to receive and disburse funding and support the agency of frontline actors, by strengthening voice and making them visible, this list was revised to about 80 potential intermediaries. The final list of 35 potential intermediaries is of those who approved the inclusion and public display of their profiles.

### **6.3 Key insights to working effectively with African intermediaries**

The triad of local actor–intermediary–funder is complex. The challenge for all parties is to build relationships in which all are valued and the different assets that each brings is seen as an indispensable part of the framework for success. To reiterate, mutual respect, openness and humility are critical ingredients for success. The reality, of course, is that the philanthropic landscape is highly unequal and power shapes these interventions and hence

the funder needs to play a central role in driving change and being responsive to the risks inherent in these relationships.

***Risks associated with aggravating unequal power dynamics***

Many African organisations are keenly aware of the issues of power in the local actor–intermediary–funder relationship and how taking on a role as an intermediary can change their relationship with funders and relationships within the broader civil society ecosystem. Some organisations, particularly civil society and community funds are concerned that assuming intermediary roles could compromise their independence in advancing funding practices that helps address existing gaps. A civil society fund leader explained the flexibility with their system of pooling funds and the relative freedom they have in shaping how funds were used, provided of course that they could show impact and garner useful learnings. If funders want to engage African funds they will need to come to collaboration with these organisations with humility and a willingness to respect their leadership.

Among civil society actors there are concerns that taking on intermediary roles could create new power dynamics and tensions as these organisations would have powerful and privileged roles in how and to whom funding goes. There is already some evidence of this, especially with funder-established intermediaries. This could be disruptive for movement building and solidarity especially where governance is weak. For some organisations, taking on intermediary roles would only be feasible where all actors are able to engage in defining and structuring roles and in contexts in which participatory grantmaking and participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning are the norm. Other reservations include concerns that this could:

- **Increase the gap between funders and fund recipients** and unwittingly exclude local organisations from key processes.
- Lessen opportunity to engage in shaping funder priorities. Some organisations were concerned that there would be less and not more strategic engagement with funders. Few organisations had any experience of being included in the funder’s strategic planning and grantmaking priorities, even when they had long term relationships. Those individuals who had been consulted were brought in as experts and not representatives of their organisations, coalitions or movements.

***Considerations in building positive, effective relationships***

Nevertheless, in general, organisations engaged as professional intermediaries, civil society support organisations, and civil society organisations saw engaging as an intermediary as potentially improving funding to African organisation and the overall resilience of African Philanthropy and the civil society ecosystem. Given this, they are keen to structure the local actor–intermediary–funder relationship in ways that address power hierarchies, contribute to movement building, and strengthening the capacity of local actors. Funders can support this by, amongst other actions:

**Improved responsiveness**

Funding contracts are frequently framed by the funder’s needs – with their strategy and systems defining the perimeters of what and who is funded and how the work will be carried out. The needs of local actors to achieve their goals is less considered or understood. The risk for local actors is that the approach will simply be imposed by the intermediary and

that the intermediary will serve as a buffer between the recipient of funds and the funder. Ensuring transparency and accountability can help plug this potential trust deficit and ensure the funder has the right information to be responsive to local needs. Local actors' needs may go well beyond resources to develop and implement solutions, to include needs related to movement building, strengthening organisations and personal development and well-being. One gender activist narrated their pain in the frequent funders' refrain: "*these are public funds for solutions to our common problems; they are not for personal costs like medical aid*" which reverberated through their organisation when an activist died from cancer, given the slow response from the public health system. Another spoke of the organisational struggle to survive during the Covid-19 pandemic when projects could not be implemented, and they had no financial reserves. Despite these challenges with organisational sustainability and resilience, many funders are unresponsive. Intermediaries can support needed changes by:

- Bringing key information to the funders' attention.
- Facilitating and mediating discussions and thus build understanding.

### **Understanding the ecosystem of actors**

**Inequality among CSOs and within networks is persistent and this has ramifications for resource mobilisation.** Small organisations are seldom able to muscle the 15, 20 or 30 percent of overheads that large organisations do and consequently they are unable to invest in organisational development or build their reserves.

They also face the reality of short-term project funding, rather than long-term flexible funding and working with intermediaries engaged in direct implementation. Some funders micro-manage: one interviewee said they were treated as an infant. Among the organisations we interviewed it was striking that many women's and youth organisations functioned with overheads of less than 10 percent and total budgets of less than USD 100,000.

In contrast, large networks and consortiums of large NGOs have multi-million-dollar projects. Funders could be more mindful of ensuring funds reach these smaller organisations. Funders can adjust due diligence or reporting requirements to allow small organisation to access funds.

**Funders must take care to work with intermediaries and local actors to structure funding processes that promote equity.** The intermediation role of intermediaries should be prioritised so that local actors voices are heard and valued. It is important that both funders and intermediary organisations recognise the rights, interests and priorities of local actors including youth, women, Indigenous People and local communities.

### ***Strengthening inclusion of different kinds of intermediaries***

In focal group discussions with Indigenous Peoples' and local community organisations, concerns about funding through intermediaries were raised. Many organisations want to be engaged directly in decision-making about funding. Some of the concerns raised could be addressed by engaging civil society networks or membership organisations that enjoy trust among their members as intermediaries. The non-fiscal roles of intermediaries were seen as important to strengthen the capacity of organisations to receive funding directly.



Funders can have an important role in strengthening the capacity of representative organisations and networks to take on the intermediary role:

- Most women's organisations interviewed are at the bottom of the funding hierarchy, with almost all receiving only project funding and nothing or little for organisational development. Indigenous People and local community's networks also struggle to secure funding, and strengthening their capacity to take on these kinds of roles is important for overall resilience. Organisations focused on strengthening feminists' organisations include Gender CC, FEMNET and Trust Africa. The latter, in partnership with the Urgent Action Fund, has set up the Harambee- Ubuntu pan-African and Feminist philanthropies that aims to build African Philanthropy and has secured an endowment (from African activists) of over USD 500,000.
- Similarly, most youth organisations lacked the capacity to be intermediaries and are virtually absent from our proposed intermediaries. Yet over 60 percent of Africa's people are under 35 years, making them an important group of actors. It is important to support the strengthening of capacity of young people both in their own organisations and organisations that don't focus on a particular part of the population.

#### ***Agreeing on key aspects on how to select intermediaries and their roles***

As previously alluded to, the selection of intermediaries needs to account for these dynamics, and this should ideally be a considered, reflective and inclusive process, in which there is:

- Transparency about the role of the intermediary,
- Consideration of the opportunities in engaging diverse types of organisations as intermediaries, and
- Multi-directional accountability.

Finding an appropriate intermediary will require understanding of the needs of all parties. This includes agreeing to the essential requirements in the funding process and identifying where is there opportunity for greater flexibility. The choice and appropriateness of an intermediary should ideally be in consultation with possible recipients and civil society actors or at the very least tested with them. This issue is explored further in the complementary report on intermediaries.

#### ***Ensuring funding for the intermediary is adequate***

Taking on these roles requires new thinking about funding that focuses on growing organisations, building the infrastructure for effective philanthropy and opening opportunities for fund recipients. The best arrangements include recognition of the need for resources:

- **To co-create better grantmaking systems** that are inclusive and participatory and are built on recognition of the voice and agency of local actors and valuing the diverse assets and resources these organisations bring to the success of the funding.
- **For organisational development of both the intermediary and fund recipient**, that capacitates individuals, builds systems and brings in resources to take new skills on-board.

- For urgent needs, including for legal and psychosocial **support to address individual care needs** (including of staff and human rights defenders) and collective care to reduce harm at community level.
- Flexible, **unrestricted long-term funding** that can be directed to where the organisation requires it, in line with strategic priorities.

The proposed intermediary organisations are actively thinking about long term resilience and sustainability – and along with this, there is a growing trend to support and strengthen African Philanthropy. At the same many organisations would like to see funders allocate resources to endowment funds and reserves for long term sustainability.

Funder support for organisational development and risk management will need to be a key part of a partnership with an intermediary. Frequently the funder relationship with the intermediary replicates the old focus on project delivery, minimising the costs of the intermediary and the support the intermediary requires. Organisations engaged as intermediaries, whom we interviewed, said that often their operational and staff costs were undervalued, and processes were not adequately provided for. In addition, intermediaries take on risk, thus shielding the funder, for example, by offering legal or other support to human rights defenders.

#### ***Using human rights to frame the relationship***

In 2019, the Human Rights Funders committed to the following principles to guide the funding relationship. These principles should be used to shape the entire funding process, effectively extending to engagements between intermediary organisations and local actors:

<p><b>Power sharing and shifting</b> To challenge how power is held and to transform how power is used.</p>	<p><b>Accountability</b> To recognise our own institutions and selves as accountable to the organisations, activists, and movements we support.</p>
<p><b>Collective care</b> To ensure the safety and well-being of activists and to ensure the sustainability of movements.</p>	<p><b>Community driven</b> To support community-led groups and to commit to community-inclusive decision-making processes.</p>
<p><b>Equity</b> To deconstruct our biases and apply an intersectional lens in addressing the root causes of injustice and inequality.</p>	<p><b>Adaptability and learning</b> To recognise the importance of innovation, create space for candid feedback, and to foster a culture of learning.</p>

### **6.4 Looking forward – strengthening the overall ecosystem for impact**

Strengthening community foundations and civil society funds to build African Philanthropy and an effective civil society ecosystem is a critically important action that will support greater resources to Africa, while also supporting local solutions. Community foundations

and funds, as well as civil society funds, play important role in getting funding to people and organisation that need it, through astute leadership and engagement with local and civil society actors that are able respond effectively. Importantly they are an expression of African Philanthropy – that includes giving money, goods, time, assets, resources and skills. Further research and engagement with community foundations and civil society funds could build on our research findings that these cluster of actors could be invaluable in transforming funding in Africa and identify opportunities for building collaborative relationships. Identifying actions to support these actors must be based on discussions with them.

#### **Growing community funds to support local solutions**

Global philanthropy has invested in the formalisation of community funds and, as a result, a growing number have financial and governance systems that meet the expectations of funders. The **Bulsho Kaab Community Fund** in Somalia, for example, obtains funding from funders and provides donations to community projects that match community funding. The **Mott Foundation** has, for close to forty years, supported community foundation development globally, in the belief that these foundations rooted in local communities are well placed to lead their communities to find solutions. **Ford Foundation** is also actively building these organisations. In Africa the Mott Foundation is partnering with SGS Consulting and Southern Africa Trust, and others, to help strengthen Community Foundations.

Another important area is investment in collaborative initiatives that support African leadership and solutions. There are still noticeably comparatively low investments in “African collaborations” – that is collaboration focused on Africa. *Bridgespan* finds that notwithstanding significant growth in these kinds of collaborations from three in 2000 to 73 in 2023, they have on average much smaller budgets than global collaborations:

*“60 percent of African collaborations have budgets under USD 10 million, and 70 percent of global collaborations have annual budgets exceeding USD 10 million.”*

One plausible opportunity for collaboration that actively supports the civil society ecosystem and African Philanthropy is to invest in collaborative funds in which global and African Philanthropy engage as equals, such as Regional Agroecology Funds in West and Eastern Africa and the Harambee ~ Ubuntu pan-African and Feminist philanthropies.

## 7. The role of philanthropy in capacity strengthening of local actors

Local organisations in Africa face a myriad of challenges that impede their ability to operate effectively and achieve lasting impact through their initiatives. To address these challenges, foundations could consider a multifaceted and strategic approach to capacity strengthening. This approach should encompass several key themes emerging from our consultations with African actors at local, national, regional and pan-African levels.

These are:

- Resource constraints and sustainability
- Capacity and technical limitations
- Regulatory and environmental challenges
- Collaboration and networking
- Impact measurement

### 7.1 Addressing resource constraints and sustainability

**Local organisations often struggle with limited financial resources**, which hamper their ability to deliver services, invest in necessary infrastructure, or scale successful programs while tailoring them to specific geographies. This scarcity of funds also leads to over-reliance on short-term grants, making it difficult to plan for long-term sustainability.

Oak Foundation and other foundations can play a crucial role in mitigating these challenges by **providing flexible, unrestricted funding that allows local organisations to allocate resources where they are most needed**. By investing in general operational support rather than project-specific funding, the foundations can enhance the agility of these organisations, enabling them to respond swiftly to emerging issues and plan more effectively for the future.

Additionally, foundations should consider supporting initiatives that encourage local philanthropy and resource mobilisation. This not only reduces dependency on external funding but also promotes sustainability by empowering local entities to generate their own financial support. Collaborative funding models, where multiple stakeholders contribute to a common goal, can also enhance resource availability and sustainability, and local accountability.

### 7.2 Enhancing capacity and technical capabilities

Many organisations face gaps in organisational capacity including a lack of skilled personnel, leadership, and management capabilities. These limitations affect strategic planning and execution, hindering the organisation's ability to achieve their missions effectively.

Foundations have the opportunity to prioritise capacity-building initiatives that focus on leadership development, strategic planning, impact assessment and financial management. Providing long-term skill-building opportunities such as training, mentorship, and peer learning, will empower local leaders to drive their organisations towards greater

efficiency and impact. Moreover, access to technology and technical expertise is critical for data management, communication, and demonstrating impact. Philanthropy could invest in technological infrastructure and provide technical assistance to help local organisations harness the power of data and technology in their operations.

This includes support for monitoring, evaluation and learning systems that enable organisations to track their progress, measure impact, and continuously improve their programs.

### **7.3 Navigating regulatory and environmental challenges**

Complex legal and regulatory environments can constrain the activities and growth of local organisations. These challenges include:

- restrictive laws,
- bureaucratic hurdles, and
- cultural misalignments that lead to resistance or lack of engagement from the community.

Philanthropy can support local entities by supporting advocacy for more favourable regulatory environments and providing resources to navigate these complexities. This includes funding for legal assistance and policy advocacy efforts that aim to create a more enabling environment for local organisations. In some countries with repressive laws that control activism it may also require support for urgent funds (with less than a 24 hour turn around) for human rights defenders. Several African organisations, including *Natural Justice* and *Urgent-Action Fund Africa*, already house human rights defenders' funds.

Cultural sensitivity is critical in ensuring the success of community-led initiatives. We can't over emphasise the importance of aligning organisational goals with the cultural contexts of the communities they serve. **By respecting local norms, values, and practices, organisations can foster greater community engagement and support.**

### **7.4 Fostering collaboration and networking**

Isolation is a significant challenge for local organisations, as it limits their access to shared resources, knowledge, and advocacy power. As discussed previously, more and more civil society organisations are cultivating new collaborative forms of organisation. This is also reflected in the growth of networks and membership organisation, alongside less formal consortiums.

There is need for leaders in the philanthropic sector, such as *Oak Foundation*, to encourage and facilitate collaborations among African entities, supporting their networks and facilitating new platforms that enable them to learn from each other, share best practices, and amplify their collective impact. Building long-term relationships based on trust, mutual respect, and open communication is essential for effective collaboration.

By supporting platforms and initiatives that bring together diverse stakeholders, philanthropy can help local organisations leverage their strengths and address common challenges. This collaborative approach not only enhances the effectiveness of individual

organisations but also contributes to the development of a robust and supportive ecosystem for local-led development.

### **7.5 Improving impact measurement and advocacy**

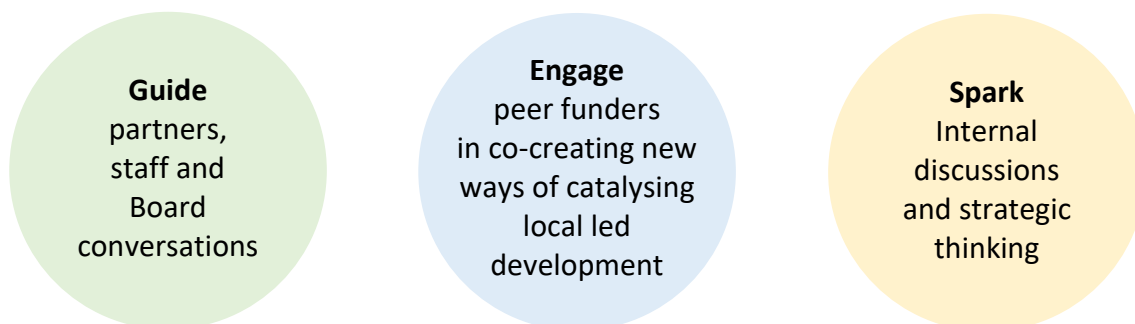
Defining and measuring long-term impact is a common challenge that many African organisations face, yet it is crucial for attracting funding, learning, and improving practices.

Philanthropy can invest in robust impact measurement frameworks that help organisations demonstrate their effectiveness and adapt their strategies based on evidence. This includes providing tools and resources for rigorous monitoring and evaluation, as well as training on data collection and analysis. Our interviewees also suggested that impact measuring approaches need to embrace local realities and cultures.

Furthermore, local organisations often lack the visibility, voice and leverage needed to influence policy and advocate for systemic changes. Philanthropy can enhance their advocacy efforts by supporting initiatives that increase their visibility, amplify their voices and increase their policy influence. This includes funding for advocacy training, strategic communications, and partnerships with other organisations working towards similar goals.

## 8. Insights and recommendations

Our findings can be used to advance foundations' thinking and funding strategies and we suggest that the report is used to:



### 8.1 Improving the practice of giving

To improve giving practices, foundations should consider the following key areas and actionable recommendations:

<b>Adopt systems change approaches</b>	<b>Why?</b> The challenges faced by communities are complex and require adaptive planning and management.  <b>Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fund systems change initiatives that aim to understand and address root causes and not just symptoms.</li><li>• Undertake a deep analysis of the entire ecosystem to (1) reveal actor dynamics and (2) identify leverage points for sustainable impact.</li></ul>
<b>Encourage cross sectoral collaborations</b>	<b>Why?</b> Sustainable community development programs benefit from the engagement of multiple stakeholders, including governments, private sectors, researchers, and civil society.  <b>Action</b> Foster partnerships that bring diverse groups together to collaborate on common goals, and ensure that all voices are heard, and resources are optimised

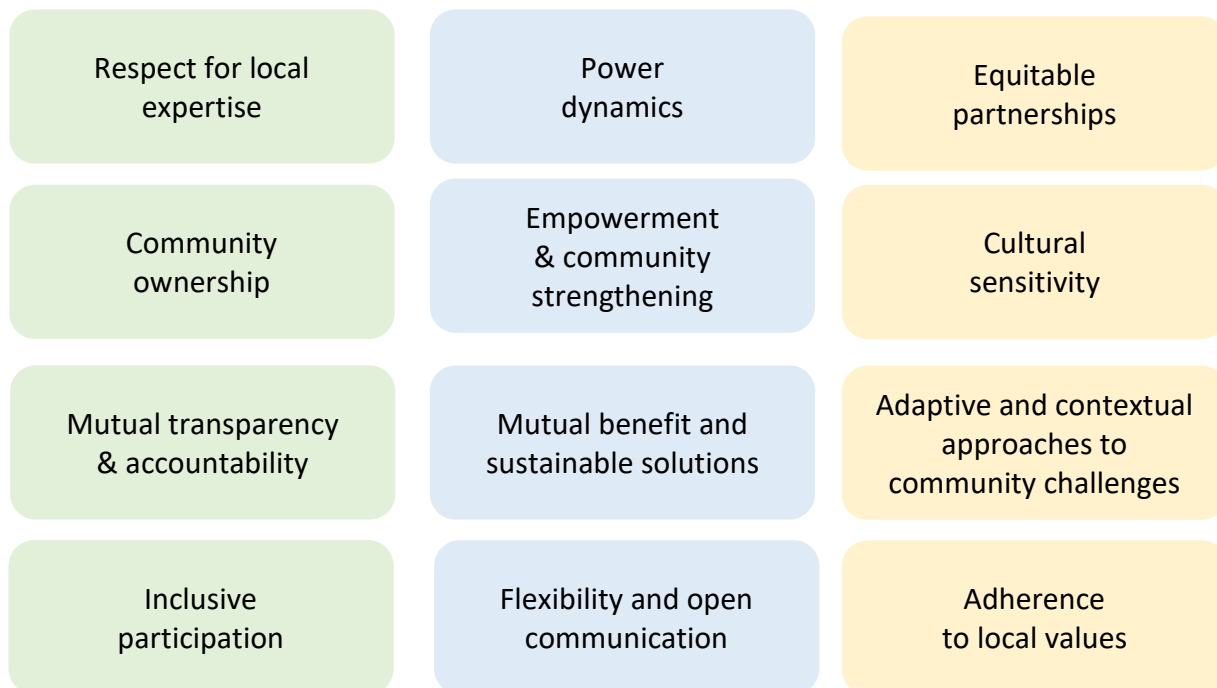
<p><b>Invest in collaborative approaches</b></p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Effective problem-solving requires diverse perspectives and shared agendas.</p> <p><b>Action</b> Support collaborative projects that involve multiple actors to foster a culture of cooperation and strengthen collective impact e.g. coalition, action networks and other peer action groups.</p>
<p><b>Support community-led and community-centred programming</b></p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Elevate community interventions to maintain relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of funded interventions.</p> <p><b>Action</b> Invest in programs that are designed and led by communities and ensure that they are tailored to local needs and contexts by providing flexible funding, that allows for adjustments, and is based on real-time feedback and changing circumstances.</p>
<p><b>Engage grassroots organisations and proximate leaders</b></p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Focusing on the correct level helps ensure appropriate action. Too often local leaders and organisations are not adequately engaged. Yet, they have a deep understanding of their communities and can drive sustainable change.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively involve grassroots organisations and leaders in decision-making processes. Consider task forces, working groups, advisory councils etc. models to enhance your inclusive decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Fund initiatives that empower them to lead transformative projects.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Centre indigenous and Global South knowledge</b></p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Local knowledge and expertise are crucial for the success of development interventions.</p> <p><b>Action</b> Ensure that local voices are heard and valued by prioritising the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and local expertise in shaping priorities and strategies, the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects.</p>



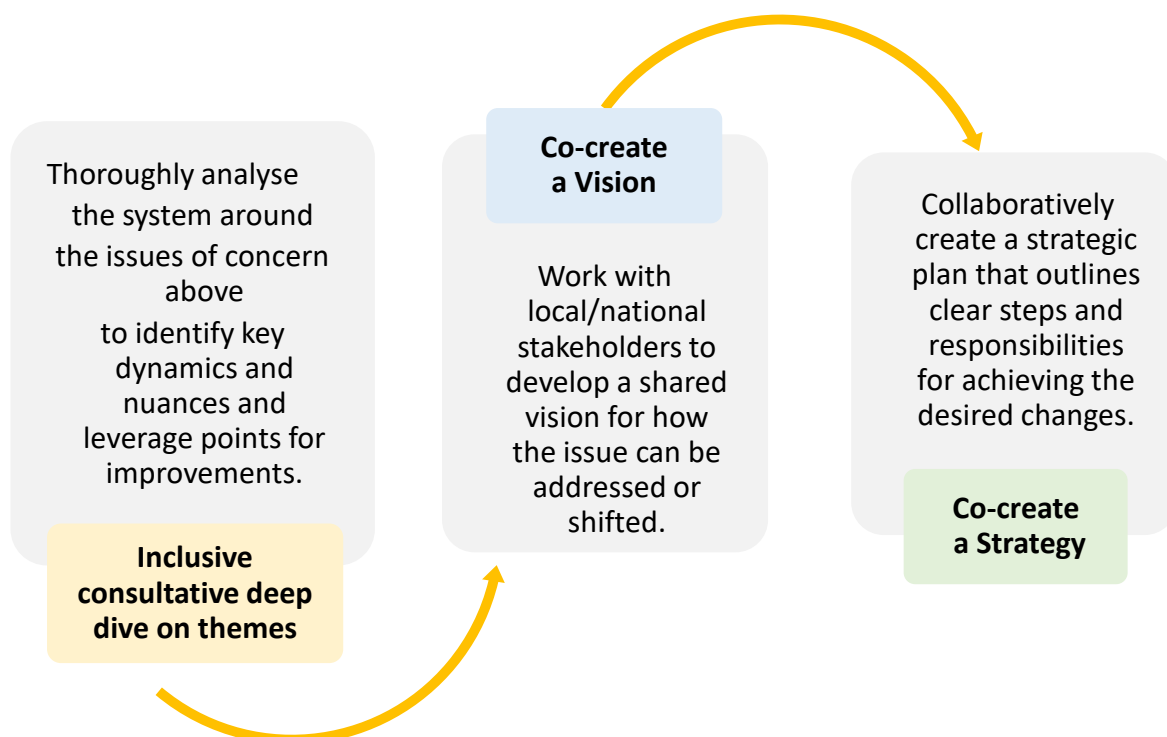
<p><b>Provide unrestricted funding</b></p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Non-profits need flexibility to respond to emerging issues efficiently.</p> <p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer unrestricted or multi-year funding that allows organisations to allocate resources where they are most needed, promoting agility and long-term planning.</li><li>• Do not create unnecessary criteria for funding that erects barriers for local actors.</li></ul>
<p><b>Support capacity building and organisational development</b></p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Local organisations in Africa face numerous challenges that impede their ability to operate effectively and achieve lasting impact through community-led initiatives.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide flexible, sustainable funding for general operations, allowing organisations to address their most urgent needs and improve agility and long-term planning.</li><li>• Support local fundraising and resource mobilisation to empower organisations to generate their own financial support, reducing reliance on external funding and promoting sustainability.</li><li>• Invest in leadership and skills development through capacity building and technological support, focusing on strategic planning and financial management to strengthen organisational capacity.</li><li>• Enhance access to technology and technical assistance to improve data management, communication, and impact measurement.</li><li>• Foster collaboration among local organisations to share resources, knowledge, and best practices, building a strong ecosystem for locally led development.</li><li>• Advocate for policies that support global and African Philanthropy, helping local organisations navigate legal and regulatory challenges.</li><li>• Promote cultural sensitivity by aligning organisational goals with local cultural contexts, respecting norms and practices to boost community engagement.</li></ul>

## 8.2 Intentional internal staff introspection

A focused group discussion with staff from sets of CSO actors from Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Malawi revealed the following as topics that philanthropic actors should engage more with their staff, to help unpack the nuances that can unlock localisation for them:



Suggested process towards an inclusive, flexible, and locally driven deep dive process of unpacking the above issues:



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