

Summary Analysis Report of the current state of the field of local grantmaking in support of social justice in sub-Saharan Africa: *commissioned by Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.*

Introduction

[Africa Philanthropy Network \(APN\)](#) is a space for indigenous institutions in Africa to interrogate and intervene in the power dynamics that shape how resource mobilization, distribution, and spending impact the possibilities of transformative change. APN's mission is to reclaim the power and elevate the practices of African philanthropy.

APN recently conducted an analysis of the current local grantmaking landscape in support of social justice in sub-Saharan Africa. The analysis was meant to serve two purposes: to inform Wellspring's thinking about possible approaches to support local grantmakers most effectively in the coming strategic period; and to support APN to develop plans for a more comprehensive mapping and research agenda focused on local social justice philanthropy in the coming years. The analysis had several questions to answer:

1. How is a local social justice grantmaker (or other terminology as preferred) defined?
2. What sets local social justice grantmakers apart from external/northern donors in terms of structure and work?
3. Among APN's existing networks and contacts, what are local grantmakers' roles in supporting enabling conditions for social justice? Are they involved in resourcing social justice movements and campaigns?
4. What are the most exciting developments in this work for further exploration, both in terms of the work supported and local grantmaking practice?
5. What are the key challenges local social justice grantmakers face?
6. What are the current opportunities for local social justice grantmakers?
7. What are the threats for local social justice grantmakers?
8. This is an evolving field. What is missing or needed? What are some key gaps in this field?
9. How can external donors play a supportive, decolonized role in supporting the development of this field?

This report will present a summary analysis of all above listed questions. APN wishes to acknowledge that this Summary Analysis Report is informed by in-depth review of existing information and individual conversations with fourteen (14) African thought leaders, based on the continent. These individuals have a wealth of practical experience and expertise within the grantmaking field, African philanthropy field and or within African civil society. Most represent APN's membership and have been at the forefront of advancing new ideas in their respective fields. **The next section shares findings for the analysis.**

Analysis of Key Questions

1. What is the definition of a social justice grantmaker in sub-Saharan Africa?

There is no single definition of social justice grantmaking. Grantmakers in sub-Saharan Africa define local social justice grantmaking in different ways. During the reflection workshop in Tanzania, leaders of grantmaking organization were asked to define social justice Grantmakers - these were the responses:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support to address social reforms and community led initiatives• It's the giving that aims at dismantling the root causes of a community problem as opposed to mitigations, and building common strengths to fight the injustices• It is the act of giving with the purpose of providing a long-term solution to individuals and community with the intention of serving humanity• It's about balance of power and resources, sharing of resources, volunteering skills sharing• Giving for movement building for promoting social justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving what you have mobilized from the community or other sources and not giving the surplus• Grants issued directly to CSOs or communities to address a particular community issue. Sometimes the communities themselves raise the funding• Formal or informal practices or system put in place that enable individuals, communities or institutions to give to those in need or to promote equal rights and equal opportunities• Providing resources, building capacities to enable the poor or marginalized to access opportunities for social, political and economic empowerment. |
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Source: Strategic thinking Workshop-Navigating the role of Grantmakers in Africa held on 23rd March 2021 in Tanzania.

The analysis came up with a few common themes that define social justice grantmaking to include the following:

- a. It means reaching the most vulnerable and supporting the initiatives of women and men who may not have access to mainstream funding because of either limited capacity, language, location, or marginalization.
- b. It is the act of placing the communities at the center of their development processes. Shifting the power to communities by investing in and strengthening their institutions. This involves fostering a culture of working together, enabling prosperity, making communities essential drivers of innovation and change, and allowing communities to make decisions.
- c. It is a process of adding value to community organizations and activists' work by providing rapid response grants; as well as, technical support to effectively engage with opportunities and identify gaps for strategic interventions towards advancing human rights.
- d. It is an immediate and effective response to the demands of community-based organizations. It entails supporting community members to get out of injustices. It must focus on the root causes of social, cultural, economic, and environmental inequities and strive to include those impacted by injustices as decision-makers and leaders.
- e. It is funding that is intended to benefit underserved communities, for long-term systemic change. It can take the form of social change philanthropy, social movement philanthropy, grassroot grantmaking, or community-based philanthropy.

The analysis revealed that there is still no single definition of what a social justice grantmaker is. However, the recorded descriptions indicate that it is a process, a means, a response, or a fund that places communities' well-being at the center as it attempts to change the status quo.

2. What sets local social justice grantmakers apart from donors from the global west, in terms of structure and work?

Understanding social justice grantmaking provides an insightful opportunity for further discussions on the suitable models that best fit the African context. The analysis does not compare local social justice grantmaking practices in Africa and the Global North. It describes the current traits of social justice grantmakers in Sub Saharan Africa. Further studies will be required to identify the differences.

In terms of structure

Grantmaking institutions in sub-Sahara consist of a board of directors and the management. Boards are responsible for policy making and strategic guidance of the organization's mission and values; while the managements are charged with day-to-day implementation of the activity plans and board decisions.

A few grantmakers have members who constitute the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which is the highest governing organ. Members are the representatives of stakeholders, who are the custodians of the organization. Where applicable, AGM is responsible for the appointment and terms of services of the board directors.

Board of Directors: the analysis shows that most of the board directors are drawn from countries of jurisdiction using agreed criteria such as qualification and skills possessed, ethical conduct and leadership, networking as well as willingness to volunteer. Often times board directorship is a voluntary position. Increasingly, a board director is having to serve with limited terms such as two or three years, with a possibility of renewal for one term only.

Managements: The management is responsible for day-to-day implementation of the organization's policies and programs, building healthy partnerships and collaborations. Managements are headed by executive directors who are appointed by the Board for a specific period.

In terms of work

They occupy a particular space on the continent, and their influence on issues far outweighs their limitations. Led by Africans, grantmakers are known for taking challenges that are systematic in nature and seek to address the underlying reasons for the continent's development failure. They are indeed providing opportunities for communities to re-imagine African agency.

They are considered central to the mission of African philanthropy because of their willingness to respond to community agency, leverage impact, increase resilience & sustainability, and distribute power of African philanthropy

They ensure meaningful participation of community organizations/partners in decision-making through their grantmaking processes, which is important in ensuring transparency and accountability. The participation also facilitates trust building and community ownership. A number of grantmakers in sub-Saharan Africa exercise participatory grantmaking.

3. Among APN's existing networks and contacts, what is the role select local grantmakers are playing in supporting enabling conditions for social justice locally? Are they involved in resourcing social justice movements and campaigns?

Currently, 19 members of APN are making grants and all play different roles in support of enabling conditions for social justice in the continent, either by focusing on specific issues in development sectors or through specific thematic areas such as governance, human rights, women empowerment and women rights, disability rights, youth empowerment, LGBTQI rights, etc. These African Grantmakers are working at different levels (regional, national and community); and they use different approaches including participatory grantmaking. Most are involved in resourcing social justice movements in one way or another. The analysis revealed an increase in grantmakers deliberate focus on *urban and rural, grassroots and national* as well as *linking the local to global*. Below are examples of what they are involved with:

Grants made are focused on:

- a. Education for social, economic and political empowerment through tailor made training (for institutional development, program implementation and entrepreneurship and resource mobilization, etc.), mentoring, and other capacity building activities to develop new knowledge and skills to respond to social justice issues and engage with the development discourse. We have noted that some are funding incubation of ideas and programs that encourage women to participate in political and other leadership positions.
- b. Networks and movements to advocate for participation, transparency and accountability through peer learning activities, experience sharing and information dissemination. They support:
 - building networks among girls and women's right organizations
 - building movements of informal work and professional women and girls; as well as feminist movements
 - building youth movements in rural and urban areas
 - Support organizing of pan-African professional bodies and community-based organizations.
- c. Advocacy for an enabling policy and legal environment by funding participatory action research and analysis, new knowledge creation, creation of policy dialogue spaces, and scholarship for participation in organized spaces.
 - Some of the grantmakers have supported CSOs to conduct Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM), Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) and Gender responsive budgeting in different development sectors to enhance government accountability and decision making about resource allocation and use for better service delivery.
 - Grantmakers support grassroot organizations to advocate against harmful traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Violence against Children (VAC) such as child marriage, early pregnancies,) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) to include rape and other forms of violence against all women and girls.
 - The analysis has noted an increase in support to strengthen local and community organizing processes – not only around specific issues but towards strengthening capacities of local mechanisms and formations that seek to take action on development challenges.

4. What are the most exciting developments in this work for further exploration, both in terms of the work supported and local grantmaking practice?

Social justice grantmakers are more than alternative source of funds. Participation and ownership is in the DNA of grantmaking organizations. During the interview, a leader of a grantmaking organization asserted that “before we fund any project, we ask ourselves ‘*could this be managed locally?*’”

Grantmakers in sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly involved in transforming development, while placing people and communities at the center of their measure of success – investing in community led development. Some of the exciting developments that could be addressed further include the following:

- Building capacity at community, national and pan-African levels
- Bringing rootedness, legitimacy and credibility for CSOs and communities to engage
- Opening up spaces for new voices, diversity, and supporting movement building
- Enabling mechanisms to highlight existing power imbalances
- Driving conversation about democracy, social justice and equitable development
- Creating capacities and platforms to inform and shape the agenda
- Committing financial and non-financial resources to respond to community agency.

5. What are the key challenges local social justice grantmakers are facing?

Established to eventually operate as African funded institutions, these institutions have struggled to attract sufficient local investment, whilst their founding funders are decreasing investment altogether or limiting investments to particular projects. There is a need for a concerted effort to ensure that these formations eventually become self-sustaining. Despite critiques around foreign agendas and conditionalities, these grantmakers have made incredible input into the African development space, enabling development agendas that are much more relevant, contextual and durable.

The analysis revealed a number of challenges that grantmakers must deal with in sub-Saharan Africa:

- Grantmakers are few and far between.
- Grantmakers are considered charities elsewhere, and
- Just a few Grantmakers raise their own funds, and these funds are tend to be limited.

These challenges make them impatient with existing social justice approaches. Some have been seen adopting market-based approaches.

6. What are the current opportunities for local social justice Grantmakers?

Strong grantmaking institutions working at community, national and pan-African levels are emerging in sub-Saharan Africa, bringing with them rootedness, legitimacy and credibility to engage in ways that (i) open spaces for new voices, (ii) support movement building that challenges prevailing assumptions and discourse, and (iii) enable mechanisms to highlight existing power imbalances in regional and global governance arrangements.

- There is great scope for such institutions to inform and shape the global governance discourse in ways that bring social justice issues to the fore.
- There could be an opportunity for philanthropy from the global north to think of different forms of partnerships with such African institutions. Partnerships which re-imagine how they can help nurture sustainable but autonomous African based social justice Grantmakers.

7. What are the threats for local social justice grant-makers?

The new global order and closing civil space: the impact of the counterterrorism agenda is increasingly concerning. At one level, African states are using the agenda to clamp down on dissenting voices and to stifle criticism of its priorities and from civil society actors. On another level, western governments are seen to be using this agenda to gain control over extractive resources.

The Financial Action Task Force regulations have created a situation where usual philanthropic transfers are under threat, and in some conflict-ridden countries, impossible. Locals and members of the diaspora in these countries have had difficulties in contributing philanthropic aid. In response some have used hawala system of cash transfers, while others have resorted to round about or extra-legal methods of getting cash to affected areas. And finally, others are setting up bank accounts in places like China and operating from there.

8. This is an evolving field. What is missing or needed? What are some key gaps in this field?

It is important to note some important challenges the African Grantmakers field must deal with:

- Leadership development is a critical challenge. The field is losing strong leaders to INGOs and intermediaries in the global north and has not yet developed a strong cadre of 2nd tier leaders. More substantive leadership is required and spaces for leaders to reflect and connect practice with knowledge generation are limited.
- Enabling environment for resources mobilization requires attention. Very few countries have progressive tax legislation, and much of the giving is done by those who are not part of the tax system. Moreover, there is not enough scholarship to understand what an enabling environment means in such contexts and how best to respond to that beyond a tax framework.
- Many Grantmakers in sub-Saharan Africa work in silos, and fund project-based initiatives. There is a need for stronger institutions that have a broader and more holistic approach, which engage in deep collaborations with one another.
- The African Grantmakers field does not have a strong enough infrastructure that can bring it together and articulate a common voice. Africa Grantmakers Network (AGN), which launched in 2009 and rebranded in 2015 into Africa Philanthropy Network (APN), requires support to become a go-to platform and an even stronger infrastructure to advance, intensify and innovate the field.

9. How can external donors play a supportive, decolonized role in supporting the development of this field?

The world as we know it is in an accelerated state of flux characterized by significant shifts in global power. There are new geo-political powers and configurations. Also, traditional powers are either in decline or shifting toward inward focus. Where power has shifted to, and equally where it has diminished, has massive implications on the state of global governance - and in turn, for the African continent.

- a. Private philanthropy from the global north that provides funds to and for work in sub-Saharan Africa finds itself relatively stagnant through this turbulence, and could well see its role marginalized. There is an opportunity now for the field to think and act differently -to revisit key assumptions about: (i) how best to operate within fluid contexts arising out of these power shifts, and (ii) the legitimacy of western values that have informed its approaches. Now more than ever, western philanthropy must critically reflect on how to enable a funding trajectory in Africa that is relevant and durable, irrespective of the fluidity of the global governance context. Three key messages emerge from this analysis:

- External donors should find ways to cede power to enable African agency. This goes to the heart of the limitations of existing decision-making processes, and new forms of decision-making and agenda setting that are devolved to those who are dealing with the work directly;
- External donors can explore how best to support social justice grantmakers organizing and knowledge building as a critical pillar of agency and development; and
- The importance of nurturing the African philanthropy space, with all of its diverse forms and manifestations -and the need to develop appropriate strategies for each.

In addition to the above, other specific support may include but not limited to the following:

- b. The new global order and closing civil space is increasingly concerning, coupled with financial regulations that have created a situation where usual philanthropic transfers are under threat, and impossible in some conflict countries. Within such challenging contexts, the external donor can support:
 - further interrogating what kinds of mechanisms will enable it to be sufficiently nimble to support African civil society;
 - Investigating options for enabling local philanthropic transfers; and
 - Advocacy agendas that seek to address the restrictive regulatory regime and prevent further erosion of closing space.
- c. Donors from the global north have continued to remain on the back foot of the social justice movement building in Africa (and indeed globally). There needs to be some critical reflection on what their role should be in relation to movement building efforts in sub-Saharan Africa. Underlying this however, is the need to understand the process of movement building within Africa – with the aim of learning when and how to support it (directly or in indirectly), and, which kind of moves would destroy it.

Conclusion

Lastly, strengthening the impact of African philanthropy requires a strong, diverse and robust infrastructure that can lead the field, support its development and serv as a platform for collective philanthropic voices and agenda. For a long time, philanthropists and philanthropy professionals were dependent on global north based networks and academic institutions as sites of learning and analysis. In the last several years, however, we have seen the emergence of a range of small infrastructure institutions committed to support philanthropy such as APN.