



Collective Freedom from Collective Struggle: 4-8 November 2024

"The beauty of the peacock is the diversity of its feathers" - African proverb.

Concept Note

1.0 Introduction

The biennial Assembly is the flagship event of the Africa Philanthropy Network (APN). The next Assembly is scheduled to take place on November 4th-8th, 2024 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Once again, we will gather several hundred practitioners including, philanthropists, like-minded funders and service providers and artists.

This Concept Note marks the beginning of a conversation with friends and sponsors. It introduces the call for partnership and requests your financial support for the convening and participation of the philanthropic community on the African continent and in the diaspora with consideration of intersections of identity like gender, race, age and class. The Assembly will be a safe space for varying communities to share their experiences and speak on shared values and collective approaches to promote the voice and action for African philanthropy.

APN's mission is to elevate the power of African philanthropic practices as a form and driver of social and systems change. We aim to influence national states and societal actors (governments and donors, both institutions and individuals) to support the development of African philanthropy by creating favorable conditions for philanthropy to thrive as a durable strategy for community led development, democratization and people empowerment. The goal is for the Assembly to feel like a snapshot of this mission at work.

2.0 Background

"A family tie is like a baobab tree; it can bend but it cannot break" - African proverb.

APN is the only network that is well placed to function as a platform for diverse philanthropic actors and institutions to interact for the advancement of the continent. The network was launched in July 2009 in Accra, Ghana as the network of African Grantmakers (AGN), and rebranded to APN in July 2015, with a commitment to building a family of broad people in solidarity with each other. It was built with a multi-stakeholder understanding and recognition of philanthropy as a field that bridges equitable development and community ownership.

APN promotes the voice and actions of African philanthropy practices, and recognises its power in social and systems change. The Biennial Assembly brings thought leaders and innovative practitioners together to discuss Africa's agency and reflect on the role of different forms of philanthropic giving. The first Assembly was held in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2010, to set an agenda for African philanthropy; the second was in Johannesburg, South Africa in November 2012. The third was to be held in Accra, Ghana in November 2014, but was organized in Arusha, Tanzania in July 2015 instead due to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa. The fourth took place in Port Louis, Mauritius in November 2018. In November 2020, APN planned to co-host the

WINGS Forum in Nairobi, Kenya but it was rescheduled to October, 2023 due to the COVID -19 pandemic and the subsequent travel restrictions.

The most recent Assembly took place from 8th-10th November, 2022 in Entebbe Uganda. The 2022 Assembly was themed: “African philanthropy: Driving Change.” More than 300 participants from different parts of the continent and globe converged to reflect on how Africans can become relevant change agents, commit to building an even more effective philanthropy ecosystem, and engage young people as a pathway to growing innovative and responsive philanthropic approaches on the continent.

After three days of peer learning and knowledge sharing, delegates came to the unanimous realization of our shared values, shared agency and need for collective approaches towards a more effective development for more just African communities.

3.0 Assembly Theme

“A child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth” – African proverb.

The overarching theme of the 2024 Assembly; “Collective Freedom from Collective Struggle” is promoted through 3 hashtags: #GivingAndPower, #ShiftThePower, #GivingForChange

The pursuit of freedom cannot happen in isolation. The systemic change we seek can only be achieved when we step out of silos and into intentional collaboration with one another. It is no longer feasible to neglect the plight of groups of African people because we do not feel connected to their struggle. Neo-liberal solutions that still serve to maintain a hierarchical structure have no place in the future we imagine for ourselves and for the next generation, if that future is underpinned by liberation and freedom for all.

A philanthropy arena that welcomes constant and consistent interrogation of power imbalance and dynamics in (re)distribution of resources (monetary, time, expertise, platform etc.) is the only way forward. Whether it is climate injustice, all forms of gender-based violence, or genocidal conflict on the continent, our struggles are connected, and true freedom can only be achieved when all of us are free.

The APN sets out a bold vision for transforming how “development is done” by focusing specifically on the recognition and importance of African philanthropic giving practices and domestic resources, in increasing ownership, unlocking agency and strengthening communities’ ability to claim entitlements from different actors, especially governments. Underlying all of this is the larger question of power and collective work of transforming power dynamics in ways that transform structures and systems towards equity and justice. How can we change our perceptions of power from one that is limiting, to one that unlocks possibilities? How can we move in the direction of collective power in our struggles while balancing collective agency and shared values? When a diverse community exercises a shared sense of agency and influence towards shared values, then power ceases to be fragmented. Power becomes collective; our struggles become collective.

For power dynamics to change in ways that shift structures and systems towards equity and justice, we not only need to shift the traditional corridors of power, but we also need to attend to how we understand what power is, what values seed it, and more importantly, how it is exercised. Achieving this will require us to deeply interrogate the impact of ongoing dynamics African communities, and how philanthropic practises have been mobilized (or not) to mitigate these impacts; how African philanthropy can be a tool for and a strategy towards freedom for all.

The 2024 Assembly will be designed to offer participants a multi-dimensional and experiential approach, where each session provides an opportunity to connect with others, learn about practices and policies that enable philanthropy to thrive, and harness innovative solutions to catalyze collective intelligence and actions needed to transform the way development is done on the continent.

4.0 Purpose and Objectives

The 2024 APN Assembly is intended to provide a platform for sharing effective approaches from using collective efforts and spaces in ensuring equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, and the fostering of safe and just African communities.

Participants will use the Assembly as a safe space to celebrate ideas, share practical solutions rooted in African philanthropic values and make recommendations for concrete actions for change and freedom for all. Specifically, the Assembly delegates will focus on the following objectives:

- a. Engage practitioners and community funders in dialogue about how to build and sustain collective power.
- b. Learn from peers about actions for re-energizing the philanthropy field by looking at shared values and collective power of voice in existing struggles, through connecting people and ways of organizing.
- c. Recognize which approaches and practices in philanthropy negatively impact people's lives and identify effective approaches for a safe and just development.
- d. Demonstrate the ability and necessity of enhancing relationships across geo-political/ thematic areas and provide evidence of advancing collective agency on the continent.
- e. Identify knowledge gaps and prioritize research areas for building collective evidence to be used in influencing and advocating for philanthropy practice and policy change.
- f. Identify effective approaches for the mitigation of social and economic injustices and inequalities that prevent Africans from achieving collective freedom.

5.0 Assembly Program

The program will be co-created by members and all sessions will relate to the objectives of the Assembly, reflecting on questions such as: what approaches have you found to be most useful in fostering safe and just communities? How was that implemented? Recognizing umbrella approaches such as coalition building, balancing crisis response with institutional resilience and longterm sustainability, centering voices and meaningful engagement, queer rights, disability politics, climate justice, the intersection of African development and technology, the safety and prosperity of future generations and life-long learning opportunities, to mention a few.

Our struggles are interconnected, and we need each other. If the goal is freedom, then everyone should be free. We must all play a role, share our expertise & experiences in different fields, and re-assess which approaches are useful in addressing our complex challenges, while embracing solidarity. This Assembly will shift away from defining philanthropy, and focus entirely on how we execute philanthropy on the continent, and to prioritize collective approaches to realize the potential of African philanthropy as a driver of a stronger, legit and democratic movement for a dignified people-led development built on shared values, collective intelligence and evidence, trust and respect of diversity. Thus, building solidarity for voice and action towards freedom for all.

The Assembly is structured to provide safe spaces for networking and for delegates to engage and create an inter-generational and inter-sectoral movement of solidarity based on share expertise and drive collective action, dignity, trust and respect for all. This will be achieved through use of different learning techniques, including thematic workshops, ignite talks, intergenerational talks, skills sharing, short films, a market place, exhibitions, networking spaces, food & health breaks, and arts and culture.

6.0 Key Guiding Questions

Here are some questions to help shape our analysis and thoughts when developing session proposals that are related to the Assembly theme:

- a. In what ways do power dynamics affect African communities? How have African communities mobilized to adopt or mitigate the effects power dynamics have had on them?
- b. How are (civil) society actors responding to the increasing effects of social injustices in African communities? How effectively are these actors addressing policy change for social justice?

- c. What would it look like to support communities most impacted by the effects of social injustices? (consider innovative solutions perhaps including technology, policy advocacy, community resources mobilization).
- d. How effective have existing policies been in tackling the effects of existing systemic social injustices? (focus on the national policies, continental protocols/frameworks)

An important detail you must not forget is to clearly show the connected nature of the struggles and injustices across communities/thematic areas and/or the connected nature of the mitigation measures.

7.0 Expected Participants

APN seeks to mobilize about 500 participants representing different forms of African philanthropy, civil society, the media, governments, donors (individuals and institutional) and the private sector from all African countries and the diaspora. Of the 500, we wish to mobilize more than 100 participants from within Zambia and Zimbabwe. The latter can be achieved through collaboration with our members from host countries: SIVIO Institute, Legal Resources Center, and Ulunthu Community Foundation in Zimbabwe, and Zambia Governance Foundation and Legal Resource Center in Zambia; who will also act as our hosts. We also collaborate closely with our pan-African members with offices in Harare.

The APN philosophy and values of solidarity, inclusivity, innovation and accountability will apply. Participants will therefore be representing individual and institutional practice, including the underserved population groups. We would like to ensure no one is left behind at this flagship event. Our community of members and friends, with headquarters located in 42 African countries, and working with communities in 51 African nations will play a key role in the mobilization of participants.

8.0 Expected Results

It is expected that the Assembly discussions will yield a list of recommended approaches to use in executing our philanthropic initiatives beyond the convening. The APN Assembly is an action-oriented space that must produce tangible results that consider our struggles as interconnected. This will be achieved through a:

- Celebration of achievements success stories, in building a powerful intergenerational culture of giving across Africa from collective spaces.
- Creating an inter-generational solidarity movement for sharing expertise and driving collective action engaging women, youth, people living with disabilities, and other undeserved population.
- Setting a collective agenda for addressing our continent's most pressing challenges using philanthropy as a durable and impactful strategy for sustainable development.
- Nurture a community of like-minded people and organizations who can nurture and advance this orientation.

9.0 Resource Mobilization and Fundraising

This Concept Note provides a snapshot of the APN dream and invites partners and sponsors to support us realize this goal. We are also seeking the support from other donors on the continent and globally to enable a diverse range of people to attend and to sponsor women, people living with disabilities, young leaders and other change makers in the field of philanthropy from the underserved population groups. APN members are encouraged not only to attend to cost sharing mechanisms, but also to sponsor partners and actors among their constituency, and to mobilize relevant actors to attend.