

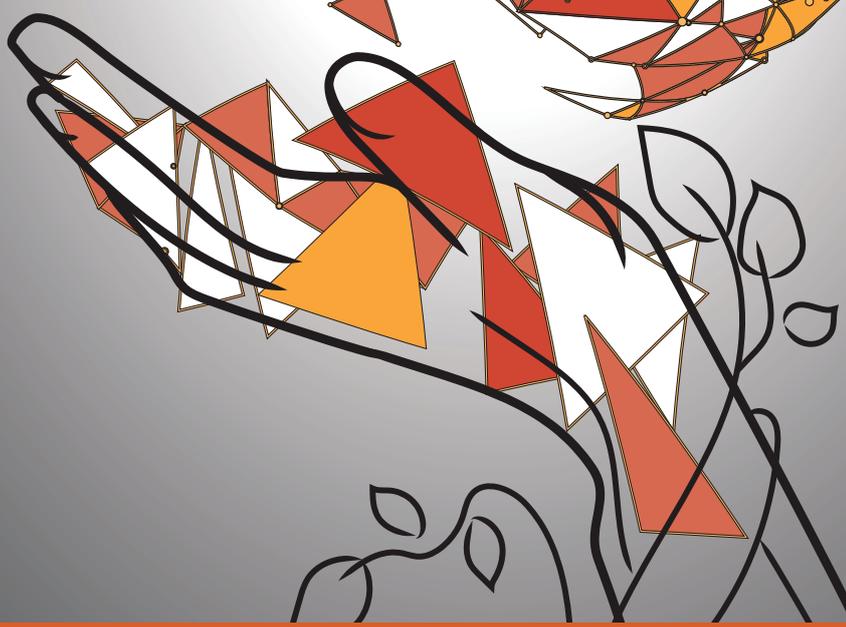
ANNUAL



2024

Review

OF SOUTH AFRICAN PHILANTHROPY



Perspectives and Stories of South African Philanthropy





ANNUAL 2024 Review

OF SOUTH AFRICAN PHILANTHROPY

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From polycrisis to “polyopportunity”

Every century has witnessed its own crises and disruptions, setting off ripple effects throughout the world or a specific region. From the 17th century’s droughts, famines and invasions to the 18th century revolutions, from the rapid industrialisation and scientific advancements of the 19th century to the 20th century’s world wars, Great Depression, civil rights movements and space exploration, every era has faced transformative challenges. The 21st century is no different, marked by the energy crisis, climate change, food shortages, volatile financial markets, regional conflicts and rising geopolitical risks. Change is the only constant, as the saying goes. So why should the disruptions of our time be any different?

The concept of a polycrisis is not new. It is believed to have emerged in the 1970s, but historian Adam Tooze recently revived it into the common lexicon. The uniqueness of this multifaceted disruption is best summarised in Tooze’s words: *“A problem becomes a crisis when it challenges our ability to cope and thus threatens our identity. In the polycrisis the shocks are disparate, but they interact so that the whole is even more overwhelming than the sum of the parts.”*

The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and international conflicts have reminded us of how porous borders are to the impacts of crises. In the development space, there is a growing realisation that Africa and other developing regions are disproportionately affected by crises that are not of its own making. The “demographic dividend” in the region offers a potential silver lining, but only if the youth can access the economy and have their social safety needs adequately met.

It is against this backdrop that the *2024 IPASA Annual Review of South African Philanthropy* has been compiled. Rather than getting caught in the definitional hamster wheel and debating terminology, we acknowledge one certainty: the pace and intersectionality of today’s social, political and economic issues have significantly intensified the complexity of the challenges we seek to address.

We are at a critical inflection point. As these crises converge, the urgency of our call to action becomes even more pressing. We must find opportunity amid the disruption, discover new ways to solve problems and drive more inclusive and equitable narratives for meaningful change to take root. In fact, Winnie Byanyima of UNAIDS asserted that this unique context presents a “polyopportunity” for leadership.

The Chinese word for crisis signifies “a crucial point, when something begins to change.” It is often paired with other words to create meanings related to agility, resourcefulness, or wisdom. This entrepreneurial spirit is alive and thriving in the South African philanthropy sector during these times.

The Annual Review adopts a forward-looking, solution-focused lens, showcasing how foundations, social enterprises and other role-players are designing, planning, implementing, measuring and elevating the solutions they develop as they adapt to this shifting landscape. The stories cover a range of social issues and highlight key insights, challenges and lessons to inform, inspire and contribute to the sector’s growth. The common thread is a belief in the opportunities that lie within the crises and the deep thought that is applied to unlock them. They underscore that leadership and thinking in philanthropy have become broader and deeper than ever before. Developing sustainable and impactful solutions require systemic thinking, a strong learning orientation, boundless innovation and radical collaboration. These real-world case studies are evidence of the power and promise of philanthropy to significantly contribute towards achieving South Africa’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets.

The publication also brings together reflections from several thought leaders, offering insights that will provoke, guide and support our thinking as we navigate the intertwined crises’ evolving and uncertain context. Their contributions encourage us to question our assumptions and catalyse refreshed strategic thinking. In parallel,



 By Yogavelli Nambiar

they advocate for building more equitable and empowering relationships with our programme partners and participants, while sharing practical tactics, tools and resources that support the delivery of interventions.

To create transformative change, we need to be abundantly curious, inherently humble, doggedly learning-driven, and skilfully agile to question, learn and pivot as needed. From the stories contained here, and from the broader philanthropic landscape, I have observed a growing consciousness of this need; a determination to act more thoughtfully than ever before, to be an avid supporter, a reflective partner and a strategic innovator of social change. It bodes well for the complex environment we find ourselves in and will guide us towards the sustainable and impactful change we all aspire to achieve.

As always, we invite you to see the 2024 Annual Review as not just a once-time read, but as a resource to support you in your vital work of driving social impact.

Happy Reading! 

Yogavelli Nambiar is the CEO of Niara Advisory. After 24 years in various capacities in the social innovation sector in South Africa and India, Yogi consults on social impact strategy, implementation support and storytelling to foundations, corporates, and social enterprises.

Seizing the future: How philanthropy can lead South Africa through the polycrisis

The world is currently experiencing a polycrisis -- a complex mix of political upheaval, inflation, climate disasters, deepening socio-economic divides and the lingering impacts of the pandemic. These are an interconnected web that threatens humanity. Amidst this turmoil, philanthropy has an extraordinary opportunity to rise to the challenge. At this critical juncture, the sector must innovate, adapt and lead boldly and with foresight, seizing this moment as a transformative visionary force to shape a resilient future.

South Africa's intertwined challenges of poverty, unemployment, inequality and environmental degradation present a daunting landscape that isolated solutions cannot address. The urgency for philanthropy to adopt a holistic and flexible approach has never been greater. Although power may be more stable than in recent months, the uncertainty of a collapsing energy system still looms, threatening to plunge us back into darkness.

Our water and health systems teeter on collapse with corruption eroding the infrastructure and services crucial to lifting the country out of crisis. Public trust in institutions is at an all-time low and traditional methods of tackling social issues fall short. Siloed thinking must give way to strategies that consider long-term impacts. Many of our peers are boldly experimenting with new ideas, refining and expanding successful approaches demonstrating that a more integrated and impactful path forward is possible.

We must be funder partners who are willing to walk the talk by encouraging innovation and experimentation and support fresh ways of thinking and acting. Flexible funding is necessary for experimental projects and scaling successful models. We must also embrace risk, recognising that learning from failure is a critical component of this process. Long-term partnerships with grantees are crucial to achieving sustainable impact and to document lessons learned to inform future strategies.

Astute philanthropists should be asking: How do we tackle the root causes of social issues rather than just the symptoms? The solution lies in championing initiatives that drive economic inclusion, educational equity and environmental sustainability. These are essential to building resilience against future crises.

For grant-makers, this means investing in strategies that drive systems change, including advocacy, community organising and civic engagement. By supporting efforts that reshape policies and reform practices, philanthropy can transform the landscape and make a profound difference to the most vulnerable populations.

Collaboration and partnerships form the cornerstone of our collective response to the polycrisis. Philanthropy fulfils a unique role in convening diverse stakeholders, including government, business, civil society and communities to find impactful solutions. By working together, we can amplify our impact and ensure that resources are deployed more effectively.

Strong leadership is paramount, and philanthropy can foster the development of adaptive management within organisations, equipping leaders with the skills and mindset to navigate ambiguity, make informed decisions and inspire others. This includes promoting diversity and inclusion in leadership and ensuring a range of perspectives and experiences are represented.

Organisations that can problem solve, adapt and remain open-minded are the most likely to thrive. Managing complex, multi-layered challenges simultaneously requires ongoing scenario planning and data-driven solutions that foster stability. Personal growth and development as an adaptive leader are imperative in navigating this complexity.

South African civil society is under significant pressure facing dwindling funding, increasing intimidation, and attacks



 By Dr Joanne Harding

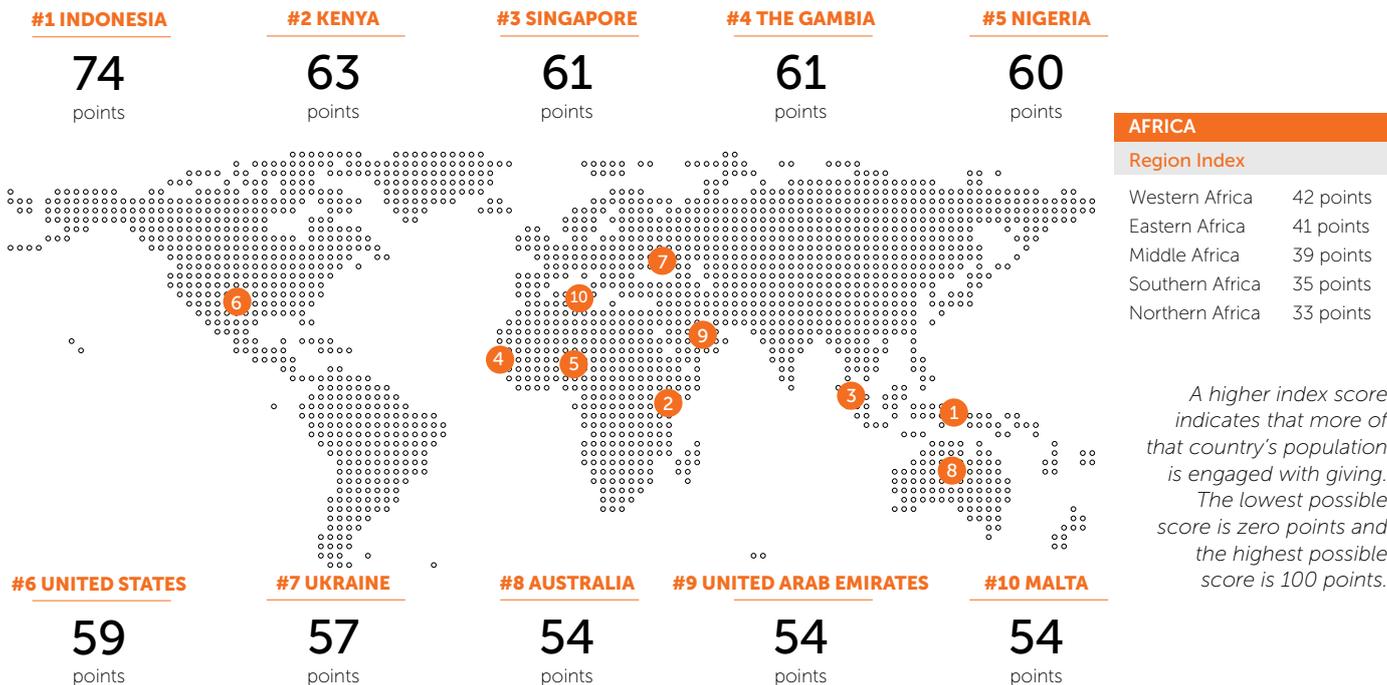
on activists fighting corruption, rights violations and maladministration. Crime and insecurity make working in high-risk areas challenging while proposed and existing laws threaten to stifle civil society and restrict foreign funding. This has made it harder for civil society organisations to attract and retain skilled, competent staff.

To thrive in a polycrisis, organisations must be resilient and agile. Resilience requires strong governance and financial sustainability through diversified funding, building reserves and contingency plans to manage risks. Streamlined decision making and empowered teams are essential. Civil society needs technology to improve data collection and analysis and must engage with global networks and knowledge-sharing platforms to adopt best practices. Philanthropy must invest in these areas to ensure long-term impact.

IPASA supports South African funders in addressing the polycrisis now and in the future, by encouraging flexibility, innovation and a readiness to embrace risk in their funding practices. IPASA facilitates knowledge sharing, learning and collaboration by creating convening opportunities for key philanthropy stakeholders while promoting systemic funding approaches and community-led philanthropy. Philanthropy's power and promise lie in its ability to adapt, lead, tackle complex problems and inspire in the face of uncertainty, building a society that cares for all. 

Dr Joanne Harding is the Executive Director of Social Change Assistance Trust.

The top 10 most generous countries in the world



Key findings at a glance

#1

Indonesia ranks first place for the seventh year running

4.3BN

People gave time, money, or helped a stranger in 2023

75

Countries improved their score this year

World giving index rankings

The CAF World Giving Index is based on data from Gallup's World Poll, it is an ongoing research project carried out in more than 100 countries.

RANK	COUNTRY	WORLD GIVING INDEX	HELPED A STRANGER (% OF ADULTS)	DONATED MONEY (% OF ADULTS)	VOLUNTEERED (% OF ADULTS)
76	Nicaragua	40	66%	25%	28%
77	Uruguay	39	69%	31%	19%
78	Spain	39	60%	39%	19%
79	Peru	39	68%	25%	25%
80	Hong Kong	39	56%	42%	19%
81	Mozambique	39	58%	21%	38%
82	Panama	39	65%	23%	28%
83	Chile	39	66%	33%	17%
84	Estonia	39	55%	41%	20%
85	Iraq	38	76%	27%	13%
86	Brazil	38	65%	29%	21%
87	Niger	38	77%	17%	21%
88	South Korea	38	53%	40%	20%
89	Uganda	38	69%	25%	18%
90	Namibia	38	66%	18%	29%
91	South Africa	37	65%	20%	27%
92	Albania	37	61%	39%	11%

Governments need to:

- Make sure that civil society organisations are regulated in a fair, consistent and open way.
- Make it easy for people to give, including cross-border giving, and offer incentives for giving where possible.
- Promote civil society as an independent voice in public life and respect the right of non-profit organisations to speak out on important issues.

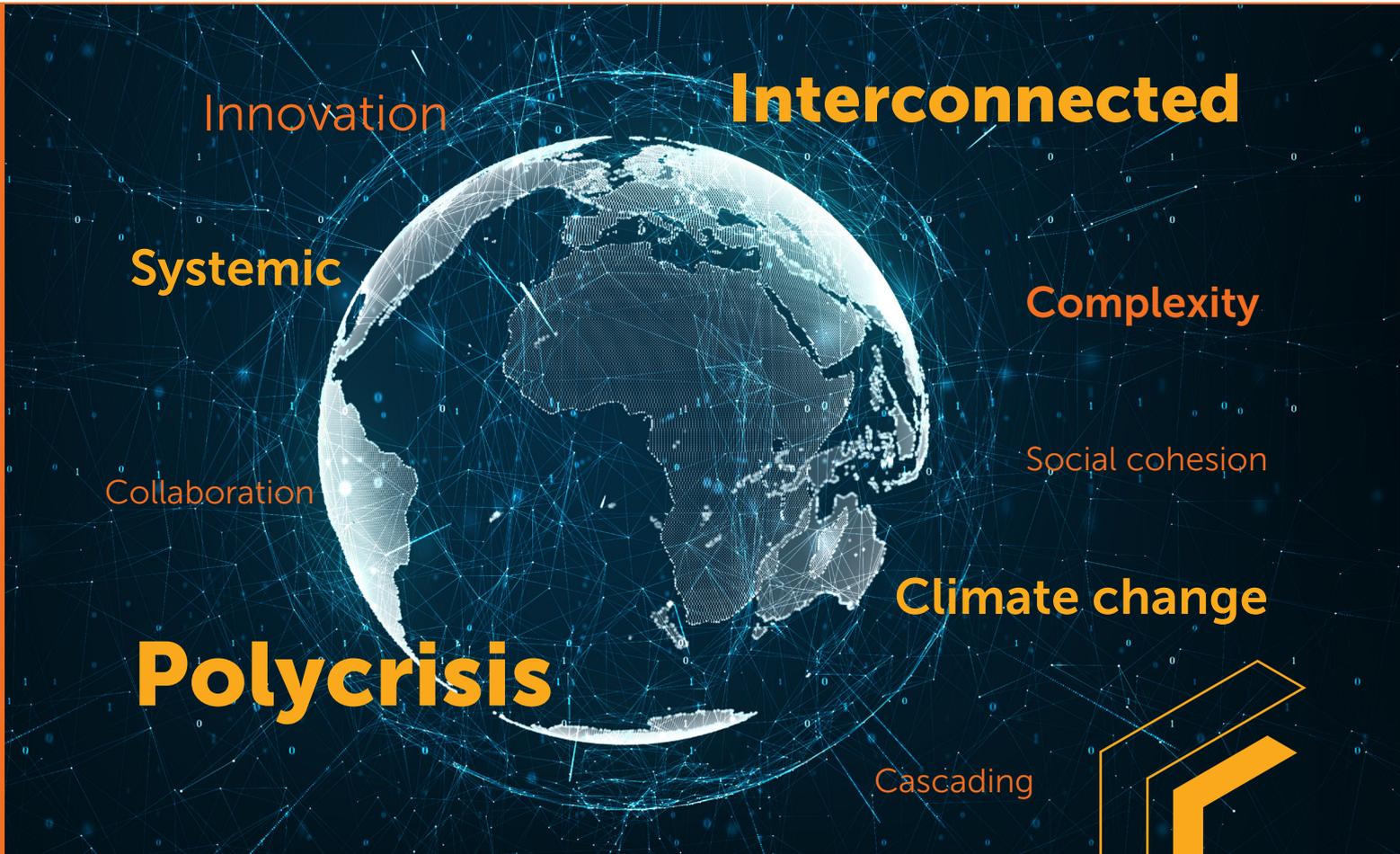
International funders need to:

- Fund the development of infrastructure that can continue to generate funds for civil society even after aid ends.
- Fund local organisations directly to improve the accountability and efficiency of aid.
- Recognise the importance of helping grantees to build sustainable domestic support and fund accordingly.

Civil society organisations need to:

- Ensure good governance and be transparent about impact to build public trust, articulating impact in terms of the UN Sustainable Development Goals where appropriate.
- Meaningfully partner with local communities so decision-making is locally owned.
- Recognise and build on traditional forms of giving to create organisations and a culture of giving that complements the strengths of the local context.

Source: World Giving Index 2024, published by Charities Aid Foundation.



The power potential of philanthropy in a time of polycrisis



By Tamzin Ractcliffe

A world in polycrisis

The term "polycrisis" has emerged as a sobering descriptor of our current human predicament. It signifies a multitude of crises occurring simultaneously with interconnections that amplify and compound the impacts of each. The concept underscores the unprecedented, unpredictable and entangled nature of the threats facing humanity and our planet.

Despite suggestions that the polycrisis began in 2008, many regions, most notably in the Global South, have faced the polycrisis for decades, evolving a repertoire of innovative responses to deal with its impact. Today, it is unmistakable that the polycrisis is everywhere. No region is immune, though some are more vulnerable than others. It is also

increasingly evident that the Global South has significantly more lived experience to share collective insights with escalating crises in the Global North. This is one of the factors impacting a gravitational shift in philanthropy from north to south.

In a polycrisis world, the domino effect of cascading crises that trigger or impact others, often in unpredictable ways, can destabilise entire systems. This means that traditional approaches to problem solving usually fall short. Climate change, for instance, is not just an environmental issue – it fuels food insecurity, exacerbates water scarcity, drives mass migration and strains global economies. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how a health crisis can rapidly morph into an economic, social, and geopolitical upheaval.



Other observable elements of the global polycrisis include:

1. Geopolitical tensions and the erosion of international cooperation.
2. Growing inequality, the fraying of social cohesion, political polarisation, the rise of authoritarianism and threats to democracy.
3. Technological disruption and its impact on labour markets add to the above.
4. Changing land use patterns and urbanisation driving biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and food insecurity.
5. Energy insecurity and the challenges of transitioning to sustainable sources.
6. Financial instability and the risk of economic collapse.

The polycrisis and South Africa

South Africa finds itself at a critical juncture as the global polycrisis intersects with and amplifies its domestic challenges. This exacerbates the convergence of crises threatening the nation's socio-economic fabric, manifesting across several fronts:

1. **Energy crisis:** The most visible manifestation of the polycrisis in South Africa is the ongoing energy crisis resulting in frequent and prolonged power outages that severely impact economic productivity, discourage investment and disrupt daily life. This crisis reflects a complex interplay of historical under-investment, mismanagement and challenges in transitioning to renewable energy.
2. **Economic challenges:** Low growth, high unemployment (especially among youth) and widening inequality have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing energy crisis.
3. **Infrastructure collapse:** Critical infrastructure, including rail networks and municipal services, shows signs of strain, impacting exports and basic

service delivery. Many municipalities are struggling to maintain basic services like water and waste management, leading to health and environmental risks.

4. **Corruption and governance:** The aftermath of "state capture" continues to erode public trust and institutional capacity, hindering efforts to address other crises effectively.
5. **Social cohesion:** Rising inequality, high crime rates, and persistent racial tensions threaten social stability, occasionally manifesting in xenophobic violence.
6. **Climate change impacts:** Increasing risks of droughts, floods, and extreme weather events threaten food security, water resources, and human settlements.
7. **Education and skills gap:** The education system struggles to equip learners with skills needed for the modern economy, contributing to high youth unemployment and hindering innovation.

Addressing the polycrisis in South Africa requires a holistic, multi-pronged strategy that tackles the interdependencies between these crises. It demands interventions catalysing systemic change by addressing root causes, not mere symptoms.

The new Government of National Unity: A model for collaborative philanthropy

South Africa's recent formation of a government of national unity represents a significant shift in its political landscape and offers a compelling model for philanthropy in a polycrisis context. By bringing together diverse political parties and expertise, it demonstrates a recognition of the interconnectedness of national challenges. This collaborative approach across ideological lines exemplifies strategies that philanthropy can and should emulate.

The unity government's leveraging of diverse perspectives to create a coordinated response mirrors the cross-sector approach that the polycrisis demands and philanthropy might now see ways of responding to. Just as the government is breaking down political silos to tackle issues from energy security to social cohesion, philanthropy must transcend its traditional boundaries.

This new political landscape also presents opportunities for philanthropy to influence, support, leverage and learn from the government's efforts. As South Africa navigates this critical juncture, philanthropy has a vital role to play in supporting the country's efforts to build resilience, foster inclusive growth and create a more equitable and sustainable future for all its citizens. By emulating this spirit of diverse cooperation, aligning strategies with national priorities and fostering innovation, philanthropy can significantly contribute to building resilience and advancing inclusive growth in South Africa.

Success will hinge upon philanthropic organisations' willingness to transform themselves and the field.

Transforming philanthropy to navigate the polycrisis

Navigating the polycrisis requires fresh approaches to spotting early signals, understanding emerging challenges, and responding in ways that better multi-solve for the panoply of impacts. This necessitates multifaceted, coordinated strategies leveraging the collective power of collaborative action based on trust, shared commitment to the common good, and solidarity.

Success hinges upon philanthropic organisations' willingness to transform themselves and the field. They must develop a shared vision for change, engage in radical collaboration across sectors, confront harsh realities, embrace experimentation, and be forthright about successes and failures.



Steps philanthropy can take include:

1. **Shifting mindsets, mental models and narratives:** There is a reason some prefer the term metacrisis to polycrisis. Underlying the polycrisis are the mental models and mindsets that have predominated in our social and economic development models. Central to addressing the challenge of the polycrisis is a fundamental shift in how we perceive and respond, how we invest and collaborate. Philanthropy can invest in initiatives that promote systems thinking, foster a sense of global interconnectedness and highlight stories that successfully address multiple issues simultaneously through holistic, collaborative and local engagement. It is as important to invest in clarifying polycrisis framing to address barriers created by overwhelm or loss of nuance.
2. **Breaking down silos:** The polycrisis demands that philanthropy breaks free from traditional siloed approaches. Crossing the increasingly artificial borders between issue areas, jurisdictions and disciplines unlocks synergies and enables more comprehensive solutions. Philanthropy can lead the way by funding and facilitating collaborations that bridge these divides, bringing together diverse stakeholders to tackle interconnected challenges.
3. **Empowering local communities:** A fundamental tenet of polycrisis philanthropy is shifting power and resources to local communities at the frontlines of overlapping crises. By valuing local knowledge and promoting homegrown resilience solutions, philanthropic organisations can foster a sense of agency and ownership. This approach addresses immediate needs and builds long-term capacity for communities to navigate future challenges.
4. **Fostering innovation, experimentation and learning:** The polycrisis requires innovative

approaches and a willingness to experiment. Philanthropy can create safe spaces for risk-taking, learning and adaptation. By supporting pilot projects, funding research and facilitating knowledge-sharing platforms, philanthropic organisations can accelerate the development and scaling of practical strategies that simultaneously respond to multiple challenges. Part of this work must include supporting continuous learning and adaptation. Philanthropy can invest in creating "learning ecosystems" that bring together practitioners, researchers, policymakers and community leaders to share insights, co-create solutions and rapidly iterate on approaches.

5. **Leveraging collective impact:** When diverse stakeholders come together to radically collaborate around shared goals, the impact can be exponentially greater than the sum of individual efforts. Philanthropy can be crucial in convening and supporting these collective impact initiatives, providing the resources and infrastructure needed to sustain long-term collaborations.
6. **Building resilience infrastructure:** The polycrisis demands that we build resilience at multiple levels - individual, community, and systemic. Philanthropy can invest in "resilience infrastructure" that enhances our collective ability to withstand and adapt to shocks. This could include supporting the development of local food systems, funding community-based disaster preparedness programmes, or investing in regenerative economic models
7. **Advocating for policy change:** While philanthropy alone cannot solve the polycrisis, it can play a critical role in advocating for policy changes that enable and incentivise collaborative approaches to simultaneous response action. By funding policy research, supporting advocacy organisations and leveraging their influence, philanthropy can help create an

enabling environment for systemic change.

8. **Embracing transformative philanthropy:** The polycrisis calls for a transformation of philanthropy itself. This means moving beyond traditional grantmaking to adopt more flexible, participatory and long-term approaches. It also examines and addresses the power dynamics inherent in philanthropic relationships, striving for genuine partnerships with grantees and communities. Consolidating the collective intelligence and experiences of the field, the Philanthropy Transformation Initiative (PTI) presents a global framework for philanthropy's transformation centred on a set of 10 principles: trust and humility in relationships, collaboration with other sectors, taking risks and being bold, leveraging endowments, using data and embracing big issues transversally. This global framework offers a shared common language to inform and influence the norms that shape the field globally and guide philanthropic institutions on their transformation journey to be better prepared to respond to the crises of our time.
9. **Cultivating strategic hope:** In the face of overwhelming challenges, philanthropy has the power to cultivate "strategic hope". Philanthropy can inspire and energise collective action by highlighting successful responses, connecting change-makers across borders and providing sustained support for transformative work.

The polycrisis presents both an unprecedented challenge and a unique opportunity for philanthropy to evolve and catalyse systemic change. By leveraging collective experiences from both the Global North and South, philanthropy can play a crucial role in building resilience, fostering inclusive growth, and creating a more equitable and resilient future for all. 

Tamzin Ractliffe is a social entrepreneur, Founding Director of Impact Trust and Director of the Resilience Funders Network.



Transformative education

Strategies for overcoming maths inequality in South Africa's schools



By Sarah Cairns

Despite high spending relative to other countries, South Africa's education system is fraught with multiple amplifying crises, or a polycrisis. The system is notably marked by poor literacy and numeracy performance. According to a 2030 Reading Panel Report (2024), 81% of Grade 4 children cannot read for meaning; the number of Grade 4s who cannot read at all has doubled. At the current rate, it will take South Africa 80 years for all children to read for meaning.

The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted learning, and global research shows that learners have lost at least half a year of learning. In South Africa, remedial strategies most often include repetition, resulting in alarmingly high repetition rates amongst children in the early grades.

Compounding this is that South Africa has one of the most unequal education systems in the world. Mathematics scores in the wealthiest 20% of schools are three years' worth of learning higher

than no-fee schools. Fifty per cent of quintile 5 schools achieve the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) Intermediate Benchmark, in comparison to 3% in quintile 1 schools. Globally, all education systems participating in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show gaps in performance correlated with socioeconomic status.

In the South African education system, two-thirds of the current learners are in quintile 1-3 schools, which are under-resourced and underprivileged. The government's National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) adopted in 2012, acknowledges these challenges and expressly seeks to ensure that all children benefit from a high-quality education, particularly in languages, mathematics and science. The NDP proposes a target of 450,000 learners eligible for bachelor's programmes in mathematics and science by 2030.



“ The MCP set out to increase the number of Black African learners achieving a minimum of 60% in matric mathematics. ”



The Epoch and Optima Trusts create the Maths Challenge Programme

The Epoch and Optima Trusts were founded by Anglo American in 2007 to improve outcomes in the basic education sector. The Trusts initiated the Maths Challenge Programme (MCP) in the same year. The programme was designed to address one of the sector's many challenges - the quality of mathematics education in the country.

The MCP set out to increase the number of Black African learners achieving a minimum of 60% in matric mathematics, the benchmark required for access to many of the mathematics and science bachelor's programmes at higher education institutions. The MCP pursued this objective for 15 years and, as it concludes, offers valuable lessons for philanthropy working within the complex context of South African education.

The design of the MCP was largely informed by research from the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE), which posited that the country would need to double the number of matriculation Higher Grade mathematics and science passes

to address essential skills shortages and foster economic growth, a goal which was formally adopted by the government in 2006. Achieving the NDP's targets for mathematics has proven far more challenging than expected. Of the 683,755 learners who wrote matric in 2023, 41,249 achieved over 60% for mathematics, a long way short of the NDP target.

To increase the number of learners achieving quality mathematics passes (over 60%) in Grade 12, the Epoch and Optima Trusts identified and invited schools already showing potential to participate in the programme. These were schools where at least 20 African students achieved quality matric mathematics passes.

It was assumed that with additional resources, already performing schools would be enabled to further improve their performance. A core strategy was adopting a schools-led approach, empowering schools to direct funding towards their specific needs, whether in human resources, teacher development, technology, or learner support. Detailed data analysis and reporting enabled evidence-based decision-making and strategic adjustments. To date, 121 schools across the country have

participated in the programme.

By 2023, MCP schools showed positive trends, such as an increasing rate of African learners choosing mathematics over mathematical literacy and achieving more quality passes compared to non-participating schools. However, these improvements were incremental and insufficient to make a significant national impact. Incoming Grade 8 learners often had considerable learning gaps, making full curriculum coverage very challenging for teachers.

The pandemic exacerbated existing educational deficiencies, particularly in early-grade numeracy and reading, and especially in lower quintile schools. Consequently, inequality in the system was perpetuated. Research shows South African teachers are poorly equipped to teach reading and numeracy in the early grades and, even more so, in African languages. As many as 80% of learners are not learning in their home language, and the Grade 4 switch from mother tongue to English instruction is problematic, causing further backlogs in learning. The multifaceted root causes of slow progress in mathematics at the matric level became increasingly evident.



Considering the enormity and complexity of the challenges in education and the urgency of required action, the Epoch and Optima Trust Board recommended a review of the strategic direction and how the trusts could better contribute to addressing root causes and enabling systemic change. To this end, the Epoch and Optima Trusts are committed to facilitating change, which is long-term and only possible through partnerships and collaboration.

The strategy review process led to a shift towards building capability in early-grade learning, strengthening initial primary teacher education and supporting research to build the body of evidence for success in these focus areas.

A 15-year perspective on the work of MCP, made possible by consistent monitoring and evaluation, can offer valuable insights

to the sector. Effective monitoring and evaluation are crucial for tracking progress, understanding impact and making informed strategic decisions. In addition, the MCP highlighted the importance of identifying the root causes of unintended or disappointing outcomes, demonstrating that addressing backlogs in the early grades is a far more efficient lever for positive change in education.

It also became evident that programmes must be adaptable to changing contexts and emerging evidence that challenge or propose to enhance established theories of change. Finally, the MCP has clearly demonstrated that achieving lasting and meaningful change in a system requires a long-term commitment that can only be sustained through partnership and collaboration with government, research institutions, like-minded donors and implementing partners.

The experience of the MCP underscores the importance of adaptive strategies in navigating the polycrisis in South African education. By shifting focus to early-grade learning, the Epoch and Optima Trusts are leveraging the lessons learned from the MCP to create new opportunities for educational improvement. Equipped with evidence and committed to long-term government and key stakeholder partnerships, this strategic pivot aims at building a strong foundation for learners by addressing systemic issues at the outset. 

Sarah Cairns is the Head of the Epoch and Optima Trusts, which are three independent trusts with the single purpose of improving learner outcomes in the basic education sector. The Epoch and Optima Trusts are managed by Tshikululu, a leading social investment fund manager and advisor.



“ The strategy review process led to a shift towards building capability in early-grade learning, strengthening initial primary teacher education and supporting research to build the body of evidence for success in these focus areas. ”



Fostering social justice amidst the polycrisis

Hlanganisa's journey



By Bongwiwe Ndondo

In recent years, the world has faced an unprecedented array of crises. These interconnected challenges have exacerbated social inequalities and strained the very fabric of our societies. At Hlanganisa Community Fund, we have witnessed firsthand how this polycrisis has reshaped the landscape of social and gender justice, presenting both challenges and opportunities for our mission.

Philanthropy has not been immune to the effects of the polycrisis. Economic instability, climate disasters and political unrest have created an environment where the needs are greater than ever, but the resources are often insufficient. For organisations like ours, this means constantly adapting to shifting priorities and finding new ways to support the communities we serve. The

interconnected nature of these crises has made it clear that a holistic and integrated approach is essential for meaningful change.

The polycrisis has intensified the struggles of marginalised communities, especially in the region. At Hlanganisa, our commitment to social and gender justice has never wavered despite the heightened challenges. We have seen an increase in poverty, unemployment and social inequality, which disproportionately affects women and other vulnerable groups. Our response to social and gender justice has been to double down on our efforts to empower these communities, providing them with the tools and support they need to advocate for their rights and improve their circumstances.





Hlanganisa Community Fund remains a beacon of hope and resilience in the social and gender justice sector. Navigating a landscape fraught with resource constraints, increased demand for services, safety and security concerns, and significant psychological and emotional strain, Hlanganisa's unwavering commitment to marginalised communities remains steadfast.

Organisations like the Hlanganisa Community Fund often rely heavily on funding from governments and international donors. However, during a polycrisis, these funding sources frequently become scarce or are redirected towards immediate crisis management, leaving less available for long-term social justice initiatives. This scarcity forces organisations to operate with limited resources, making sustaining essential programmes and support services for marginalised communities difficult.

Crises amplify social and economic inequalities, increasing the demand for services social justice organisations provide. For instance, economic

downturns often result in higher rates of domestic violence, homelessness and food insecurity, disproportionately affecting women and children. Consequently, Hlanganisa must stretch its limited resources to meet this rising demand, often without corresponding increases in funding or support.

Working in the social and gender justice sector often involves advocating for marginalised groups, which can be perilous in politically unstable environments. Activists and organisations face threats, harassment and violence, making it challenging to carry out their work safely. In regions with weak governance, law enforcement may be unable or unwilling to protect social justice advocates, further endangering their efforts.

The compounded stress of navigating multiple crises can take a significant toll on the mental health and wellbeing of those working in the social and gender justice sectors. Burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma are common among social workers, activists and advocates. The emotional strain of witnessing

and addressing severe inequalities and injustices, especially under crisis conditions, can diminish their capacity to support their communities effectively.

To navigate the challenges of the polycrisis, social and gender justice organisations must adopt strategies to build resilience. Hlanganisa exemplifies this through various approaches. By seeking a mix of funding from multiple sources, including private donors, international organisations and innovative financing mechanisms, Hlanganisa reduces dependency on any single source and gains more stability. Collaborating with other organisations within and outside the social justice sector, Hlanganisa amplifies advocacy efforts, shares resources and provides mutual support, enhancing its impact.

Crises amplify social and economic inequalities, increasing the demand for services social justice organisations provide.



The COVID-19 pandemic, a major component of the polycrisis, brought significant funding challenges. As economies contracted, many donors had to reallocate their resources to immediate health and survival needs, leaving less available for long-term social justice initiatives. This slowdown in funding affected our programmes but also pushed us to innovate. We strengthened our partnerships, leveraged digital platforms to reach wider audiences and advocated for policy changes that would benefit the communities we serve.

Our regional partners in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe have faced unique challenges brought on by the polycrisis, distinct from those in South Africa. These countries have dealt with severe economic difficulties, political instability and health crises that compound the struggles of already vulnerable populations.

“ Working in the social and gender justice sector during a polycrisis has taught us valuable lessons. Flexibility and adaptability are crucial. ”

The polycrisis has exacerbated these issues, leading to heightened food insecurity, disrupted education systems and increased gender-based violence.

Working in the social and gender justice sector during a polycrisis has taught us valuable lessons. Flexibility and adaptability are crucial. The ability to pivot strategies, reallocate resources and maintain open communication with stakeholders has been essential to our continued success. The past five years have highlighted the importance of resilience and the need to address systemic issues through a comprehensive approach.

The reality of our sector is one of cautious optimism. While the polycrisis has presented significant obstacles, it has also strengthened our resolve and brought a renewed sense of purpose to our work. There is a growing recognition locally and globally that collaboration is necessary to tackle these complex challenges effectively.

At Hlanganisa, we are committed to continuing our work to strengthen community-based initiatives, advocating for gender equality, and ensuring that marginalised voices are heard in policy-making processes. The polycrisis has underscored the need for robust social

institutions and resilient infrastructure to support sustainable development. By fostering collaboration and prioritising equity, we can navigate these turbulent times and work towards a more just and inclusive future.

Our strategy for navigating the complexities of the polycrisis focuses on both short-term and long-term goals, ensuring resilience and sustainable development. We will continue to advocate for gender equality through policy advocacy, awareness campaigns, and support services for victims of gender-based violence. Amplifying marginalised voices remains a priority, achieved through community engagement, media campaigns and research to document the impacts of the polycrisis. We will foster regional collaboration by promoting regional integration and forming coalitions for collective advocacy on shared challenges. 🌐

Bongiwe Ndondo is a seasoned leader in the social justice sector, currently serving as the Chief Executive Officer of the Hlanganisa Community Fund. With extensive experience in strategic development, she has been a driving force behind initiatives aimed at uplifting marginalised communities across Southern Africa.





Addressing the polycrisis in Hammanskraal

Insights from humanitarian aid



By Shumikazi Kwinana

Introduction

In recent years, the concept of a polycrisis has gained prominence, describing situations where multiple interlinked crises exacerbate one another, leading to compounded impacts on communities. This article examines the multifaceted challenges faced by Hammanskraal, a community in Gauteng Province, South Africa, focusing on its persistent water crisis and the broader implications it has on public health, socio-economic stability and community resilience. The response efforts by ForAfrika, a humanitarian NGO, illustrate effective strategies for mitigating these complex issues and highlighting the pivotal role that effective stakeholder engagement plays.

Understanding the polycrisis in Hammanskraal

Hammanskraal is a trans-provincial region situated in northern Gauteng and embodies a polycrisis characterised by several intertwined challenges. The primary issue revolves around the chronic lack of access to clean water, exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure that leaves many residents reliant on unsafe water sources. This dire situation has led to frequent sanitation and health challenges, culminating in a devastating cholera outbreak in early 2023. The outbreak claimed 31 lives and hospitalised more than 100 individuals, exposing the severe public health consequences of the ongoing water crisis.



Beyond the immediate health implications, the lack of clean and safe water in Hammanskraal has profound socio-economic ramifications. Inadequate water infrastructure hampers backyard agricultural productivity, which is vital for food security in resource-constrained communities, thereby contributing to food insecurity and economic instability. Moreover, the burden of water collection falls disproportionately on women and children, limiting their educational and economic opportunities and perpetuating gender inequalities. Compounding these challenges is the alarming rate of youth unemployment, exceeding 60%, which fuels social issues like substance abuse and crime. A 2023 Community Health Survey noted that as many as 30% of youths in Hammanskraal had experimented with drugs, with a substantial number becoming addicted to substance abuse as a coping mechanism.

South Africa experiences high poverty rates, with 55% of households below the poverty line, according to a 2023 National Statistics Agency Report. This exacerbates these issues, leading to a cycle of deprivation that affects the entire

community. Child hunger is a critical issue in Hammanskraal, where one in five children suffers from chronic malnutrition, according to the Child Welfare Organisation Report of 2023.

Multi-layered strategy to address complex challenges

ForAfrika's response to the polycrisis in Hammanskraal exemplifies a comprehensive approach that addresses the interconnected nature of these challenges. Central to their strategy was the rehabilitation of the community's water infrastructure. This initiative involved the refurbishment of 15 boreholes to ensure reliable access to clean water for approximately 12,000 residents. By tackling the root cause of the water crisis, ForAfrika aimed to mitigate the health risks associated with waterborne diseases and lay a foundation for sustainable development.

However, recognising that infrastructure alone is insufficient, ForAfrika implemented complementary measures to foster economic empowerment and community resilience. They collaborated with stakeholders, including the National Youth

Development Agency (NYDA) and the Kwetso Foundation, to create employment opportunities for local youth. The youth were provided with basic training and then engaged to maintain the water infrastructure. These initiatives not only addressed unemployment but also promoted community engagement and ownership of the water infrastructure, which is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the interventions. Furthermore, ForAfrika prioritised public health education to improve hygiene practices and mitigate future disease outbreaks. Community-wide awareness programmes emphasised the importance of sanitation, hygiene and safe water usage, empowering residents to safeguard their health independently.

In addition to these efforts, ForAfrika extended its impact through initiatives in early childhood development (ECD) centres, providing nutritional support and educational resources to these centres. By integrating community and ECD gardens with the newly drilled boreholes, ForAfrika continues to ensure a holistic approach that addresses nutritional and educational needs while promoting sustainable agriculture practices.





Inclusivity of diverse stakeholders

A key lesson learned from ForAfrika’s intervention in Hammanskraal is the necessity of inclusive collaboration among diverse stakeholders across various sectors. Recognising the complexity of the polycrisis, ForAfrika engaged local community leaders, government agencies, corporate partners and NGOs to ensure a coordinated response. Financial support from entities like the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and First National Bank (FNB) facilitated infrastructure development, underscoring the role of corporate social responsibility in community development.

Effective collaboration with traditional tribal authorities, under whose authority Hammanskraal falls, was crucial in tailoring interventions to local needs and promoting community-driven solutions. By involving residents in decision-making processes, ForAfrika fostered a sense of ownership and accountability, enhancing the sustainability of its interventions.

Government agencies such as the Department of Water and Sanitation and the NYDA played pivotal roles in providing

guidance on water and sanitation issues, mobilising youth in partnership with two local NGOs and aligning interventions with national development priorities. These partnerships maximised resources and also ensured that interventions were integrated into broader development strategies, enhancing their long-term impact.

Conclusion

The response to the water crisis in Hammanskraal highlights the importance of adopting a holistic, community-driven approach to address polycrises effectively. ForAfrika’s experience demonstrates by understanding the interconnected nature of crises and fostering inclusive partnerships, humanitarian organisations can develop sustainable solutions that empower communities and build resilience.

As Africa continues to confront multiple crises exacerbated by climate change, socio-economic disparities, political unrest and inadequate infrastructure, the lessons from Hammanskraal underscore the urgency of prioritising integrated and collaborative approaches. By leveraging the strengths of diverse stakeholders and empowering local communities,

we can create resilient societies capable of overcoming the most complex challenges.

In conclusion, the case of Hammanskraal serves as a compelling example of how strategic humanitarian interventions can transform communities and pave the way for sustainable development in the face of adversity. 

Shumikazi Kwinana is the Programmes Director at ForAfrika South Africa.

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South Africa's healthcare philanthropy



By Siphokazi Mthathi

Healthcare philanthropy has played a significant role in South Africa's long journey to address health inequities. The 1997 White Paper on the Transformation of the Health System laid out a vision to overhaul a fragmented, hospital-centric, apartheid-era system with the aim of prioritising access, quality and equity in line with primary health care principles.

The 2003 National Health Act, which outlined the path to universal healthcare, emphasised community participation, equity and quality, further consolidating this agenda. The 2012 National Development Plan and the National Health Insurance (NHI), which seek to advance system transformation and equity, reaffirmed these commitments.

Philanthropy did not initiate South Africa's

health movement but it has bolstered it, driving policy changes, and advancing access and equity. A prime example is the HIV/AIDS movement, spurred by the government's initially lacklustre response to the epidemic. The movement successfully shifted government policy and elevated the needs of those hardest hit, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, to global health priorities.

This success attracted substantial local and international funding to bolster South Africa's response. However, this funding often came with conditions with large, global, north-based organisations controlling the flow of money, sometimes undermining local leadership, and creating unhealthy competition within the healthcare ecosystem.





Healthcare philanthropy in South Africa goes beyond the influx of large financial contributions. The sector is a tapestry of individuals, communities, organisations, corporate actors, local foundations, private funders and international agencies. Central to this tapestry are the thousands of volunteers and community health workers who contribute unpaid labour, serving as the first responders to national healthcare efforts. These grassroots contributors have extended care to underserved areas, saved countless lives and helped shield the economy from the worst effects of epidemics.

Big-money philanthropy has been vital, injecting much-needed resources into the healthcare system, funding research and strengthening local capacities. Organisations like Atlantic Philanthropies, the Ford Foundation, Médecins Sans Frontières, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, PEPFAR, the Gates Foundation and USAID have complemented local efforts, accelerating the rollout of treatment and preventive measures. Their contributions have bolstered community-based systems, reduced infections and improved the quality of life for those affected.

COVID-19: Lessons for a polycrisis era

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and deepened long-standing inequalities,

disrupted global supply chains, and overwhelmed health systems. It underscored the need for philanthropy to be more adaptable, responsive, and focused on systemic issues and real-time needs. The pandemic highlighted the value of local expertise, equity and the importance of resilient systems supported by real-time data. Going forward, philanthropy must prioritise collaboration and crisis preparedness to effectively address complex challenges.

The World Health Organization's recent declaration of Mpox as a public health emergency in Africa, alongside warnings of climate and conflict risks in the 2024 Global Risks Report, points to the reality of a polycrisis—where multiple, intersecting crises complicate healthcare and social change efforts. This forces governments, social actors, and philanthropy to navigate competing priorities. Yet within these challenges lie opportunities for philanthropy to build resilience, foster innovation, leverage technologies and advance equity in previously unimaginable ways.

A holistic response to interconnected crises is crucial. Philanthropy can empower social change leaders to develop integrated strategies that cut across sectors, bringing together diverse stakeholders to co-create solutions. By investing in initiatives that address multiple issues, such as health, the environment, and economic empowerment,

philanthropy can drive comprehensive and sustainable change.

Moreover, while some philanthropy focuses on building the technical capacity of governments, healthcare philanthropy should also invest in social change leaders, enabling them to innovate and adapt. This can include funding research, leadership development programmes and providing flexible support that allows for experimentation and rapid shifts in approaches. Such investments will help leaders stay ahead of crises and devise scalable, replicable solutions, which is the direction Tekano intends to contribute to in the future.

Polycrisis often disproportionately impacts marginalised communities, exacerbating existing inequalities and creating new vulnerabilities. However, these communities also exhibit significant strength, resilience and innovation. Philanthropy can transform vulnerability into opportunity by focusing on community-led initiatives and building local capacity. This requires shifting power and resources to communities, valuing local knowledge and supporting grassroots movements, especially those in often neglected rural areas that are already making a difference.

Philanthropy can empower social change leaders to develop integrated strategies that cut across sectors, bringing together diverse stakeholders to co-create solutions.

Lastly, the pressure of navigating the polycrisis places immense stress on healthcare and social change leaders, who are often on the frontlines of multiple, overlapping emergencies. Philanthropy can contribute by supporting the mental health and wellbeing of these leaders. This includes funding wellness programmes, providing mental health resources and promoting cultures of care within organisations.



Tekano Health Equity South Africa's contribution

Founded in 2016, Tekano operates at the intersection of health and social justice, recognising that societal structures, power dynamics, resource distribution, and the conditions in which people are born, live and grow, shape their health. While addressing healthcare disparities is critical, Tekano believes that achieving health equity requires addressing the root causes—the social determinants of health. Health equity challenges are complex and intertwined with social, economic and political systems. Tekano advocates for interdisciplinary approaches that link health outcomes with social justice, aiming to build a community of leaders committed to advancing health equity through transformative action. Our approaches include deploying resources towards:

- **Leadership development:** Our fellowship programme strengthens the conceptual understanding of systemic drivers and equips leaders with intersectional approaches to address complex health equity challenges.

Tekano fellows are social change leaders and ecosystem builders who work in fields such as education, food systems, water, the environment, extractives, climate, economics and public health.

- **A catalytic, lifelong community of leaders driving a transformative agenda:** We bring together an interdisciplinary community of fellows and diverse partners to foster collaboration, co-learning and joint initiatives that drive meaningful change.
- **Investing in sustainable solutions:** We support collaboration and initiatives that offer sustainable solutions to health equity challenges, particularly those that address social determinants of health and emphasise local community participation and ownership.
- **Linking to a global leadership ecosystem:** We are also part of a global network of seven entities that unite changemakers across geographies and themes to advance a fairer, more equitable world. With our fellows, we contribute to and leverage this network for co-learning, transnational collaborations and enhancing impact on the South African health equity landscape.

Conclusion

As South Africa grapples with an increasing burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases, and pandemics "mirroring a global reality" the need for integrated strategies that combine

curative and preventive measures has never been more urgent. Despite ongoing contestations, the global momentum around Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the national rollout of the NHI present a critical opportunity for philanthropy to reimagine its role. By moving away from top-down approaches that undermine community agency, health philanthropy can build new partnerships that address today's complex challenges.

In this era of polycrisis, philanthropy has the potential to sustain existing gains and drive transformative change, amplify advocacy efforts to hold governments accountable, support innovative models of healthcare delivery and promote equity. In the context of competing global and local priorities, philanthropy can play a key role in supporting efforts to ensure health does not become a casualty, advocating for a balanced approach that addresses urgent health realities while investing in lasting change. Alongside essential government and community-led actions, this is a crucial moment for philanthropy to lead with impact, championing bold approaches that deliver just health outcomes for all. 

Siphokazi Mthathi is the CEO of Tekano Health Equity South Africa. Her experience spans 25 years of organising and leadership at national and international levels in the areas of human rights, social justice, philanthropy and development.



Foundation Spotlight

Collen Mashawana Foundation



By Mmatlala Beverley Lekoloane

Empowering communities to thrive

Established in 2012 by Collen Mashawana, a renowned South African philanthropist and entrepreneur, the Collen Mashawana Foundation (CMF) has dedicated itself to empowering vulnerable communities through sustainable development and community engagement. Focusing on addressing the most pressing needs of disadvantaged populations, CMF has significantly impacted the lives of many individuals and families.

Philanthropic response

South Africa faces numerous challenges, including water and food insecurity, inadequate housing, underprivileged schools and sexual gender-based violence and femicide (SGBVF). Despite these difficulties, there is a chance for

transformation and growth. The Collen Mashawana Foundation is dedicated to unlocking this potential, focusing on supporting the most vulnerable members of society. The Foundation is committed to ensuring that individuals living with disabilities have equal access and opportunities to thrive, and that older members of society receive the care and support they need in their later years. We also recognise child-headed households' unique challenges and provide them with the guidance and resources they need to succeed.

By addressing basic needs and providing essential resources, CMF empowers individuals and communities to break the cycle of poverty and build a brighter future. Its holistic approach tackles interconnected issues, ensuring that support is comprehensive and effective.



Collen Mashawana



“ CMF has profoundly impacted vulnerable communities through its comprehensive initiatives, addressing essential needs and empowering individuals to break the cycle of poverty. ”



Understanding the on-the-ground reality

CMF has appointed ambassadors in each province to engage with local communities to understand their unique challenges and identify areas where intervention is needed. Through these ambassadors, CMF conducts regular needs assessments to gather data on the most pressing issues affecting communities.

Through its regular needs assessments, the CMF has gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by vulnerable communities. One of the most striking realities is the lack of access to basic necessities like clean water, forcing families to rely on unsafe sources posing serious health risks and impacting overall wellbeing and quality of life.

The Foundation has encountered families without secure homes, exposing them to harsh and life-threatening weather conditions. The absence of stable housing also perpetuates insecurity and instability, making it difficult for these families to rebuild their lives.

Food insecurity is another pervasive issue, with many communities lacking access to nutritious food. This leads to malnutrition and related health problems, which can have long-lasting effects on individuals and families. The lack of access to healthy food options also perpetuates cycles of poverty, making it challenging for communities to break free from the grip of hunger and malnutrition.

CMF has also identified significant barriers to quality education. Families struggle to

access educational resources, hindering their children's prospects and limiting their potential. This has far-reaching consequences, as education is a critical factor in breaking cycles of poverty and empowering individuals to improve their socio-economic circumstances.

Through our work, we have encountered numerous households dealing with the devastating effects of SGBVF. Many have faced unimaginable trauma and require comprehensive care to rebuild their lives.

CMF has profoundly impacted vulnerable communities through its comprehensive initiatives, addressing essential needs and empowering individuals to break the cycle of poverty.

Housing relief: Secure homes for families

The Foundation has built over 600 houses, providing safe and secure homes for families in need. This initiative offers a sense of belonging and protects families from harsh weather conditions, improving their health and overall wellbeing.

During the recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Dr Collen Mashawana, the Chairman and Founder of the Colleen Mashawana Foundation, met with Bonakele Madlala, a 61-year-old grandmother living with 22 family members in a mud house destroyed by the floods. The family was scattered and hopeless but CMF intervened, demolishing the unsafe mud house and rebuilding a fully furnished four-bedroomed home with electricity, water and essential amenities. The new home includes accessibility

features, such as a ramp and wide doorways to accommodate Bonakele's granddaughter who uses a wheelchair. This new home has provided the Madlala family with security and dignity enabling them to rebuild their lives.

Water security: Clean water for all

By drilling boreholes, CMF has brought clean water to thousands of individuals, ensuring access to this basic human right. This initiative has reduced the risk of water-borne diseases, improved hygiene and increased productivity.

Food security: Nourishing families

CMF's food parcel distribution has nourished hundreds of families, providing essential nutrition and alleviating hunger. This support has enabled families to focus on education, economic empowerment and overall development.

Education support: Enhancing learning environments

Underprivileged schools have received essential resources, including infrastructure development and educational materials. Skills development programmes have been introduced focusing on critical skills such as entrepreneurship, leadership and life skills. Computer training and digital literacy programmes will help equip students with essential skills for the modern workforce. This support has enhanced learning environments, improved academic performance and will empower future generations.



SGBVF support: Critical assistance for survivors

CMF has provided critical support to survivors of SGBVF, including counselling services to address trauma and emotional distress and safe housing to provide refuge and security.

Celebrating 12 years

As CMF celebrates its 12th anniversary, the foundation is committed to continuing its vital work. To mark this milestone, CMF will build 12 new houses, providing secure shelter for 12 families in need. Additionally, 12 boreholes will be donated, bringing clean water to thousands more individuals. This expansion of CMF's initiatives demonstrates the foundation's dedication to creating sustainable long-term change.

The construction of the 12 houses has already begun, with the first successfully handed over to the deserving Bhengu family. The family's previous home was devastated by the 2019 KZN floods, leaving them in dire need of secure housing. The house handover took place on the 4th of July 2024, giving the family a place to call their own.

CMF's strategic partnerships with organisations committed to creating positive change are a key factor in its success. These partnerships have enabled CMF to amplify its impact, reaching more communities and individuals living in hardship. Notable partners include WesBank, IDC, Department of Social Development, SABC and Afribiz Invest.

By focusing on basic human needs and empowering communities, CMF demonstrates that even in the face of adversity, opportunities for growth and transformation exist. Continued support and collaboration can help unlock a brighter future for South Africa's most vulnerable communities.

Lessons learned and future focus

CMF's work demonstrates the impact of collaborative efforts. To drive meaningful change, we must prioritise community development, focus on fundamental human needs and foster joint action.

By prioritising community development and focusing on human needs, we can create a ripple effect of positive change that resonates throughout entire communities. However, we cannot rely

solely on government initiatives to spark this change. As individuals, organisations and collective entities, it is up to us to take ownership of our communities' development. By fostering a culture of collective action, we can pool our resources, expertise and passion to create a brighter future for all.

As CMF looks forward to the future, we are eager to continue to permanently change lives, one community at a time.

We believe that by working together, we can:

- Provide access to clean water, sanitation and healthcare
- Empower education and skills development
- Foster economic growth and entrepreneurship
- Build safe and secure housing 

Mmatlala Beverley Lekoloane is the PR and Marketing Specialist of CMF and is responsible for developing and implementing strategic marketing and communications plans to promote the organisation's mission, programmes and impact.





The transformative power of creativity

Lessons from the past for the present and future



 By Lwando Xaso

The work of creativity and culture is to reveal and explore what is possible in seemingly impossible contexts. It is about a radical imagination and enlightenment in times of ignorance and resignation.

The creative act offers infinite possibilities and boundless imagination, which are critical amidst unceasing challenges caused by numerous social ills. These include the conspicuous and inconspicuous wars, the continuing fallout from an unresolved pandemic, destructive climate change, the high cost of living and many challenges that have placed undue burdens on communities worldwide.

While these challenges cause unease and despair, they also serve as an impetus for

creative action. As Toni Morrison tells us, this is when creatives should go to work.

At this moment, the enlivening power of creativity is needed. In the shadow of all that seems to be dying in our world, it reminds us that so much more is coming to life – a revival of sorts – not a nostalgic revival longing for a life gone by, but one redefining the present and looking toward the future.

Historical precedents

This kind of revival fuelled and sustained the anti-apartheid movement, serving as a precedent for what creativity can achieve when faced with seemingly insurmountable odds.



It can defeat authoritative regimes, enable people who have been reduced to a race to define themselves as human beings, and build bridges from walls.

It cannot be denied that throughout history, culture and creativity have served as potent weapons for freedom. This is evident not only in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa but in many sites of struggle around the world. These include the liberation movement against colonialism in Mozambique, the civil rights movement against racial subjugation in the United States and the fight to end dictatorships in Latin America, among many others.

In 1979, during the height of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, a group of exiled activists and artists in Botswana formed the Medu Art Ensemble. This group advocated for an end to the South African apartheid regime through creative expression. Medu, meaning “roots” in Sepedi, preferred to call themselves “cultural workers” rather than “artists” to resist the notion of elitism and to see themselves simply as people doing their work through creative doing.¹

The Ensemble, which included future National Poet Laureates Dr Mongane Wally Serote and Keorapetse William, used the arts to build self-awareness and self-image of a people systematically broken down. They aimed at connecting people’s experiences and struggles, creating new understandings of their lives and passing on these understandings. They believed that work should come with a vision of how to take our community and people forward.²

Its exhibitions and symposiums created the opportunity for South African artists to meet cultural workers from across the world. The success of its work resulted in the establishment of the ANC’s Department of Arts and Culture in Lusaka. It further strengthened the cultural boycott against apartheid, which was instrumental in the ultimate fall of the regime.³ On 14 June 1985, a surprise raid on the Medu headquarters in Gaborone, conducted by the South African Defence Force, killed 12 people and ended the Ensemble’s operations almost overnight. This underscores how dangerous the apartheid regime deemed its work.

Despite this tragedy, many continued to advocate for the power of art and justice, including Albie Sachs, former judge of the Constitutional Court. His work at the axis of art and justice has served as inspiration and an incredible reference for our efforts, particularly his 1990 paper titled “Preparing Ourselves for Freedom,”⁴ which highlighted the role of art in our national transformation. Sachs asks the following pertinent question in his paper:

“What are we fighting for, if not the right to express our humanity in all its forms, including our sense of fun and capacity for love and tenderness and our appreciation of the beauty of the world?”

Albie Sachs was one of the eleven judges appointed by President Nelson Mandela in 1995 to the new Constitutional Court, which had the mandate to transform South Africa’s tainted justice system.

 **The work of creativity and culture is to reveal and explore what is possible in seemingly impossible contexts.** 

¹ South African History Online, The Medu Art Ensemble, available at <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/medu-art-ensemble>, retrieved on 25 June 2024.

² Ibid.

³ UCLA Library, About Medu Art Ensemble and Albio Gonzalez.

⁴ Sachs, Albie, *Preparing Ourselves for Freedom: Culture and the ANC Constitutional Guidelines*, 35(1), 187-193 (7 pages) (Spring, 1991), Cambridge University Press.

The judges had the insight and wisdom to incorporate an art gallery into the new Constitutional Court building, using art as another language, outside of its judgments, to speak to the people. The Court uses art that reflects our infamous past, our troubled present and a more expansive and hope-filled future.

**Present day interventions-
Moleskine Foundation’s
Creativity Pioneers Fund**

Inspired by this history and the Constitutional Court’s example, the Moleskine Foundation established the Creativity Pioneers Fund (CPF). The fund is a collaborative global programme supporting non-profit organisations that highlight creativity’s critical role in driving social impact.

Through their unconventional work, the Creativity Pioneers are demonstrating the indispensability of creativity in pertinent issues such as languishing economic growth, climate change, and even the viability of democracies. Shining examples include Seven Hills, a skateboarding park in Jordan, a country that hosts the world’s second largest per-capita forcibly displaced population. In that context, Seven Hills is more than a skatepark; it is a space that offers grounding and community, teaching its young people resilience as they literally and figuratively attempt to fly.

Another example is Jail Time Studios,

the first recording company to operate inside an African prison, Central Prison in Cameroon. The founders understand that imagination and creative expression become critical when living in confinement, deprived of freedom. Jail Time Records contributes to a life-giving and healing force inside Central Prison through music and teaches prisoners creative skills that can provide remuneration. By producing music with the prisoners, Jail Time Records is helping change societal views and consciousness around the prison system, humanising the prisoners to the outside world.

A third example is Bridges for Music in Langa, Cape Town, a township with a sky-high youth unemployment rate. In such a context, Bridges for Music is more than a state-of-the-art music school. It is helping to tackle the youth unemployment crisis by ensuring that young people have access to quality music education and job opportunities. Many of their graduates have gone on to find employment, start their own companies and travel the world. More importantly, they have found a renewed sense of self where unemployment had eroded their self-confidence.

**Towards better futures -
building a collaborative
framework for creative change**

In these volatile times, creative skills and action are needed. Over the last three years of the CPF, we have observed that

creativity helps communities live through uncertain times by deepening the sense of community and enhancing resilience, a communal trait. Beyond resilience, we have seen this creative work by the Pioneers fostering a sense of play and joy, creating a better state from which to change our circumstances.

The CPF operates as a dynamic coalition of partner organisations, each contributing in diverse ways to ensure that these creative and cultural organisations can sustain their efforts of using creativity for social change. Within this collaborative framework, partners offer various forms of support, ranging from financial contributions to expertise and resources, all aimed at advancing the fund’s mission. Today, it represents a coalition of more than 15 partners from the philanthropic, corporate and institutional sectors.

The impact of this work cannot be measured in traditional ways. The CPF is also cultivating new methods of data collection and impact assessment, which will strengthen the case for creativity as a force for social change. As we grow the CPF, we do so with the conviction, evidenced by South African history, that fighting for creativity is fighting for social change. 

Lwando Xaso is a lawyer, writer, curator, speaker and facilitator. She is an advisor to the Moleskine Foundation.





The Impact Bond Innovation Fund (IBIF)

The first social impact bond for ECD launched in South Africa



By Zanele Twala

The Context

Lack of access to quality early learning in a child's formative years has been identified as a major constraint to learning in later years and thus access to socio-economic opportunities in adulthood with enormous social costs¹. Early learning support is one of the first steps to giving a young child an equitable start in life – without it, their ability to reach their potential is already curtailed by age 6².

Currently, more than 3.2 million children between the ages of 0 and 5 years do not have access to any form of early learning programme³. According to research by one of the Foundation's key strategic partners, Ilifa Labantwana, the prohibitive expense as well as availability of facilities are two of the main reasons why so many children are not receiving early learning support⁴. Furthermore, current investment by government and other sources is just a fraction of what is needed to meet the demand.

We are all aware that the scale of challenges that exist in the world require a pool of funding that is far greater than ours. We also know that there are vastly

more resources in the world than our funding alone. What if we could unlock a bigger pool of funding to deliver a greater impact? What if we could drive impact by using our resources in a different way, funding innovation that has the potential to accelerate and scale impact far faster than we can through our programmes? And what if there was an opportunity to have some of our funding returned to us so we are able to use it again to invest in other impactful opportunities?⁵

These questions are increasingly answered by the philanthropic sector in finding innovative financing models to fund their work. Some Foundations are discovering that by channelling their financial resources in a different way, the outcomes they achieve can be magnified. It is for this reason that the Social Impact Bond is such an important and innovative financing mechanism.

Currently, the majority of ECD operators is unregistered and thus ineligible for government support. Paradoxically, it is these unregistered operators who serve the most vulnerable children and communities.

¹ Ilifa Labantwana and Resep. 2021 Enrolment in early childhood care and education programmes in South Africa: challenges and opportunities. ECD Working Paper Series: No. ECD WP 002/2021.

² Ilifa Labantwana. ECD Review 2019. SA-ECR_2019_12_09_2019_online_pages.pdf (ilifalabantwana.co.za).

³ Ilifa Labantwana. Website homepage: Ilifa Labantwana | Facilitating a quantum leap in early childhood development in South Africa. Accessed 9 March 2022.

⁴ Ilifa Labantwana and Resep. 2021.

⁵ Impact Investing South Africa (2024) A handbook for foundations.



The approach

The IBIF model aimed to test the efficacy of home-based early learning models in low-income areas in Cape Town, where early learning facilities are often difficult to access, low-quality and prohibitively expensive. The aim was to identify an effective model for delivering easily accessible and high-quality early learning services to young children. These services were delivered by intermediaries Mothers2Mothers (m2m) and the Foundation for Community Work (FCW). According to Zoheb Khan, (former Intellidex, a key partner of the Foundation and lead researcher on the outcomes of the IBIF bond), "This was a clear area of policy failure – ideal for investment in a social impact bond."

The IBIF delivered early learning services aimed at improving the cognitive and socio-emotional development of 2,000 children over a three-year period. The success of the programme was measured through the delivery of services to the targeted number of beneficiaries and through a standardised test on early learning outcome measures (ELOM).

The Foundation's role

The Foundation was one of three first-loss investors in the IBIF. With any new financial instrument, it is difficult to attract

traditional investors and asset managers. The Foundation was to invest in this first social impact bond and through its participation provide a demonstration effect to other potential investors in social impact bonds.

As this was the first social impact bond in South Africa, the transaction costs of contracting, mediating and running the bond were unexpectedly high. The Foundation, which is not obligated to provide capital returns to its investors, was ideally placed to participate in this pioneering transaction.

The Tutuwa Foundation was also better placed than other foundations to invest in this initiative as its close association with Standard Bank allowing it easy access to its financial technical skills. A positive spin-off of this was that Tutuwa was able to sensitise the bank to the concept and inner workings of a social impact bond – an important and worthwhile undertaking as the real scalability potential of social impact bonds lies in their being able to attract mainstream investment assets.

Accelerating impact

The IBIF was successful in two out of three outcome measures and delivered annualised returns of 14% to investors. The children who participated in the programme also saw a statistically significant increase in their ELOM scores,

although they did not reach the desired targets. The primary reason is that the targets set were based on benchmarks for children in centre-based care, where they receive higher levels and greater repetition of content.

Beneficiaries of the programme include not only the direct beneficiaries involved in the Western Cape pilot project but all those who stand to benefit from the concurrent discovery of cost-effective models for delivering early learning services to young children. Importantly, resources were applied to an area where there has been policy or service delivery failures that might not otherwise have been addressed through government funding.

Most significantly, the Foundation demonstrated through the IBIF that investors can earn market-related returns on social impact projects. It also absorbed the relatively high transactional costs which will not need to be repeated by other foundations and traditional investors in a similar impact bond. According to Zoheb Khan, "these efficiencies were already applied to the Bond4Jobs, which went a lot quicker due to the lessons learned in the IBIF." Several crucial lessons were learned that can be applied to future social impact bonds in the sector. These lessons have been documented in the Tutuwa-funded research series on social impact bonds carried out by its partner.



Furthermore, with the bonds payment system tied to performance targets, intermediaries were required to implement more rigorous and intensive performance monitoring than what they were accustomed to. A new, electronic-based system was introduced to the home-based caregivers, which produced more accurate tracking of implementation. Closer supervision, performance management and training of home-based caregivers was also required. By framing the new approach as capacity building, the additional assistance was well-received and not viewed as micro-managing or punitive.

Despite the successes, some challenges were experienced by the early childhood operators in implementing the programme. These challenges emanated from dealing with the complexity and uncertainty of the environment during COVID-19. Due to not being able to implement the face to face home-based programme, adjustments had to be made to reach the parents and children through digital platforms like Microsoft Teams, Zoom and WhatsApp. These adjustments allowed for the programme not to be affected in achieving its pre-determined outcomes.

Investing in the IBIF required bold leadership from the Tutuwa team. The legislation for foundations was unclear and it was the first social impact bond in South Africa.

Zoheb Khan

In the IBIF there is a lot of evidence to show that FCW and m2m innovated to ensure effective services were delivered...Having working capital upfront and the autonomy to decide how to use it played a large role in this innovation, as explained by a representative from m2m.

Zoheb Khan

The success of implementing this innovative financing model offers the philanthropy sector the knowledge that collaboration is a powerful force for good. Given the complexity of impact investing, it is critically important to partner with other organisations to leverage specialist skills, share learnings, co-invest and build the impact investing ecosystem.

In considering the massive financing shortfall for development, there is an urgent need for philanthropy to rethink its role and evolve from pure grant-making to strategically using funding to de-risk investments, support pilot programmes and mobilise risk capital to deliver long-term sustainable impact.

Highlights:

Project Investment 2018-2020:
R3.5m

Project milestones:

- The IBIF bond delivered strong financial returns to investors – achieving two out of three of the outcome measures resulted in an annualised 14% return on investment.
- Social outcomes delivered included the delivery of early learning services to 4,000 children and their associated caregivers in the Western Cape.
- A statistically significant improvement in children’s gross and fine motor development and emergent numeracy and mathematical skills.
- A series of research reports on the IBIF and the Bonds4Jobs social impact bonds which make a significant contribution to the development of this new avenue of funding.
- According to Intellidex, there is a lot of interest in social bonds which is a direct impact of the IBIF and the Bonds4Jobs. “If it weren’t for these two social impact bonds, there wouldn’t be so much talk about social impact bonds in South Africa right now.”



Zanele Twala is the CEO of the Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation. Prior to this, she was the Director/ Sector Expert Early Childhood Development in The Presidency. She was also previously the Executive Director of Bridge Innovation in Learning and has held the position of Country Director of ActionAid International South Africa for 5 years.



Youth leadership and development for an uncertain future

Embracing a new framework for achievement



 By Asheesh Advani

As the world experiences unprecedented innovation and change, shifting social norms and global uncertainties, youth leadership and development are more critical than ever. What kind of leadership can we help cultivate in young people to ensure they can thrive and achieve in such an unpredictable future?

Drawing on the concepts introduced in my recently published book, *Modern Achievement*, we introduce the Fixed-Flexible-Freestyle Framework as a powerful approach to personal and professional development. This Framework offers a structured yet adaptable roadmap for youth leadership—a roadmap that prepares young leaders to navigate uncertainty and empowers them to innovate and lead with confidence.

The Fixed-Flexible-Freestyle Framework: A modern approach to achievement

The Fixed-Flexible-Freestyle Framework, first used by JA Worldwide in strategic planning eight years ago, also resonates

in personal achievement. It encourages young leaders to be resilient and adaptive, equipping them to navigate the complexities of a fast-changing world.

- **Fixed lessons:** These foundational principles remain constant, regardless of external changes. They are the basic rules that apply universally, anchoring young leaders in core values and time-tested strategies.
- **Flexible lessons:** These involve adapting strategies to suit changing contexts. As young leaders face new challenges, they must learn to think broadly and adjust their approaches accordingly.
- **Freestyle lessons:** These lessons focus on innovation and creativity, encouraging young leaders to explore their unique strengths and passions. Freestyle lessons push them to embrace their individuality and leverage it to make a meaningful impact.



The role of philanthropy in youth leadership and development

Philanthropy is critical in nurturing youth leadership, especially in uncertain times. By investing in education, mentorship and innovative programmes, philanthropists can help equip young leaders with the tools they need to succeed. Philanthropy can also foster environments through which young people can experiment, learn, and grow, applying the Fixed-Flexible-Freestyle Framework in real-world settings.

For philanthropy to be effective, it must go beyond traditional charity and become strategic, focusing on long-term impact and sustainable change. By aligning philanthropic efforts with the principles of the Fixed-Flexible-Freestyle Framework, we can equip young leaders to not only face future challenges but also to innovate and create solutions that drive progress.

Case Studies: Lessons in leadership from young achievers

To illustrate the power of the Fixed-Flexible-Freestyle Framework, the experiences of three leaders featured in the book *Modern Achievement* will

be explored. Each of these individuals embodies the principles of this framework, demonstrating how it can be applied to achieve success in diverse fields.

Embracing patience in exploration

Howard Leong is an alumnus of JA Malaysia and JA Asia Pacific and is now a research strategist at JA Worldwide. He studies economics at the University of Calgary and previously studied AI at the University of Oxford. In 2021, he won the Global Student Prize for his work on the JA Malaysia Mall, an online marketplace for student-run businesses.

When Howard was 12, his family's steel manufacturing business in Malaysia went bankrupt, shifting them from a comfortable life into financial struggle. Despite this, his mother instilled in him the belief that he could still achieve anything—a **Fixed** lesson, teaching him the importance of resilience and perseverance. However, Howard often felt torn between his own ambitions. For example, becoming a neurosurgeon or a *Fortune 500* CEO, his desire to contribute to the nonprofit world and his family's expectations. This internal conflict led

to impatience and anxiety about falling behind, especially when exploring paths that didn't align with traditional definitions of success.

Through this struggle, Howard learned to embrace his inexperience—a **Flexible** approach that allowed him to adapt to new opportunities without the pressure of having it all figured out. By rejecting the need to follow a conventional path, he was able to pursue unique opportunities, such as attending an AI programme at Oxford, even without the typical prerequisites. This openness to exploration and learning reflects the **Freestyle** aspect of the Framework, where innovation and personal strengths guide one's journey.

“Philanthropy is critical in nurturing youth leadership, especially in uncertain times. By investing in education, mentorship and innovative programmes, philanthropists can help equip young leaders with the tools they need to succeed.”





The power of empowerment

Simi Nwogugu was just 24 when she left her consulting job in the US to return to Africa and establish JA Nigeria. She soon observed a **Fixed** reality: boys led in setting up businesses, but by week ten, their focus waned, and girls took over, pushing through challenges and bringing their businesses to the finish line.

Simi knew she needed to empower girls to step into leadership roles earlier. In response, she created LEAD (Leadership, Empowerment, Achievement and Development) Camp. This one-week **Flexible** programme brings 50 outstanding girls from across Nigeria to Lagos for a week of projects, opportunities and meeting role models. However, some girls did not want to go home following the camp, as it meant facing gender-based violence, often from within their families. It broke Simi's heart, but with no government agencies or organisations to help, she could not intervene.

So, Simi created one with a **Freestyle** approach and a big vision: millions of girls and women across Africa in leadership roles, shaping policies, laws and social safety nets that empower girls to complete their education and become whoever they aspire to be. This gave rise to 10 Million Black Girls, a powerful network of women leaders building businesses across barriers, regions and differences. Now CEO of JA

Africa, Simi Nwogugu is the 2023 African Education Medal winner.

Aman Ghose: Building relationships across generations

Aman Ghose, Vice President for Partnerships at Aquanow, emphasises the value of building relationships with mentors and peers who are five to ten years older. His journey began in Dubai, where his family moved from India for his father's banking job. Growing up in a multicultural environment, Aman attended an international high school with classmates from 60 nationalities. His diverse upbringing instilled in Aman a **Fixed** lesson about the importance of cultural understanding and adaptability, highlighting the value of building strong, diverse relationships.

After graduating from Claremont McKenna College in California, where he studied politics, philosophy and economics, Aman was uncertain about his next steps. This period of exploration reflects the **Flexible** aspect of the Fixed-Flexible-Freestyle Framework.

Initially, he pursued a career in diplomacy in Washington, DC, but soon felt unfulfilled and transitioned into the private sector. Guided by a mentor's advice, Aman moved to India to gain a competitive edge in the aerospace and defence industry, embracing uncertainty

and adapting his path as he progressed.

In India, Aman's **Freestyle** approach enabled him to leverage his networking skills, building strong relationships with senior professionals. He recognised the value of mentorship and experience in shaping his career decisions and cultivated these connections through work and personal interests. These relationships became pivotal in shaping his future, leading to a position at a private equity firm. He later moved to Aquanow, a fast-growing startup in Dubai, where he now holds a senior role with equity in the business.

Preparing young leaders for an uncertain future

As we look to the future, the question is not whether young people will lead, but how well we will equip them. The Fixed-Flexible-Freestyle Framework provides a solid foundation, ensuring that the leaders of tomorrow are ready to navigate whatever challenges lie ahead. 🌟

Asheesh Advani is a lifelong social innovator who has led jaworldwide.org since 2015, which has been recognised for the last six years as one of the ten most impactful NGOs in the world. His book modernachievement.com was co-authored with bestselling author Marshall Goldsmith.



Women's inclusion and empowerment in climate and conservation initiatives



By Phil Murray

The founding of an NPO

It began with a human problem and a nature problem, and when people - daft or brave enough - felt compelled to tackle them. How hard could it be to try out elegant, simple solutions in a real-life context? Trying and failing would be better than doing nothing.

Spinning the raw floss of complex socio-economic and nature conservation problems into two clear problem threads was the starting point:

1. The Walker Bay Region's natural fynbos ecosystem was undervalued and at risk of being irreversibly degraded.
2. Massive unemployment and a lack of education and training opportunities meant that the cycle of poverty continued to revolve in the towns of the Walker Bay Region, with no option for upliftment or escape. Poverty and unemployment might potentially threaten the natural fynbos ecosystems even more.

Grootbos in context

The Grootbos Foundation established a founding document and constitution before becoming registered as a non-profit company in 2003. The decision to register a Section 21 non-profit company instead of a non-profit organisation or a trust was a bold move. In 2003, the Grootbos Foundation Board needed a crystal ball with which to foresee the future of the foundation and its surrounding communities. They soon learnt that the community would identify its needs and priorities quite loudly. Community work can be chaotic and unpredictable; the process of trying new solutions and programmes is often far from elegant.

The Grootbos Foundation Board understood this. Grootbos Private Lodge, the separate commercial entity, was built on the conviction that the eco-tourism sector would continue to grow in the Western Cape. The allure of wild nature experiences and panoramic coastal views would entice tourists to the region.





Conserving the natural landscape sustainably and meaningfully would be essential for nature and eco-tourism. People are an integral part of the landscape, and its conservation cannot succeed without human investment, labour, support and buy-in for shared benefits.

The mission of the Grootbos Foundation was to combine conservation goals to preserve pristine fynbos by providing adult training in landscaping and propagation skills, resulting in landscape conservation and jobs. They launched two programmes: one focused on botanical science surveys to understand the fynbos landscape, and the other was designed to equip unemployed local people with gardening, nursery and fynbos propagation skills.

In 2003, Gansbaai and Stanford, the towns closest to Grootbos, had no public high school or adult skills-training college. The nearest high schools were in Hermanus, 40 kilometres away, making high school education seem reserved for the privileged. Unemployment was widespread and young women began to put their hands up to receive training or skills. Both women and men are capable of doing conservation work.

The Grootbos Foundation opened the Green Futures College, a skills training college focused on agriculture, which would provide transferable skills to 12 unemployed men and women from the

local community each year. The work was primarily physical. It developed skills necessary to accurately identify indigenous fynbos, propagate plants for a nursery, perform landscaping and ecosystem restoration, and remove invasive plant species and other conservation-related tasks to protect the environment and natural assets like water systems.

Women applicants also required training and applied to Green Futures College. It quickly became apparent that women could contribute to the green economy and conservation without wielding a chainsaw or tangling with an Australian myrtle.

Green Futures College expanded to offer eco-tourism and hospitality as a combined one-year programme suited to women, invasive plant-clearing workshops for unemployed female teams, and establishing a township community farm. The farm offered one-week urban agriculture courses and access to small allotment sites for unemployed women.

The Grootbos Foundation believed it was making inroads towards achieving sustainable food security by providing short training workshops, work contracts in invasive plant clearing and easy access to allotments and home gardens so that the township community could grow vegetables. However, the female voices of the community objected, arguing that

growing vegetables was old women's work, which did not inspire younger township women, even if they were unemployed. Invasive plant-clearing contracts were few and far between. The Grootbos Foundation had misread the community needs and realised it needed to adapt to remain relevant.

Community feedback

It feels wonderful to get it right. Being acknowledged for providing free training for future employment that contributes to conservation efforts is gratifying, especially when the foundation is responsible for securing donations and grants.

However, it is less satisfying when students drop out, cannot hold permanent jobs after graduating, or when the community requests programmes different from those provided. Criticism and distrust can stem from misunderstandings about how a non-profit company raises funds and operates as a public benefit organisation. While these criticisms can often be ignored, feedback from the community cannot.

The community pointed out that these issues are more complex than just two simple problem statements. Ignoring this interconnected web of issues can create a disconnect between the foundation and local people. The women of Gansbaai and the surrounding towns expressed a desire for different training programmes.



Training women

The free one-year training programme at Green Futures College underwent an annual self-review. Based on feedback from students and trainers, requests from the greater community and shifting perspectives on socio-economic dynamics, the Grootbos Foundation adjusted its approach. Female empowerment became a central theme across the foundation's diverse programmes, including youth, career and sports development.

Biodiversity stewardship training was introduced. This practical non-classroom programme prepared teams of women to work in conservation as individual contractors. Unlike the previous format, which focused solely on invasive plant-clearing training, this training provided

various useful skills. This included chainsaw operation, erosion control, hiking trail development, forest restoration, fynbos propagation, wildfire fighting, sustainable flower harvesting and more.

The next step was to provide these independent biodiversity stewardship teams with business training and mentorship, ensuring they become confident, preferred conservation agents in the region. These women understand their role in the landscape and the importance of conserving nature to drive eco-tourism in the region.

At the same time, with the foundation supporting human progress through conservation, making efforts to collect and record fynbos species, collaborating with Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and contributing to the South African National Biodiversity Institute's database (SANBI), they gained interest and traction among other landowners. This gave momentum to the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy, which is advancing conservation scientifically and on a human level. The Grootbos Foundation's Conservation Research Unit grew, focusing on biodiversity surveys and conservation collaboration, as well as establishing a

protected environment and researching the fynbos biome.

South Africa needs innovative, creative, daring solutions for its complex, complicated social problems. Initially, it might have seemed more prudent for Grootbos to invest in smaller, safer, more manageable community outreach projects as other eco-tourism businesses have done. However, conservation is only meaningful if secured for the long term.

A pristine, wild, unspoilt coastline and mountainous backdrop, rich with the magnificent flora and fauna of the Cape Floristic Region, attracts tourists from all over the world to the region. Sharing the work and opportunities with the local community ensures the collective buy-in, creating a positive cycle of employment that benefits everyone. 🌱

This innovative solution to climate change is built on listening, learning and committing to the long game.

Phil Murray is the General Manager - Communications, Public Relations and Fundraising and part of the Management Committee of Grootbos Foundation.

“ People are an integral part of the landscape, and its conservation cannot succeed without human investment, labour, support and buy-in for shared benefits. ”





Walker Bay Region landscapes

Grootbos Foundation is a registered non-profit organisation, committed to the conservation of the Cape Floral Kingdom and the upliftment of the communities therein. The Foundation works throughout Walker Bay in the Overberg, Western Cape, in the towns of Gansbaai, Stanford, Hermanus, Elim, Pearly Beach and Buffelsjag.



Insects

Grootbos Foundation's entomology team is focused on building a complete database of the insects which live on Grootbos Nature Reserve and in the Walker Bay Nature Reserve. The team has confirmed the presence of 106 bee species in the region. Picture: Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa caffra*) on a *Lobelia sp.* flower.



Entomology collection

Grootbos Foundation's entomology team is focused on building a complete database of the insects that live on Grootbos Nature Reserve and in the Walker Bay Nature Reserve. This work includes active collection of insect specimens and rigorous investigation into the relationships between plants and insects.



Floral Kingdom

The Cape Floral Kingdom is one of the most diverse floral kingdoms in the world. The incredible diversity and high instances of endemism make this landscape precious. Grootbos Foundation's Conservation Unit is committed to researching biodiversity and protecting this region in the long term.



Restoration

Considered research and investigation means that Grootbos Foundation can make informed decisions regarding conservation and landscape restoration. Restoration of the ancient milkwood forests on Grootbos Nature Reserve is part of our commitment to restoring the landscape damaged by previous unintentional human practices like wild harvesting or farming.



Fire management

The *fynbos* landscape is adapted to fire. Fire management is vital to ensure the safety of lives and livelihoods, while allowing the *fynbos* to burn naturally as is required for the germination of seeds and health of the landscape. The Grootbos Foundation supports landscape management through fire for the health of plants and animals, while ensuring protection from fire for humans.



Kids' conservation

Through youth environment education programmes, Grootbos Foundation ensures that the next generation is ready to take up the baton for conservation of the Cape Floral Kingdom.



Employment in the green economy

The Biodiversity Stewardship Programme trains women to clear invasive plant species, prevent erosion and protect water sources. The women also safeguard against severe summer wildfires, which do great damage if the natural *fynbos* vegetation is infested with invasive plant species, and they restore damaged landscapes. Grootbos Foundation empowers women from disadvantaged backgrounds to work as independent contractors and provide for their families through work in conservation.

Future-fit philanthropy

Key aspects of a strategic and sustainable roadmap



 By Reana Rossouw

In the context of the ever-evolving polycrisis, funders will have to adopt a holistic, integrated approach to make a meaningful impact in the future. We can no longer focus on single issues and work in isolation. To tackle the complex network of multidisciplinary challenges we face, it is time for a transformative, ecosystem-driven model of philanthropy. But what does it mean in practical terms? What are the next steps for individual organisations? To become future-fit, funders will have to rethink and likely adjust every aspect of their work – from strategy development to operational management to designing, implementing and measuring programmes.

Philanthropic organisations must know what their ‘next’ looks like

The ongoing and evolving global polycrisis highlights the need for institutional, private and corporate funders to adopt a holistic, integrated approach for meaningful, sustainable impact. The days of single-cause solutions and organisations are over. The complex web of multidisciplinary challenges requires funders to recognise their role within a broader philanthropic ecosystem. Collaboration and co-creation are essential for fostering transformative philanthropy, capable of addressing future disruptions and emerging solutions of the future.

1. Future-fit strategy development

Strategy not only determines how resources will be applied but also speaks directly to the change and impact funders want to achieve, giving direction to their purpose. The constantly evolving polycrisis means that the operating context is also continuously changing. Philanthropic strategies, therefore, require a more dynamic and concerted approach informed by shifting crises and the perspectives of multiple stakeholders across the ecosystem. In practice, instead of a map that sets out a specific route to philanthropic objectives, funders will need a compass that allows for flexibility, collaboration and participatory input along the strategic journey. Table 1 summarises key aspects of the required shift in organisational strategy development.

Table 1: Requirements for future-fit strategy development

Strategy today	Future-fit strategy development
<p>Based on singular, internal views and perspectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, based on science and evidence, returns delivered by past investments and programme/portfolio impact, as measured by monitoring, evaluation and impact data. Considers multiple perspectives from stakeholders across the broader ecosystem and impact value chain.
<p>A linear approach to development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clearly defined impact intent, impact statement and impact thesis underpinned by several theories of change across strategic, operational and programme/portfolio themes. Acknowledgement of the various potential pathways to creating impact and multiple opportunities for course correction over time, in cooperation with ecosystem partners - remaining flexible and adaptable in thinking and execution as new evidence emerges.
<p>Impact measured only on a programme level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly defined strategic indicators that measure the performance of the organisation and its strategic objectives, covering both investment and development dimensions. Supportive indicators on a programme and portfolio level that consider multiple dimensions of impact across strategic, operational and programmatic dimensions.
<p>A single perspective of due diligence and governance</p>	<p>An integrated approach to due diligence that considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple lenses such as gender, climate change and youth are aligned with strategic impact objectives. Multiple dimensions in due diligence criteria, such as the type of investments and the consideration of ESG (environmental, social and governance) aspects in the selection of partners and programmes.

2. Future-fit management and operations

Once funders are clear about the focus of their work (the “what”, as informed by the strategy), it is important to be clear about how they will create change and influence systems changes. This is the “how”, which speaks to operations.

While a future-fit strategy will influence the structure of an organisation, preparing for a sustainable future at an operational level will require a new perspective on the role and responsibilities of funders in the bigger ecosystem. In addition, it will be important to build a portfolio of approaches that reinforce one another and intentionally cede, share, and yield the power of the funder in support of community and societal priorities.

These priorities will evolve as the environmental, political, social and economic context and humanitarian needs change (for example, due to the escalating impacts of climate change). Table 2 highlights some practical considerations from an operational point of view.

Table 2: Requirements for future-fit operations

Operations today	Future-fit operational and management practices
Focused on single issues with single funding mechanisms, such as grantmaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using an ecosystems approach to drive social, economic and environmental outcomes, boost operational efficiency, broaden and deepen community relationships, improve sustainability outcomes and manage risk now forms part of dynamic operational strategies. Funders take on new roles, functions and responsibilities (e.g. an enabler, facilitator, collaborator, advocate in the change creation process) to effect transformative ecosystem change, in turn requiring multiple, blended and outcomes or performance-based funding structures.
Focused on funding organisations with singular impact objectives and outcomes expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial resource requirements or budgets and allocations influenced by partnership arrangements, with roles and responsibilities determined by the structure of collaborative partnerships. These should be segmented by collective/shared purpose as well as investment proportion/contribution (e.g. grants, capacity and technical contributions, infrastructure, assets, products and services). Flexible and innovative funding structures determined by programme requirements and not available funding. Shifting the impact focus from downstream (short-term metrics) to upstream (evolving and transforming mindsets, influencing behaviours and operating systems).
Focused on predetermined or existing development approaches and solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource capacity, competency and skills components determined by investment and development models and partnership approaches. New skills become invaluable, such as negotiation, legal, business development, data science and analysis.
Focused on own priorities, limited and inflexible processes and outdated systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes and systems determined by strategy, structure, investment, partnership and development approaches, together with the human resource component. Considers and prepares to integrate new technology and ESG components.

// The ongoing and evolving global polycrisis has underscored that funders – institutional, private and corporate – must adopt a holistic, integrated approach to make a meaningful and sustainable impact in the future. //





3. Future-fit programme design, implementation, management and measurement

The complex and dynamic nature of the global humanitarian landscape, combined with limited resources, makes programme and portfolio diversification unavoidable, often sidelining many “traditional” social causes.

To achieve sustainable change through a transformative philanthropic approach, many advocates need to work on several aspects simultaneously. An intersectional approach acknowledges that many factors intersect to create specific disadvantages for marginalised and vulnerable communities. By understanding these complex dynamics, philanthropic efforts can design initiatives that address multiple challenges. This comprehensive approach advances justice and fosters broader economic growth and innovation.

There is no set roadmap for dealing with the issues of the future. Table 3 shows the practical impact on the programmatic side of philanthropy.

Table 3: Requirements for future-fit programmes and portfolios

Programmes today	Future-fit programmes and portfolios
Focused on single-approach development models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed by impact intent, influenced by varying challenges and contexts, guided by multiple pathways of opportunities for transformative change across ecosystems and supported by multiple potential theories of change. • Guided by overarching themes and supported by multiple stakeholder inputs, such as gender perspectives, youth, financial inclusivity and climate change, and taking a long-term view with multi-year and supportive capacity-building support. • Diversified portfolios based on partnership arrangements, informed by community input and guided by extensive research and data.
Focused on inputs and outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on clearly defined impact goals and outcomes informed by evidence, allowing for universal, specified and customised indicators based on global frameworks that enable effective benchmarking and performance comparisons. • Collaboration on an operations level, including collective learning agendas, an agreed set of principles and values, shared measurement standards and publicly reported impact data that is assured and verified.
Focused on simplistic monitoring and sporadic evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses impact data to inform decision-making rather than as a mechanism for accountability. • Refined performance management practices that enable data collection from multiple stakeholders who contribute to impact outcomes, and using this data transparently across stakeholder groups to enable collective learning and encourage intensified scrutiny of impact data from different perspectives. • Impact measured systematically over time based on the strategy and funding cycle and across impact dimensions (who was impacted, by how much and for how long) considering the contribution of the investors and other stakeholders. • Theories of change adapted based on evidence from impact measurements. • Providing impact data on both a programme and portfolio level that can be attributed to the investor and compared to peers over time.

Conclusion

The nature of global crises and the challenges facing the philanthropic sector have fundamentally changed, requiring a transformative shift in how we approach philanthropy. The complexity and interconnectedness of the polycrisis calls for ecosystem-driven change.

This requires a dual approach. First, a

collaborative strategy with a collective focus and co-creation across the ecosystem. Second, each organisation must adapt strategically, operationally and programmatically to remain future-fit. This combination of top-down and bottom-up transformation is crucial for ensuring the sector’s efficiency and effectiveness in an ever-changing environment, while building a sustainable ecosystem.

Reana Rossouw is the owner of Next Generation Consultants, which specialises in social innovation, impact management and measurement. The multi-award-winning agency has served clients across the social sector since 2003.





Social Innovation

A systems approach to addressing the challenges of a polycrisis



By Luvuyo Rani

and Danson Gichini



The world has entered an age of polycrisis, where climate change, inequality, conflict, and other global challenges derail progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As of 2024 – halfway to the 2030 deadline since the goals were adopted – progress is off track, with only 15% of goals projected to be achieved. Around 48% of targets are significantly deviating and 37% have shown no progress or have regressed below 2015 baselines.

In Africa, poverty and inequality are worsening, with many lacking access to healthcare, education and food. The wealthiest 10% control nearly 56% of the income, mirroring extreme inequality in Latin America and India. Youth unemployment is soaring, with over 72 million young Africans not in employment, education, or training, and the youth population is projected to double by 2050. Climate change also disproportionately affects Africa, threatening food security, ecosystems and economies while exacerbating conflict over dwindling resources.

With traditional economic models failing to address these complex social, environmental and financial challenges, supporting innovative businesses that prioritise people and the planet has never

been more crucial. Social innovation and the social economy are key to responding to this uncertainty and complexity.

The need for social innovation and the social economy

Social innovation develops new solutions that address social needs more effectively than existing methods. By embracing systems thinking, it aims to transform underlying systems, creating sustainable and scalable impact across public, private and non-profit sectors. Unlike traditional top-down approaches to development in Africa, which often address symptoms, social innovation targets root causes for lasting change.

Central to social innovation is the social economy, which includes cooperatives, mutuals, associations, and social enterprises that prioritise social and environmental objectives over profit, reinvesting surpluses into their missions. Acting as society's R&D lab, the social economy tests and scales social innovation, creating models adoptable across industries, and by the public and private sectors. By promoting inclusive and sustainable development, the social economy addresses social and environmental challenges, making it a critical sector in today's global landscape.



Harnessing social innovation for systemic change

Social innovation and the social economy can be harnessed effectively through scaling models that demonstrate the ability to affect systemic change. The case studies below demonstrate the nature and effectiveness of this approach.

RLabs: Empowering communities through technology

Reconstructed Living Labs (RLabs), founded by Marlon and Rene Parker in Bridgetown, Cape Town, exemplifies social innovation driving systemic change. Through a community-centered approach, RLabs empowers individuals by providing skills training, access to technology, and fostering entrepreneurship. Over 2,500,000 people have accessed RLabs' skills, training, and economic empowerment programmes. Expanding their model to 25 countries across five continents, RLabs has addressed systemic issues like unemployment, education and social exclusion, equipping communities with tools to solve their own challenges. This model shows how empowering communities can lead to sustainable, global systemic change.

Silulo Ulutho Technologies: Bridging the digital divide

Another notable example is Silulo Ulutho Technologies. Founded by Luvuyo Rani, Silulo started as an internet café in Khayelitsha and evolved into a social enterprise providing IT training, business services, and access to technology in underserved communities. By addressing the digital divide, Silulo enhances individual skills and strengthens

community resilience and economic development. This holistic approach to tackling systemic issues underscores the transformative potential of social innovation.

BroadReach: Empowering healthcare through technology

BroadReach, co-founded by Ernest Darkoh and John Sargent, has demonstrated social innovation by using technology and data to drive systemic change in healthcare systems across Africa. Through their platform, Vantage, they empower governments, NGOs and healthcare providers with data-driven insights to improve decision-making and resource allocation. This approach has resulted in more effective healthcare delivery, better patient outcomes and stronger public health systems. By leveraging technology to address challenges like HIV/AIDS, maternal health and infectious diseases, BroadReach creates sustainable, large-scale impact, transforming healthcare systems and driving lasting social change.

Shonaquip: Empowering disability-inclusive communities

Shonaquip, founded by Shona McDonald in 1992, has been a pioneering force in social innovation, creating inclusive solutions for people with disabilities. Through a holistic approach, Shonaquip provides custom-designed wheelchairs and mobility devices for 21,000 people annually, alongside professional support services, training and advocacy to address their complex needs. Their work improves mobility and independence while strengthening healthcare systems and community-based support networks, reaching 347,000 secondary beneficiaries

annually. By addressing societal barriers for people with disabilities, Shonaquip fosters long-term, sustainable change and transforming lives.

Africa Forward by Catalyst Now: Building a pan-African network

Africa Forward, an initiative of Catalyst Now (formerly Catalyst 2030 and launched at the World Economic Forum's Davos Annual Meeting in 2020), is transforming the social innovation landscape across Africa. With 29 national chapters and 1,085 members across the continent, Africa Forward accelerates social innovation by supporting its members through three main pillars: Social Innovation Field Development, Job Creation and Skills Development, and Sustainable Financial Empowerment. Africa Forward is rapidly expanding its reach and impact by opening new country chapters and driving systemic change through its initiatives and members across Africa.

The evolution of social innovation and the social economy

The conversation around social innovation and the social economy has evolved, expanding from a focus only on social enterprises to broader systemic solutions across sectors, with increasing support from governments, the private sector and impact finance. Global platforms and policies now recognise and support social innovators, fostering environments for systemic change. A key example is the adoption of the 2023 UN resolution on promoting the social and solidarity economy. Regionally, African Union (AU) Member States in 2024 endorsed a 10-year strategy for scaling Africa's social and solidarity economy.



Unlocking new opportunities: Rethinking philanthropy funding approaches

As the social economy and social innovation gain recognition globally, philanthropists have an exciting opportunity to rethink their approach to giving, unlocking greater and more sustainable impact. Rather than focusing solely on temporary relief, social innovators address the root causes of systemic challenges. This allows philanthropists to evolve, shifting from only donors, to strategic partners, or impact investors. By aligning contributions with ventures that can scale, generate revenue, and sustain themselves, philanthropy transforms from a one-time gesture into a long-term force for change.

One way to embrace this shift is through venture philanthropy. Philanthropists can move beyond only providing grants, to offering a blend of financial and non-financial support like strategic guidance, mentorship, and network access. By establishing multi-year funding or creating funds dedicated to early-stage social ventures, philanthropists can give social innovators the runway they need to grow. Moreover, social innovators allow philanthropists to become partners in local ownership and contextually relevant solutions. Co-creating with local innovators who understand community complexities leads to deeper, lasting change. Participatory design and local advisory councils ensure solutions are embedded in local realities. The SAB Foundation exemplifies this, working with local entrepreneurs to develop solutions for South African communities. Similarly, the Ackerman Family Foundation supports small business development and job creation, fostering sustainable local growth.

The rise of social innovation also

highlights impact measurement, offering philanthropists the chance to focus on accountability and measurable results. Social innovators operate with business-like precision, allowing philanthropists to fund initiatives with clear KPIs and data-driven outcomes. Investing in capacity-building grants helps social enterprises develop robust impact measurement systems. Oppenheimer Generations Philanthropy leads in this area, ensuring their supported ventures in agriculture, education and conservation deliver measurable, long-term results. The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation also emphasises impact measurement, focusing on educational initiatives that drive economic mobility for low-income families, ensuring contributions lead to sustainable, trackable improvements.

Philanthropists can also embrace bold, high-risk ventures, taking on roles traditional funding streams avoid. Social innovators push boundaries with disruptive models, and while these ventures carry higher risk, they offer the potential for groundbreaking solutions. The Motsepe Foundation, for instance, has allocated funds for catalytic projects addressing systemic unemployment and poverty. Another exciting opportunity lies in blended finance, which allows philanthropists to multiply their impact by leveraging additional capital from governments, private investors, or development finance institutions. By structuring funding as part of co-investment deals or matching grants, philanthropists de-risk investments for the private sector, making it easier to attract larger capital pools. This approach amplifies contributions and catalyses multi-sector partnerships that achieve more collectively than any entity alone. The Ford and Rockefeller Foundations have successfully used blended finance to mobilise private sector capital for renewable energy and social justice projects in South Africa.

Finally, supporting social innovators allows philanthropists to step into systems change and policy advocacy. Many social problems are rooted in systemic issues that require structural change, not just services. By partnering with innovators influencing policy and shifting systems, philanthropists ensure their efforts go beyond aid and address the root causes of inequality and injustice. The DG Murray Trust (DGMT) exemplifies this, supporting social enterprises and civil society organisations focused on influencing national policies in education and health. By driving systemic change, DGMT reshapes structures that perpetuate inequality, creating sustainable social impact.

In this era of social innovation, philanthropists have the opportunity to rethink their role—not just as funders, but as leaders driving long-term, systemic change. By adopting a venture philanthropy approach, co-creating solutions with local innovators, taking bold risks and embracing blended finance models, they can achieve unprecedented impact. Prioritising impact measurement, policy advocacy, and systems change, philanthropy can move from temporary solutions to enabling transformative, sustainable outcomes. This is an exciting moment to reimagine philanthropy—not just to give, but to lead the way toward building a better, more resilient Africa. 🌍

Luvuyo Rani is a social entrepreneur and co-founder of Silulo Ulutho Technologies, a company dedicated to empowering underserved communities in South Africa with digital skills and access to technology.

Danson Gichini is a social innovation specialist at the World Economic Forum in Geneva, Switzerland. He has extensive experience in advancing social impact and sustainability initiatives at the global level and across Africa and the MENA region.





Radical collaboration

The Synergos approach to systems transformation



By Marlene Ogawa

Many of us are dedicating ourselves to improving our communities and prospects for growth because we believe our goals are achievable. However, we are contending with a polycrisis—an interwoven set of challenges that should not deter us. Here's how Synergos navigates these complexities.

Context: Bridging leadership model

Synergos's partnerships are inherently multi-sectoral, often starting with a focus on health, leadership, governance, education, or economic development. By involving diverse stakeholders, particularly the communities themselves, these collaborations uncover different perspectives on the root causes of the issues. In South Africa, Synergos, alongside its partners in the Small Town Regeneration Strategy within the Department of Corporate Governance, utilises the Bridging Leadership and Collaborative Governance Model. This approach fosters innovations that address various aspects of sustainable

development, recognising that the complexity of persistent challenges requires a systemic, multi-sectoral strategy.

Bridging Leadership emphasises creating and sustaining effective working relationships among key partners and stakeholders. By bridging different perspectives and incorporating elements of personal transformation for social change, a common agenda is developed to collectively address social and economic problems.

In South Africa, as in other regions where Synergos operates, our efforts are based on the understanding that communities face multiple challenges exacerbated by economic decline, social fragmentation and inadequate infrastructure. These interconnected issues impact the entire country socially and economically, necessitating a comprehensive and collaborative approach.

Synergos South Africa has therefore adopted a model of diverse implementing partnerships that intertwine economic and

social development. Applying the Bridging Leadership and Collaborative Governance Model creates a pathway for sustainable change in these communities, towns and cities, with government, business and community stakeholders.

Inner work: The foundation of effective leadership

At the core of Synergos’s approach is “inner work”, which focuses on the personal development and self-awareness leaders need to effectively navigate complex environments. This inner work is essential for fostering empathy, self-reflection and authenticity in leadership. It enables leaders to guide their communities with a deep understanding of their own biases and motivations. By prioritising inner development, leaders can align their actions with their values, leading to more meaningful and sustainable social change. This approach, which Synergos has championed for over four decades, resonates with the global movement toward Inner Development Goals (IDGs), which are committed to fostering inner development for more sustainable futures.

Trust building: The cornerstone of collaboration

Trust is the bedrock of any successful collaboration, especially in the face of a polycrisis, where uncertainty and complexity dominate. Synergos strongly emphasises building and sustaining trust across diverse groups and sectors. This trust-building process is gradual, requiring consistent and transparent actions to create a foundation for lasting partnerships. In the Small Town Regeneration initiative, trust is built through collaborative governance models that bring together local authorities, businesses and civil society organisations. These stakeholders collaborate to develop and implement solutions, ensuring that decisions are inclusive and reflective of the community’s diverse perspectives. This collective ownership and

responsibility enhance the legitimacy and sustainability of governance initiatives, leading to more resilient and empowered communities.

Collaboration: Co-creating solutions for complex challenges

Collaboration is at the heart of Synergos’s strategy to address the polycrisis. The organisation’s model of radical collaboration extends beyond traditional partnerships by actively involving a diverse range of stakeholders in the decision-making process. This includes leaders in governments and businesses and also civil society and local community leaders. By ensuring that solutions are co-created, Synergos considers the perspectives and needs of all parties involved, resulting in more inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

“ Trust is the bedrock of any successful collaboration, especially in the face of a polycrisis, where uncertainty and complexity dominate. ”

Bridging leadership is the ability to build trust.

Here’s how we grow bridging leaders.



INNER WORK

- Increasing awareness of the self, others, and the larger system
- Aligning individual intentions for authentic action

TRUST IN OURSELVES



SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Learning to use proven tools for analysing social problems systemically
- Employing strategies to build trust among stakeholders that don’t normally work together

TRUST IN OTHERS



COLLABORATION

- Working with key stakeholders to leverage collective resources and action
- Building sustainable relationships that can carry the partnership forward



The Small Town Regeneration Programme exemplifies this collaborative approach. By engaging local leaders, businesses and community members in governance processes, the initiative fosters greater transparency, accountability and community participation. This collaborative governance model also extends to economic and social development, where communities are encouraged to identify and leverage local assets. These include cultural heritage, natural resources and strategic locations to drive economic growth. By addressing both economic and social dimensions in an integrated manner, the programme creates a holistic and sustainable development pathway.

Challenges, opportunities and the path forward

The journey toward systems transformation is fraught with challenges, including resistance to change, entrenched interests and the complexity

of navigating interconnected crises. However, these challenges also present opportunities for growth and innovation. The growing recognition of the interconnectedness of global challenges has led to increased interest in systems thinking and collaborative approaches, offering the potential for greater collective impact.

As more organisations and governments embrace these methodologies, the potential for creating meaningful and lasting change increases. Synergos’s focus on inner work and trust-building can lead to more compassionate and resilient leadership capable of navigating the complexities of the polycrisis.

In conclusion, as we continue to grapple with the complexities of the polycrisis, the lessons from Synergos’s work offer valuable insights into how we can move forward, knowing that there is a collaborative method to the polycrisis.

Perhaps this moment of polycrisis is an opportunity for us to reflect deeply, individually and collectively, and to course-correct in how we act—locally and globally.

By embracing systems thinking, radical collaboration and the principles of Bridging Leadership, we can build the connections and trust necessary to navigate these challenges. The choice before us is clear. Will we retreat into isolation and division, or will we rise to the challenge and build the bridges that will carry us through these crises and beyond? One thing is certain. This is a process and a journey that requires intention, as well as the investment of both patience and relational capital. 🌀

Marlene Ogawa, Synergos South Africa Country Director, leverages bridging leadership to address complex social challenges by fostering multi-sectoral collaborations.



The power and promise of purposeful family offices:

Catalysts for global innovation



By Ivan Comerma

Introduction

Purposeful family offices stand apart from conventional ones by their capacity to lead global innovation and social impact. With a clear purpose, these purposeful family offices can enact significant change through strategic philanthropy and impact investment. The article emphasises the need for family offices to find a purpose, establish effective systems that implement it and foster the next generation of entrepreneurs through innovative approaches.

Understanding purposeful family offices

A purposeful family office goes beyond wealth management. It aligns activities with a clear mission that reflects the family's values and long-term vision. This purpose-driven approach ensures that investments and philanthropy blend into creating responsible social and environmental impacts. Establishing a purposeful family office starts with systematically identifying core family values and translating them into a vision as an actionable plan.

From purpose to action: Setting up efficient vehicles

Once a family office identifies its purpose, the next step is to set up efficient vehicles to execute this purpose. By their nature, foundations provide a formalised way to combine philanthropy and impact investing. Such foundations are tasked with not only customary charitable purposes but also the cultivation of new-generation entrepreneurs to deliver profit and impact. This emphasis ensures that the foundations are kept relevant and sustainable in the future.

Harvesting new generation entrepreneurs

Many foundations miss a significant opportunity - supporting and cultivating new-generation entrepreneurs. Foundations, therefore, have the potential to make money alongside their social missions by investing in young, purpose-driven business leaders. This attempts to divert the focus away from everyday philanthropy towards impact investing, where financial return and social impact are created concurrently.



“ With a clear purpose, these purposeful family offices can enact significant change through strategic philanthropy and impact investment. ”





The great wealth transfer

In the next 20 years, an estimated \$84.4 trillion will be passed to Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z in the US, representing one of the most significant wealth transfers in history, with \$72.6 trillion going to heirs and almost \$12 trillion set aside for charitable giving. This transfer represents an excellent opportunity for the next generation to redefine investment strategies and make them more sustainable and socially responsible than those designed by previous generations.

Unserved demand for impact investments

Next-gen family offices are increasingly driven by a desire to align their investments with their values, focusing on sustainability and social impact. This shift is apparent in the fact that newer generations clearly favour impact investing over traditional forms of investing. However, despite this increasing interest, many next-gen investors express that their needs are poorly served by current financial institutions, whose offerings often do not meet the specialised services needed to effectively manage impact-focused portfolios.

Purpose-driven private accelerators

Purpose-driven private accelerators (PDPA) are innovative programmes that nurture and develop social impact entrepreneurs. In these structured environments, young entrepreneurs receive mentorship, funding and strategic guidance to turn their ideas into viable, impactful businesses. PDPA will play a very critical role in capitalising on the next wave of next-gen family offices looking for impact investments, which are currently scarce.

How PDPA capitalise on next-gen family offices' interest in impact investments:

- **Engagement:** PDPA engage next-gen family members by aligning with the family office's values and their need to achieve real impact. They provide a platform for such people to actively participate in philanthropic activities that realise financial and social returns.
- **Deal flow:** PDPA help to build a pipeline of quality investment opportunities by focusing on local and global entrepreneurs with high-impact potential. This addresses the demand for impact investment to be realised with its supply.
- **The need for due diligence:** PDPA make the process more accessible to ensure the investments are geared toward the family office's mission and impactful goals. This lessens the risk and administrative burden of impact investing.
- **Mentorship and support:** Mentorship from experienced business leaders and networking platforms are essential for entrepreneurs. This increases the likelihood of success for startups and thereby the returns for the family offices.
- **Sustainability and growth:** By supporting profitable social enterprises, PDPA ensure that foundations can sustain their activities and grow over time. It creates a virtuous cycle where successful entrepreneurs can reinvest in their communities and inspire future generations.

Systema Capital: A model of purposeful innovation

Systema Capital serves as a model of a successful, purposeful family office. Their programme aids foundations in implementing entrepreneur programmes within their portfolios. Systema Capital's approach is broken down into the following steps:

- **Purpose discovery:** It helps family offices discover their core identity, purpose and values which it formulates into an actionable mission.
- **Entrepreneur programmes:** It mentors, funds and gives strategic directions to next-generation entrepreneurs.

P2P platform: It connects foundations worldwide fostering collaboration to mobilise more resources, jointly execute projects, and amplify global impact. Systema Capital also runs a pilot programme for young entrepreneurs at the "base of the pyramid" in Guatemala. Many participants are unaware of their entrepreneurial potential. The programme has exceeded expectations. The results were astonishing and demonstrate that mentoring these young individuals and providing them with appropriate tools effectively supports their development.

After a 90-minute workshop, 90% of participants from our partner foundation in Guatemala, an American NGO with one school serving 300 students (ages 11 to 17) in a remote area, volunteered to join the entrepreneurship workshop. Of these, 60% identified a problem with a readily available solution and 20% decided to start researching to develop that solution.

“ A purposeful family office goes beyond wealth management. It aligns activities with a clear mission that reflects the family's values and long-term vision. This purpose-driven approach ensures that investments and philanthropy blend. ”



This represents the future of impact and the cost was negligible.

Opportunities and future directions

Purposeful family offices need to adopt the following strategies to achieve maximum impact:

- **Agile structures:** Adopt flexible, responsive and adaptive structures that facilitate easy and fast responses to changing circumstances.
- **Innovation hubs:** Develop innovation hubs in family offices to incubate new ideas and pilot projects.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders to co-create contextually relevant and impactful solutions for the beneficiaries.

Lessons and insights

Purposeful family offices can be a leading example in philanthropy. Critical lessons for others include:

- **Embrace risk:** Be bold and take risks with your philanthropy if it can lead to transformational changes.
- **Collaborate:** Building partnerships could greatly improve the reach and efficacy of any philanthropic initiative.
- **Focus on impact:** Utilise data and feedback loops for continuous improvement and maximum impact.

Conclusion

Purposeful family offices have unparalleled potential to drive change in philanthropy, especially during the polycrisis. By leveraging resource endowments,

flexibility and innovative strategies, they bring essential change to society and encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs. More importantly, purposeful family offices are crucial in fostering hope and innovation. They build platforms and accelerators to engage next-gen participants, ensuring the long-term sustainability and growth of philanthropic efforts with a focus on impact investing. Creating platforms and accelerators could be an excellent opportunity for participants if such services do not currently exist.

Ivan Comerma is a seasoned professional investor, serial entrepreneur and independent advisor of family-owned foundations globally, with extensive experience in governance and financial sustainability.





The evolution of giving

CSI and philanthropy's shared future



By Cathy Duff

Giving is undergoing a transformation

The landscape of giving, whether in the context of philanthropic organisations or corporate social investment (CSI), is evolving. In the face of the current polycrisis, social and environmental challenges are viewed more thoughtfully. While philanthropic organisations and companies have mainly operated separately with differing goals and methodologies, both sectors have felt a societal shift towards deeper, more systemic thinking, inspiring them to adapt their approaches from simple charitable donations to more strategic, impactful interventions.

"Philanthropic organisations have had a longer history to explore different approaches to giving. As they take steps towards more impact-driven models, CSI is following their lead, devising more strategic and integrated approaches to delivering social change," says Triologue Managing Director Nick Rockey.

As we witness the growing understanding that lasting change needs more than band-aid solutions, this evolution begs questions about the future of giving. How is CSI shifting, and what, if anything, can philanthropic organisations learn from this shift?





The transition to leveraged CSI

The evolution of CSI, outlined in Trialogue’s Business in Society Handbook article ‘The Future of CSI’, can be characterised by three phases: Charitable CSI (1.0), Strategic CSI (2.0), and Leveraged CSI (3.0).

- Charitable CSI (1.0)** describes a welfarist approach, viewing corporate giving as a cost that is largely separate from the business. Such projects have limited alignment with business goals, may originate from reactive project selection and reflect minimal monitoring and evaluation.
- Strategic CSI (2.0)** the current predominant approach views CSI as an investment that is more integrated into the business. It features fewer, more strategic projects aligned with business objectives, enhanced monitoring and evaluation, and some collaboration beyond implementing partners.
- Leveraged CSI (3.0)** represents the future direction of CSI where giving becomes core to the business with strong corporate interdependence and leveraged alignment. This approach seeks to influence the broader system, moving beyond the scope of specific projects. It emphasises multi-stakeholder involvement and collaboration, focusing on fewer, more expansive programmes and collective impact initiatives with wide knowledge-sharing and advocacy.

1.0 Charitable CSI	2.0 Strategic CSI	3.0 Leveraged CSI
A cost	An investment	An investment
Separate function	Integrated into the business	Core to the business
Strong external influence	Strong corporate influence	Strong corporate interdependence
Limited alignment to business	Clear points of alignment	Leveraged alignment
Reactive project selection	Proactive project selection	Company-initiated and driven programmes
Many projects	Fewer, more strategic projects	Fewer, broader programmes
No collaboration	Some collaboration beyond implementing partner	Collective impact initiatives
No monitoring and evaluation (M&E)	Enhanced M&E focused on outputs and outcomes	Applied research focused on impact
Mostly cash	Cash, in-kind and time (volunteerism)	Cash, in-kind and time all core components and qualified; new financing mechanisms
Limited communication	Marketing, increased transparency	Built into brand proposition
No knowledge-sharing	Limited knowledge-sharing	Wide knowledge-sharing and advocacy
Voluntary	Legislation recognition	Disclosure requirements

Acknowledging that these different approaches are not mutually exclusive milestones but interdependent strategies that can coexist within a company’s CSI portfolio, Leveraged CSI represents an aspirational future for corporate giving.

Drivers behind the change in giving practices

Three significant trends are driving this change in the CSI landscape:

- Increasing integration within the company
- The move towards systemic impact in society
- Enhanced ways of working

These are shaping the future of CSI and offer valuable insights into the potential evolution of philanthropic organisations.

The first driver, increasing integration within the company, is primarily relevant to the corporate world. It represents a shift towards viewing social impact as an integral part of business operations rather than a separate function. While

this specific trend may not directly apply to philanthropic organisations, it is an expression of the growing importance of strategic alignment and holistic thinking in creating social impact.

However, the second and third drivers present compelling parallels for the philanthropic sector and offer a roadmap for evolution.



Towards systemic impact in society

The move towards creating systemic impact in society represents a fundamental change in how organisations approach social issues, from addressing symptoms to tackling root causes. It involves:

- A focus on systemic change and social justice
- Collaboration and the adoption of collective impact models with coordinating bodies
- Support for advocacy and research
- Applied research to influence changes in broader society
- Intentional knowledge-sharing to amplify impact

"Philanthropic organisations are increasingly pursuing a cause at a deeper level. While this approach is not yet standard practice, the transition is easier given that philanthropic organisations are not bound by the rules or management whims that can constrain corporate giving," says Rockey.

The move towards more systemic impact might see philanthropic organisations increasingly focusing on root causes rather than symptoms of social issues and engaging in cross-sector and other collaborations to address complex challenges. They might invest more in foundational research and advocacy to influence policy and practice and build knowledge sharing platforms that support giving.

Enhanced ways of working

The third driver influencing CSI's evolution focuses on adopting new, more effective ways of working, including:

- Increased use of data and artificial intelligence (AI)

- Improved giving practices
- Continuous learning through applied measurement
- Alternative sources of social funding
- Outcomes-based funding
- Increased use of innovative finance

This driver presents opportunities for philanthropic organisations to deliver greater impact. They, too, can leverage ever-improving technology to make more informed decisions about grant-making, predict the potential impact of different interventions, and measure outcomes and impact more accurately.

More flexible trust-based giving practices could deliver more inclusive, effective giving. Unrestricted funding and participatory grant-making processes might offer more sustainability for organisations and give recipient communities a voice in funding decisions.

Exploring innovative financing mechanisms offers philanthropic institutions the opportunity to experiment with impact investing, blended finance models, or social impact bonds. These approaches could allow foundations to leverage their assets more effectively, potentially creating a more significant social impact while ensuring financial sustainability.

Can CSI and philanthropy come together for "Giving 3.0"?

As companies and philanthropic organisations embrace these drivers of change, a new way of giving is emerging, one we might call "Giving 3.0".

This new paradigm is characterised by a focus on systemic impact, innovative practices and the commitment to continuous learning and adaptation. Giving transforms from mere funding to a catalyst for change, convening stakeholders to bring about holistic social

change. Data and technology can be leveraged not just to measure impact but also to predict and shape it.

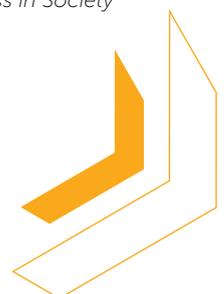
Giving 3.0 would embrace the collaborative effort. This convergence could create space for more philanthropic and CSI partnerships that combine the strengths of both sectors.

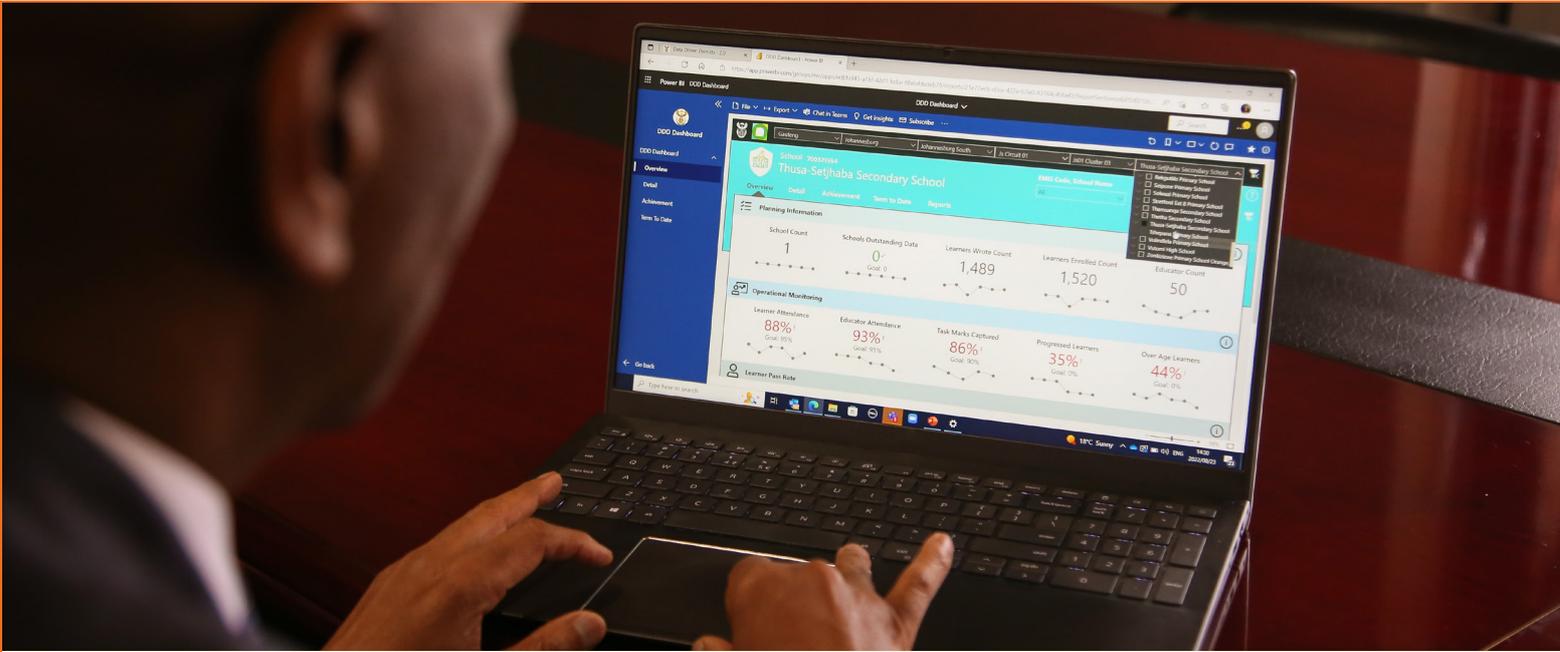
"Such collaborations open up exciting possibilities for CSI. Where companies may be hesitant to work directly with their competitors, engagement with philanthropic organisations offer the chance for fruitful partnerships. Corporate funding and business strategies could be combined with a foundation's grassroots knowledge and programme design expertise to deliver innovative, sustainable, and scalable solutions to complex social problems," says Rockey.

He adds that such partnerships have the potential to enhance corporate giving. "Instead of isolated CSI initiatives, companies can plug into larger, more strategic efforts led by experienced philanthropic organisations. This approach amplifies the impact of corporate contributions and provides companies with valuable learning opportunities and reputational benefits."

As philanthropy and CSI continue to evolve, Giving 3.0 presents a promising direction for private-sector giving to address the social and environmental challenges of our time.

Cathy Duff is a director at Trialogue, a South African corporate responsibility consultancy and leads the company's thought leadership division – which includes the annual Business in Society Handbook and Business in Society Conference.





Data-driven resilience

Strengthening systems through effective data use



By Grace Kalisha

A case study of data use at scale in education

Strategic partnerships can help address societal challenges and drive transformative impact. The Data-Driven Districts (DDD) programme is one partnership that has empowered South Africa's education sector to improve learner outcomes by equipping leaders with actionable insights through its proven, scalable model.

Times of uncertainty and crisis require more than strategy – they also demand sound operational practices that can adapt to rapidly changing contexts. The South African education sector has been significantly impacted due to long-term shifts and short-term changes over the last several years. As the requirements for workforce readiness continue to evolve, the lingering effects of the pandemic on learning, coupled with incidents such as the 2022 KwaZulu-Natal floods affecting learning hours, underscore the critical role of robust education policy and response strategies. Ensuring South Africa's children consistently have access to a quality education that prepares them

with relevant skills for further education, work, or other fulfilling pathways is crucial.

In the education sector, both strategic and operational efforts require high-quality, timely, and relevant data to inform decision-making. These determine which interventions to prioritise, how to deploy resources and which interventions yield the desired learner outcomes. Along with the need for data-informed insights, the DDD toolset provides education officials access to real-time data to inform strategies and interventions for learning and assess their effectiveness in a quantifiable and objective manner.

Launched in 2014 in partnership between the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, the DDD initiative provides South African education officials with near-real-time data on attendance and achievement for Grades R through 12. Additionally, visual dashboards offer insights into gaps and granular learner data, enabling root-cause analysis to inform the actions that can unlock and lead to improved learner outcomes.



Learnings from a decade of delivering data insights

Ten years after its inception, the DDD Dashboard represents data for 11.5 million South African learners. Out of approximately 25,000 schools nationally, 22,000 submit their data for analysis and visualisation each term; 10,000 submit weekly and over 12,000 education officials actively use the toolset. Core users include curriculum, management, governance and school management team officials. Built on top-tier cloud hosting and business intelligence software, the toolset supports education leaders in attendance monitoring to proactively deter learner dropout and achievement review by grade, subject and entity to enable focused learner interventions. The DDD dashboard can also be used to support education interventions, such as rostering for supplementary after-school programmes, ed-tech interventions and augmenting data for monitoring and evaluation for funders and NGOs.

The DDD implementation model has evolved over time while maintaining core facets that have supported its widespread adoption. At a governance level, MOUs are in place both with the DBE to provide strategic guidance and ensure strategic fit. With Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), we need to ensure alignment

with their needs and operational processes. At an execution level, technical partners provide technology development, and field implementation is provided by NGO partners, with the New Leaders Foundation (NLF) as the main implementing partner. NLF provides user training and support government stakeholder management, education intervention support and change management to drive usage adoption.

Many lessons have been learnt as the adoption of the DDD initiative has increased. It is currently embedded within the ways of working of the DBE and PEDs and remains a hub for shared innovation that both supports and stretches goals for public education. Some lessons learnt include:

- **Set phased goals to allow big initiatives to get started:** Though the ultimate goal was a system-level impact at a national scale, the programme launched only in seven districts. The early stages aim to prove the concept, refine data collection and validation processes, test visualisations and determine the key data needs of district officials. This phased approach facilitated expansion to eight out of nine provinces. It achieved more than 95% of learner and school coverage

in active provinces, coupled with fostering a strong and growing data user community.

- **Decision-focused engagements with partners and stakeholders:** Public-private partnerships are key to scaling impact. Bringing partners along on the journey balances the speed of execution with creating a solid base for sustainability. Focused engagements that frame decisions for mutual benefit while being explicit on the cost and impact enable a clear way forward as challenges are met. The partnership with the DBE and PEDs has been invaluable in ensuring programme relevance and impact.
- **Balancing student and user-centric innovation with contextual fit:** A technical upgrade of the DDD toolset moved from a cumbersome custom-built solution to a nimbler platform. The change process was slow and was paced to balance the value gained from using the best data hosting and business intelligence technology offered in the market with the level of change users could absorb. Training and support were provided to users, visuals were kept intuitive and contextualised and processes were iterative to ensure that user needs were incorporated.

- Leveraging the right skill set for the need and stage:** Different skill sets have been used throughout the programme's history. A consultant-led project management function enabled acceptance of the case for change, after which a more sustainable NGO partnership with NLF was employed to embed the programme.

Moving ahead as a sector

The DDD initiative is at a critical point in its evolution, offering opportunities for current and new partners. The technology upgrade enables prediction and proactive management of learner outcomes. Core implementation activities are well-defined, leaving room for growth and innovation. Government partnerships provide support

to DBE and PEDs within an established collaboration. The next phase will focus on enhancing meaningful data use for improved learning, further exploring tools such as innovative machine-learning applications and testing other new use cases.

There are many entry points for partnerships to leverage this toolset further to increase data use in education and drive learning improvement. Opportunities include pilots that integrate data into enhanced interventions, focused applications in areas like literacy and dropout management, creating centres of excellence in specific provinces and adapting the technology for use within South Africa and beyond.

The radical pace of change and high

uncertainty necessitates using accurate and timely data to drive efficiency and effectiveness in education. The DDD toolset's development and adoption provide a framework for other initiatives seeking system-level reach and learner-level impact. While significant progress has been made since the programme's inception, the next phase of impact will be achieved through new partnerships and leveraging data in our fast-changing world. 

Grace Kalisha is the Programme Manager for the R-12 Data Driven Education portfolio at the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation in South Africa. She oversees the Foundation's investments in programmes and initiatives within the portfolio.





Philanthropic leadership

Essential qualities for leaders to survive and thrive in times of crisis



Globally, the terms polycrisis (the plethora of intersecting crises we face) and permacrisis (the permanency of crises) have entered philanthropy discourse as complex political, social economic and environmental stresses converge. In the face of unprecedented and overlapping challenges, organisations need competent and resilient leaders to develop and implement sustainable solutions. This applies to leaders of philanthropic organisations and to the philanthropy sector as a whole.

The Independent Philanthropy Association South Africa (IPASA) plays an important role in strengthening, growing and transforming the independent funding sector. This includes equipping leaders in philanthropy with the knowledge, skills and tools to navigate this maze of challenges with foresight, empathy and a commitment to sustainable solutions. Through this work, IPASA has identified and promoted many of the essential qualities and behaviours needed by philanthropy leaders, as described in this article.

By Louise Driver





“ The ultimate measure of a [wo]man is not where [s]he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where [s]he stands at times of challenge and controversy. ”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Leaders in South Africa’s philanthropy sector need to adopt a holistic approach to address the interconnectedness of crises. It can be challenging to **understand all the factors that inform effective funding strategies**. They must first understand the cross-cutting issues affecting their funding focus areas and then carefully consider the ripple effects of their decisions on both social and environmental fronts. Recognising this need, IPASA has run a Climate Change Funder Support initiative for the past four years. This programme was designed to help leading philanthropic organisations in South Africa understand how the climate crisis affects the issues they address through their funding focus areas and to help them respond to the interconnectedness of these issues. Through this work leading Early Childhood Development (ECD) funders are exploring opportunities for impact at the intersection of ECD and climate resilience in South Africa, alongside

climate and environmental funders.

To grasp the possibilities and probabilities of the poly/permacrises, leaders need to work with a **futures mindset**, exploring multiple potential ways in which society may change over different time horizons. For philanthropy, this means developing a deeper understanding of where philanthropic needs may arise in the future, as well as the drivers of need and connections between them.

Leaders also need to apply a **systems lens** to their work in order to encompass the multiple, complex systemic drivers of an issue. Additionally, rather than adopting a problem-centred approach when examining how problems are interconnected, leaders should focus on opportunities, considering the potential for ripple effect change through well-thought-out initiatives that can leverage systemic change. Equally, futures approaches will assist leaders to explore

the multiple, complex systemic impacts of philanthropic interventions. Philanthropy leaders have realised that they cannot solve problems of polycrisis magnitude by themselves.

The most successful leaders will skilfully **mobilise deep collaboration** to fund solutions – not just collaboration between funders but partnering across sectors and across funder and stakeholder networks. Leaders in South African philanthropy are forming public-private philanthropy partnerships. When private foundations partner with government and corporate funders, their collaborations are stronger and better equipped—in resources and diversity of skills and perspectives—to address the polycrisis. A good example of this is the new Education Outcomes Fund, which brings private and corporate foundations together with the Department of Basic Education to collectively tackle issues related to access to education in the country.



Innovation is another essential tool for leaders addressing current challenges. The Education Outcomes Fund demonstrates the value and impact of multi-stakeholder collaboration and also the potential for philanthropy leaders to be innovative in how they fund through innovative funding mechanisms. Leaders championing sustainable innovation provide the foundations for long-term resilience.

Adaptability, flexibility, resilience, an appetite for risk and the ability to learn from setbacks are essential to deal with dynamic, evolving challenges.

In these times, leaders need to develop **inclusive decision-making** processes that embrace diverse perspectives so that policies address the needs of all, fostering social justice and environmental equity. Community-led philanthropy and participatory grant-making approaches are often timelier and more context-appropriate during crises, leading to a strong local and global push for community-driven systems change. This funding practice involves all relevant parties at every stage, from identifying issues to developing solutions and then implementing and evaluating. This approach values local knowledge and expertise and requires humility from

leaders of philanthropic foundations and the willingness to shift power to the communities they fund, accepting that these communities hold the solutions to the issues that need to be solved.

An emphasis on **building trust** through **transparent communication** will serve leaders well during times of crisis. Leaders in philanthropy must communicate honestly and clearly, openly acknowledging challenges and outline **actionable** plans to all possible stakeholders. IPASA provides opportunities for **peer-learning** and sharing **best practices** through its member and philanthropy partner network. Such channels help leaders in the philanthropy sector discover and promote innovative solutions to complex challenges during times of crisis. At the onset of COVID-19 in South Africa, philanthropy leaders were at the forefront of tackling the fallout from the crisis. They had to manage the additional strains the pandemic placed on systems of support. IPASA's networks enabled people to share their ideas, plans and expertise with others in the philanthropy sector to create a unified response for greater impact.

Conventional approaches will not take

us far enough or move fast enough in a world of polycrisis and permacrisis. The new leader will embrace **sustainable and inclusive models**. They will recognise the gravity of the challenges and take bold, ethical and innovative actions to shape a future where societies and ecosystems can thrive. The responsibility to lead towards a sustainable and resilient future lies in the hands of leaders who can influence positive change.

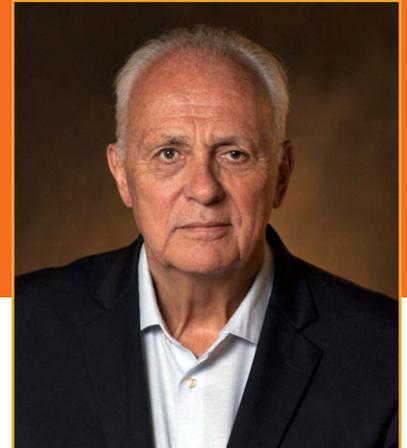
Courage is perhaps the most important leadership quality for leaders working in the philanthropy sector today and into the future: courage to stay the course; courage to transform one's thinking, mindset, behaviour and practice; and courage to embrace the authenticity of a participatory and systemic approach. Our leaders need courage—the ability to feel the fear and do it anyway—in order to drive the great transformative changes required to tackle the global challenges we face. 🌍

Louise Driver is the Executive Director of IPASA, the Independent Philanthropy Association South Africa, a membership-based philanthropy organisation which promotes, advances and supports philanthropy in South Africa.



Interview with Lord Malloch-Brown

Interview by Yogavelli Nambiar



Lord Mark Malloch Brown is a British diplomat, communications consultant, journalist and former politician who served as president of Open Society Foundations from 2021 to 2024. A former member of the Labour Party, he served as Minister of State for Africa in the Brown government from 2007 to 2009.

He was Development Specialist at the World Bank from 1994 to 1999, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme from 1999 to 2005 and United Nations Deputy Secretary-General from April to December 2006. He led the UN's creation of the Millennium Development Goals which were adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in December 2000.

1



What are your thoughts on the promise and power of philanthropy at this time?

The framing of the power and opportunity of the polycrisis for philanthropy is only half the truth because the polycrisis can also overwhelm the sector. The greatest danger for philanthropy is when government fails structurally to provide the social safety net needs of the population. Philanthropy comes in as a makeshift substitute but never has the resources to do it adequately.

In South Africa or anywhere else, you cannot fund massive service provision through philanthropy, whether healthcare or education. In times of crisis, there is always a risk that those service delivery demands on philanthropy overwhelm its capacity to fulfil its much more important role of strategic innovator. This is the role of innovating and finding new solutions that government can then pick up and

take to scale. I have a clear relationship in my head of philanthropy as a frontline innovator that allows the government to surge in behind. However, when philanthropy has to look over its shoulder and see that the government doesn't have the means, capacity, or will, it tends to get stuck doing the job it should be handing over.





2

What are ways in which philanthropy can play a more strategic role?

When I was President of Open Society, we assembled a group of major philanthropies including several based in Africa to coordinate our advocacy, spending and delivery response to COVID-19, and to overcome the massive inequities in access to vaccines. At that time, we were pressing for African solutions. These are moments when you can help crystallise responses. We provided critical support to different African public health agencies – including South Africa’s – who needed to play the frontline role. We provided capacity at the surveillance and drug supply ends, offering other kinds of responses beyond vaccines such as public health containment strategies.

When we look more widely across the polycrisis, there is a replica of that. The

foundations have a big role to play in advocating that there is a polycrisis which is not an acknowledged fact of global politics. It is highly likely that even within the various presidential campaigns across the world this year, no presidential candidate has mentioned the word “polycrisis”.

It is an unevenly recognised crisis and requires advocacy to get the world to respond. There is also a financing role in securing a response from the different institutions that should be on the frontline. Together, this might look like getting a pandemic treaty approved, strengthening the roles of the IMF, World Bank and regional development banks to create more robust responses during this time or looking at national economic resilience

strategies related to supply chains and localised food production. There are many sweet spots for foundations and their grantees to intervene.

Foundations have two kinds of capital – urgent, or some might say quick, capital, and patient capital. With the quick, you get yourself into filling holes for others who couldn’t get there in time. That often means a welfare response but the critical thing is to limit it in duration.

Patient capital is more long-term. Much more than scientific research, human rights work at the Open Society Foundation is a multi-year initiative. There are setbacks along the way, and it is difficult for a government funder to sustain that kind of commitment.

3

We often talk about cross-sector partnerships. How should philanthropy be thinking about its relationship with the public sector?

I have spent a lot of time re-educating my former colleagues to move away from the hostility towards government with the understanding that if you wanted to succeed, the government is likely to become a critical partner at some stage – not necessarily from the beginning and not always. When it does,

you need to retain your independence to allow you at times to be critical of government to make sure that it lifts its level of ambition to what is needed. It’s a more nuanced relationship. At times it’s a partnership, at times it’s critical opposition, and at other times, it might mean not minding if your grantees are

out on the streets demonstrating against government.

You are looking for grantees who are tough and pragmatic – tough about results and pragmatic about how they are going to work with the government when that’s what it takes.

4



What is the type of philanthropic leadership you believe is required now?

I am intrigued by the issue of leadership. I have seen a generation of leaders in Britain and the US who ascribe to a very traditional, hierarchical form of leadership of leading from the front. This left me with an acute eye for those who represent another mould. For many years I worked for Kofi Annan who grew up in Ghana and was an exceptional leader.

At this time, we need leaders who can bring people together during crises and not drive stakes between them. A leadership style that begins with listening,

tries to find points of consensus, never strays far from fundamental values and principles. At the same time it is pragmatic and recognises that sometimes a slice is better than the whole loaf when you can't get the whole loaf.

In a time of crisis, philanthropic leaders need to step beyond the usual pathways. It is time for outside-of-the-box thinking, exceptional partnerships, coalitions and ambitions. That it is rarely just from the philanthropist themselves but rather the people who work with them.

Ultimately, the leadership we need is going to come from the grantees. I am not one of those who believes solely in the trust-based philanthropy model where you give the grantee a big cheque and let them get on with it.

The need for change is much too deep at the moment as you need coordination, structure and learning between philanthropic partners. That said, you still require a behind-the-scenes role while the grantees should be the voice and frontline.

5

In a recent article you wrote, you mentioned that philanthropists should become “heretics” – what did you mean by this and how do you see this playing out in South Africa?

South Africa is one of the most challenging environments for various reasons (its history, its high level of poverty, inequality and unemployment, among other factors). Large foundations funded by western fortunes may understandably raise many red flags in contemporary South Africa.

That is challenge number one: to find a way that is not disruptive of the country's progress, nor undermining of it. Secondly,

there is a broken state problem, where the jobs or services that people aspire to in the country and deserve are not being delivered. Therefore, you have this massive political backdrop of the yawning gap between people's expectations and what is being delivered coupled with deep suspicion.

In comes philanthropy. It can never be the knight on the white horse in that kind of context. It has to earn its way with

results. There's been a lot of fantastic, low-profile philanthropy by South African and international philanthropists who have worked collaboratively with various local actors. That's important – philanthropy cannot come in with a big splash or be paternalistic and promise to solve South Africa's problems. Rather, it must earn its way through being responsive to the needs of the communities they serve.





Our winning entry at the Beacon Awards for Sustainability 2023

This represents the work ahead, where communities grow initiatives that are good for people and the environment, that are sustainable and regenerative and that embrace the growing green and blue economy.



Food security and ability to grow things will become important

Understanding soil regeneration, farming best practice, properly constructed and tended community gardens and building partnerships across the value chain are all essential ingredients of a successful food growing business, sustaining communities and nourishing bodies.



Ecotourism

Ecopreneurs provide opportunities to grow capacity around delivering tourism experiences. Some are about delivering experiences as guides, some are about services and some about accommodation. One thing South Africa has is a very beautiful environment and securing that environment also opens the opportunity for people to experience it.



Ecopreneurs in action

We use a farm in Baardskeederbos to provide practical training and we develop skills in bee-keeping (apiculture) as a platform for learning how to build an eco-business while also securing the environment that makes this business possible.



The Ecopreneurs' Ecosystem

In a polycrisis, we must equip young people to navigate a disruptive world, become productive, and earn a living in a country with one of the highest unemployment rates. They must also learn to minimise environmental harm.

Growing eco-businesses that enable youth to earn while benefiting the environment is crucial to building resilience. Five Trails Africa develops the capacity of Ecopreneurs from resource-poor communities, helping them address economic and environmental challenges for themselves and their communities. The programme enables participants to enhance their Eco-Intelligence, strengthen their Eco-leadership, identify Eco-Opportunities and turn ideas into Eco-Businesses.

This future-building initiative is supported by philanthropic funding and an earned income model.

<p>Pause & Reflect Tool 2</p> <p>Using journaling as a tool for mindfulness and introspection.</p>	<p>Safari 2</p> <p>Explore and connect with your environment.</p>	<p>Who Are You? 3</p> <p>Delve into a deeper version of yourself.</p>	<p>Finding Purpose 4</p> <p>What are your ambitions, aspirations and guiding light?</p>	<p>Finding Purpose Tool 3</p> <p>Exploring your WHY and how it connects to the needs of others and the environment.</p>	<p>Seed as Potential Energy 5</p> <p>Step into a world of creative, innovative ideas.</p>
<p>Magic of a Seed 6</p> <p>Get growing, get glowing!</p>	<p>Feed the Seed 7</p> <p>Shared energy will help it grow. Explore the power and potential of the collective.</p>	<p>Networking Tool 4</p> <p>Learn how to make the most out of your social capital.</p>	<p>Creating a Safe Space 8</p> <p>Explore better communication to support team dynamics.</p>	<p>Systems at Play 9</p> <p>We are a part of many systems: how do these systems affect us and how we affect them?</p>	<p>Kaizen Thinking 10</p> <p>Continual small changes, lead to improvement.</p>
<p>Kaizen Tool 2</p> <p>How to continually change for the better.</p>	<p>Emotional Intelligence J</p> <p>Connecting our head and heart to shift our mindset as we strengthen self.</p>	<p>Be Inspiring Q</p> <p>What inspires you and who do you aspire to be?</p>	<p>What's Your Story? K</p> <p>Inspiring others through your own experience.</p>	<p>Hello Future! 2</p> <p>A sneak peek into the days ahead.</p>	<p>Let's Talk Lunch 3</p> <p>Unpacking the food story as we know it.</p>



Flood management

Using simple construction to make more resilient community infrastructure.



The all consuming fire seemingly destroys all with no way of overcoming the challenging conditions

Ecopreneurs use vignettes (images rich in detail that can be unpacked) to develop regenerative leadership strategies that can turn challenges into opportunities, just as fynbos regenerates to create abundant and sustainable diversity.



What is Philanthropy For?

By Rhodri Davies

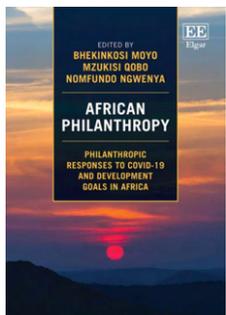


In recent years, philanthropy, the use of private assets for the public good, has come under renewed scrutiny. Do elite philanthropists wield too much power? Is big-money philanthropy unaccountable and therefore anti-democratic? And what about so-called "tainted donations" and "dark money" funding pseudo-philanthropic political projects? The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified many of these criticisms, leading some to conclude that philanthropy needs to be fundamentally

reshaped to play a positive role in our future. What is Philanthropy For? (Bristol University Press, 2023), Rhodri Davies examines why it's important to ask what philanthropy is for, as it has shaped our world for centuries. Considering the alternatives, including charity, justice, taxation, the state, democracy and the market he explores the pressing questions that philanthropy must tackle to be equal to the challenges of the 21st century.

African Philanthropy: Philanthropic Responses to Covid-19 and Development Goals in Africa

By Bhekinkosi Moyo, Mzukisi Qobo and Nomfundo Ngwenya

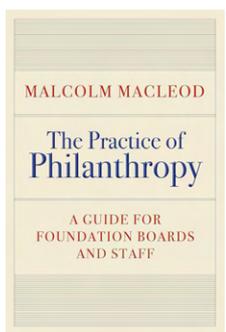


Opening novel avenues of knowledge in the study of African philanthropy and development, this incisive book provides a critical assessment of philanthropic responses during crisis and non-crisis periods. It explores how collaboration between multilateral institutions and philanthropic organisations during a crisis can be harnessed and replicated to address the continent's developmental challenges during non-crisis periods.

Combining empirical insights with cutting edge theory, this forward-thinking book investigates the activities of high-net worth individuals, foundations, and corporate actors working with governments to create shared value. Through individual case studies and comparative analyses across diverse sectors and geographies, chapters demonstrate how shared value is crucial to building resilience in societies through philanthropy.

The Practice of Philanthropy: A Guide for Foundation Boards and Staff

By Malcolm Macleod



This book describes the unique challenges of running a foundation. With practical insights and wisdom gleaned from years of experience, Malcolm Macleod explores the crucial elements required for impact, from building strong relationships with non-profits to getting the most out of a governing board to managing an endowment.

This essential book:

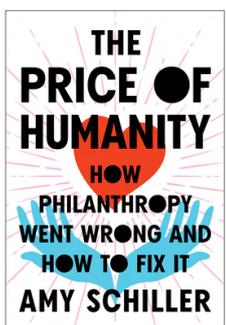
- Shows readers both the principles of

grant-making, and how to put them into practice to make more effective grants.

- Shows readers how to master the practice of philanthropy so they will be able to recruit and engage an excellent board, achieve superior investment returns, and make impactful grants.
- Gives readers an inside view of how foundations work and how to run them in a way that maximises the impact of grants.

The Price of Humanity: How Philanthropy Went Wrong and How to Fix It

By Amy Schiller



The word "philanthropy" today makes people think big money—Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffet and Andrew Carnegie come to mind. The scope of suffering in the world seems to demand an industry of giving, and yet for all the billions that are dispensed, the wealthy never seem to lose any of their money and nothing seems to change.

Amy Schiller shows how we get out of this stalemate by evaluating the history of philanthropy. She argues philanthropy's contemporary tendency to maintain obscene inequality and reduce every cause to dehumanising technocratic terms is unacceptable, while maintaining an optimism about the soul and potential of philanthropy in principle.



South Africa's Only Independent Philanthropy Network



Supporting Philanthropy



Strengthening Philanthropy



Transforming Philanthropy

MEMBERSHIP OFFERINGS

As a membership-based organisation we offer a range of services to our members and the philanthropy sector as a whole, including:

Knowledge sharing and learning opportunities

Access to our knowledge management online member portal

Collaboration and networking opportunities

Expert advice on integrating climate issues into grant-making and investment portfolios

Access to sector-specific events

Invites to member-organised and local and global partner philanthropy workshops and events

Through our services and offerings, we aim to build capacity, promote innovation, and drive positive change in the philanthropy sector in South Africa.

IPASA FUNDER SERVICES

We offer a range of events and knowledge products to independent funders in South Africa which include:

Funding Sector Support Initiatives

Annual Philanthropy Review

Funder Collaboration Initiative

Annual Philanthropy Symposium

Climate Funder Support Initiative

Grant-Making Toolkits & Resources

VALUE OF IPASA MEMBERSHIP

"The opportunity that IPASA provides to network, to forge relationships and partnerships in the funding sector has been invaluable."

Linda Whitfield
The Harry Crossley Foundation

"IPASA is dedicated to empowering South Africa's philanthropic sector by facilitating partnerships, knowledge sharing, learning, networking and collaboration among funders, to drive practical, measurable change."

Mmabatho Maboya
Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation

"IPASA enables us to leverage knowledge, share learning from the membership network, and identify opportunities to learn best practices in specialized areas."

Leonora Sauls
Ackerman Family Foundation

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IPASA
INDEPENDENT PHILANTHROPY
ASSOCIATION SOUTH AFRICA

EMPOWERING THOSE COMMITTED
TO EMPOWERING OTHERS

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