



PHILANTHROPY & ACCESS TO FINANCE

F20 Action Paper

How Philanthropies & Philanthropic Networks Can Act and Commit

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evolving role of philanthropy amid geopolitical shifts must transition beyond traditional charity models. By embracing innovative approaches and cross-sector partnerships, the philanthropic sector should amplify its impact and address critical gaps in governance and resource mobilisation. Collaborative platforms, such as the G20, provide opportunities to align philanthropic efforts with global financial systems, ensuring that sustainability and inclusivity remain at the forefront of international development. Philanthropic networks must work to enhance transparency and accountability, leveraging participatory decision-making processes which include diverse stakeholders, especially from the Global Majority¹. This ensures that financial interventions address the unique challenges and priorities of the most vulnerable communities. Additionally, philanthropy must champion sector-wide initiatives to monitor and map climate finance flows, utilising technology to make financial data accessible and actionable.

To empower local communities effectively, philanthropic organisations are encouraged to adopt regenerative practices offering multi-year, unrestricted funding to support sustainable and culturally relevant solutions. Participatory grant-making, Indigenous-led funds, and capacity-building initiatives should be mainstreamed, to shift decision-making power to communities. Removing barriers to funding, such as complex application processes and stringent eligibility criteria, further levels the playing field for smaller, community-led organisations. All this must be underpinned by sustained partnerships between philanthropic networks and global financial institutions to address systemic challenges in governance and resource mobilisation. By promoting transparency, harmonising impact measurement standards, and supporting initiatives that bridge the digital divide, philanthropy can strengthen financial systems and advance climate and sustainability goals. While philanthropy can't avoid facing the uncertainty of our current age, as a catalyst for innovation and scaling impact, the sector has the opportunity to drive systemic change and shape our world for future generations.

Hamburg/Cape Town, 18 January 2025

¹ The Majority world is defined as those who support climate action, social justice and democracy.



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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

1.1 Global Challenges for Philanthropy in 2025

Philanthropy in 2025 is at a crossroads. Outdated strategies are having **less and less impact** for the most vulnerable in society. Meanwhile, global changes threaten the prospects of a sustainable and equitable future for our world. Geopolitical shifts have redirected global finances toward immediate humanitarian relief and post-conflict recovery, often overshadowing critical long-term development goals. Traditional donor nations like the United States, **UK**, the **Netherlands** and **Germany** are redirecting aid funds to domestic security priorities linked to migration, militarisation and industry. Escalating tensions between major powers exacerbate polarisation, hampering global collaboration. While institutions like the **United Nations** and **Bretton Woods institutions** are being challenged by growing nationalism, **undermining the cohesion** and influence of non-state actors in the global development community.

Climate change remains a growing challenge. Regions across Africa, Asia, and Latin America are grappling with the effects of extreme weather, underscoring the urgent need for mitigation, adaptation, and loss-and-damage funding. However, without sustained support in the international financial architecture this will not be enough. Commitments made by states during COP29, including funds of up to \$300 billion, fall far short of the estimated \$1.3 trillion needed to combat climate change and its effects. This endangers the goals set out in the Paris Climate Agreement as well as the implementation of the SDGs. With the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement, sustaining meaningful progress will require non-state actors like philanthropy to step into the gap amidst a growing demand for support.

Advancement in technology like Artificial Intelligence (AI) has also been a double-edged sword with growing concerns around privacy, the widening digital divide and increased emissions linked to data centres and technology manufacturing. Philanthropic organisations face the difficult task of adopting these tools responsibly, while balancing innovation with ethical stewardship. Alongside this, younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, question the power dynamics inherent in traditional philanthropic models calling for a shift towards more participatory, activist approaches that align with community-led solutions.



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1.2 Philanthropy's New Frontiers

Amidst the uncertainty and disruptions, the status quo has been upended. In the wake of a new world order, philanthropies are being challenged to go beyond traditional roles of giving, evolving into bridge-builders, advocates, catalysts and reforming agents. The focus of philanthropy must shift from traditional charity models, which address only immediate needs, to strategies that tackle the root causes of global challenges. This transition reflects a growing recognition that sustainable solutions require structural inequities, power dynamics, and long-term societal transformation to be addressed. An essential aspect of this evolution is the emphasis on regenerative philanthropy that enables communities to thrive and achieve long-term independence. By adopting bold, innovative approaches, the sector can foster collaboration, and scale solutions; using the resources at its disposal to bring other stakeholders back to the table. This requires championing sustainable giving among private sector actors, empowering civic voices and holding governments accountable for advancing the wellbeing of their citizens.

This paper explores some of the strategies and actions that align with the unique role that philanthropy must play in our contemporary world; to not only respond to today's challenges but also anticipate and shape the future. The paper's creation began at the inaugural [Hamburg Sustainability Conference \(HSC\)](#) in October 2024, which engaged international cross-sectoral discussion and commit to concrete progress on sustainability and to engage in a renewed push towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

In order to actively address the climate finance and philanthropy discussions that were central to the F20 Sustainable Finance Working Group convenings, Foundations Platform 20 held two side events as part of the HSC. The first being the roundtable discussion, *How Can Philanthropy Make Climate Finance More Accessible for Women?*, and the second being the world café, *How Philanthropy & Philanthropy Networks Can Act and Commit*, which was co-hosted with [ZEIT Stiftung Bucerius](#) and [WINGS](#). Participants in both sessions included a broad range of philanthropic stakeholders, civil society actors, as well as representatives from the Indigenous communities, the public sector, think tanks, multilateral funders as well as UN agencies.



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G20 Strategic Reflection: Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability

This paper is published at a time when [South Africa's G20 Presidency](#) will be one of the major international platforms of 2025. Under the theme of "Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability," the G20 will focus on inclusive economic growth, food security, and leveraging artificial intelligence for sustainable development. This offers philanthropic organisations and networks an opportunity to amplify their impact, influence policy decisions, and foster collaborations that address systemic challenges. As a respected and diverse multilateral platform, the G20 offers the philanthropic community a chance to collaborate and engage state and non-state actors with a united front. By working together, philanthropy can advance common goals, scale impact and ensure that those in power support philanthropic efforts to empower communities across the globe.

By participating in G20 policy discussions, philanthropies can advocate for initiatives that promote equitable growth and social development, specifically for marginalised communities. It also offers philanthropic organisations an opportunity to form partnerships, co-create solutions and mobilise resources. Finally, as the first G20 to take place on African soil, South Africa's presidency offers a unique window for the global philanthropic community to connect with African counterparts, learning from local experiences and reforming African-orientated philanthropy to build trust and solidarity with stakeholders of the region. To engage effectively philanthropic organisations and networks must be open to adopting a new way of thinking and implement practices that are truly aligned to the needs and aspirations of the most vulnerable and excluded.





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SECTION 2: EMBRACING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

2.1. The Role Of Innovative Global Networks For Philanthropy

Innovative and independent global networks, like the F20, remain pivotal for convening multi-sector stakeholders, offer a channel for connecting philanthropic actors with policymakers, business leaders, and civil society. Research shows that adopting a collaborative approach in funding models better supports communities by reducing fragmentation and enhancing service provision². Philanthropic networks play a crucial role in helping stakeholders identify and address competition that may hinder collective impact. Early candid discussions within philanthropic collaboratives can help uncover non-negotiables that might impede effective joint action. The [Bridgespan Group notes](#) that networks are assets that enable donors to serve both as providers of capital and connectors to other potential supporters of the work. Networks allow members to form specialised philanthropic coalitions that focus on specific sustainability challenges e.g. climate finance, renewable energy etc., allowing resources and expertise to be pooled to address complex problems with less risk. They also foster inclusion through representation of Global South and marginalised communities. Finally, they enable a greater degree of experimentation, building evidence to support investments for scaling up smaller initiatives.³

2.2. Partnerships between Philanthropy and Governments

Philanthropy sometimes falls into the trap of acting like a lone ranger, seeking to be a saviour rather than a partner.⁴ However, collaboration between philanthropic actors and local stakeholders is essential for addressing complex sustainability challenges. The relationship between philanthropies and governments in particular play a sometimes-paradoxical role as both enabling and hindering meaningful impact. In some cases, philanthropy, despite its best intentions, [undermines the developmental processes and responsibility of the democratic state](#). On the other hand, some state actors view philanthropic organisations as foreign agents that undermine their power and authority.

The Role of Philanthropy

Engaging policymakers and parliamentarians to advocate for more enabling environments for philanthropic activity should be a collective goal for the global philanthropy community. Some actionable steps that philanthropies can take to achieve this include:

² https://ssir.org/articles/entry/how_philanthropic_collaborations_succeed_and_why_they_fail?

³ [Bridgespan](#)

⁴ https://ssir.org/articles/entry/how_philanthropic_collaborations_succeed_and_why_they_fail?



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- Partner with local civil society to advocate for contextually relevant and enabling roles for philanthropy in different countries.
- Invest in capacity-building initiatives that empower policymakers to carry out reforms that make it easier for philanthropies to operate and partners with local stakeholders.
- Encourage transparency and self-regulation within the philanthropic sector to pre-empt the justification for restrictive laws or antagonism from state actors.
- Explore opportunities for pooled funds with government entities that support innovative pilot projects to serve as practical demonstrations of the fruits of partnership.

The Role of Governments

Governments need to do their part to make finance more accessible by implementing policies and frameworks that promote financial inclusion. This integration is often achieved through public–private partnerships and technological innovations. To achieve this, specifically in the area of climate finance, governments should consider implementing the following:

- Create decentralised funds enabling direct access to climate finance for local communities to manage resources according to their needs.
- Simplify the procedures for communities and small organisations to access climate finance by reducing bureaucratic hurdles, providing clear guidelines, and offering assistance in the application process.
- Implement robust monitoring and reporting systems for climate finance to track how funds are allocated and utilised through public online platforms.
- Provide training and capacity-building initiatives for local leaders and community-based organisations helps them effectively utilise climate finance.

It must be emphasised that the primary mandate for development should spring from governments, with philanthropy serving as a catalyst or scaling partner for sustainability and impact. Frameworks such as the [Guidelines for Effective Philanthropic Engagement](#), highlight some of the core principles that underline effective partnerships.



G20 Strategic Reflection: Philanthropy in South African society

The G20 South African presidency offers a strategic opportunity for philanthropic organisations to embed their collaborative efforts within global policymaking processes. By leveraging South Africa's emphasis on inclusive partnerships and sustainable development, philanthropic networks and donor collaboratives can influence G20 platforms such as the Development Working Group and Compact with Africa initiative. These avenues provide fertile ground for aligning cross-sectoral collaboration with the presidency's agenda.

To navigate G20 policy discussions effectively philanthropic actors must gain a nuanced understanding of how philanthropy, especially from the global North is perceived in the region. Global North philanthropies have historically contributed to various sectors in South Africa, including education, health, and social development. Their financial resources and expertise have often complemented state efforts, leading to meaningful partnerships with the post-Apartheid government. However, the historical context of colonialism in Africa adds a layer of sensitivity to foreign interventions. Some political actors view the activities of Global North philanthropies as extensions of neo-colonial influence, arguing that external entities exert control under the guise of aid or development. Concerns have also been raised around the transparency of decision-making processes within foreign philanthropies and the extent to which they involve local stakeholders.

In recent years, there's been a discernible shift towards promoting Indigenous philanthropy and reducing dependency on foreign aid. South African philanthropists and organisations are increasingly taking the lead in addressing local issues. This movement aims to balance the contributions from the Global North with homegrown, locally-driven initiatives.





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SECTION 3: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND JUSTICE

3.1. Building Long-Term Partnerships

Traditional short-term funding often results in fragmented efforts with limited lasting impact. Long-term, trust-based partnerships allow philanthropies to collaborate with communities to co-design culturally relevant, sustainable solutions. This approach requires funders to share power, prioritise mutual learning, and embrace reciprocity. Empowering communities to allocate resources where they are most needed fosters innovation and adaptability.⁵ Some actionable steps philanthropies can take to build long-term, trust-based partnerships include:

- Provide multi-year, unrestricted funding to give communities the security and stability to grow the impact of their initiatives naturally.
- Co-design programmes with communities to ensure initiatives are tailored to local needs, fostering ownership and commitment among stakeholders.
- Strengthen the capacity of community organisations, through leadership development, strategic planning, and organisational support.

Participatory grant making is a powerful approach that shifts decision-making power to those most affected by funding decisions. Establishing Indigenous-led funds further promotes giving, rooted in respect, reciprocity, and self-determination. Some [best practices](#) for implementing participatory grant making include:

- Remove barriers to participation by offering accommodations such as childcare, disability access, and multiple communication formats.
- Compensate participants for their time and expertise to acknowledge their contributions and encourage sustained engagement.
- Reassess recruitment strategies to identify and fill gaps in representation with individuals from various backgrounds, including underrepresented groups.
- Create a safe environment where participants feel valued and protected from harm. Be mindful of collective trauma, ensuring that the participatory process does not inadvertently cause stress.
- Involve community members in reimagining all aspects of the process, from application to evaluation.

⁵ [Trust-Based Philanthropy](#)



- Integrate participatory principles within the organisation's internal processes beyond grantmaking, such as in governance and staffing, to reflect a genuine commitment to shared power.

3.2. Removing Barriers to Accessing Funding

Barriers within grant application processes significantly hinder organisations, particularly smaller nonprofits and those serving marginalised communities, from securing funding. Complex and time-consuming application procedures can overwhelm organisations with limited administrative capacity, making it challenging to complete extensive documentation and detailed narratives. Rigid eligibility criteria often exclude innovative or community-based organisations that do not meet traditional benchmarks, preventing funders from supporting emerging initiatives addressing critical needs.

Additionally, organisations in underserved areas may lack awareness of available grant opportunities due to inadequate dissemination of information, resulting in a lack of diversity among applicants and perpetuating funding inequities. Demanding reporting obligations further strain the capacities of smaller organisations, diverting time and resources from program implementation to administrative tasks, which may discourage them from applying for grant-funded projects. Moreover, organisations without established connections to funding networks find it challenging to secure grants, as the absence of these relationships can lead to biases favouring well-known entities.⁶ Finally complex jargon alienates non-expert stakeholders, reducing their ability to engage effectively. By adopting plain language principles, institutions can make critical information more understandable. To address this, philanthropies can adopt several best practices.⁷

- Streamline processes to enhance accessibility and encourage a more diverse pool of applicants.
- Relax stringent requirements for small and new nonprofits to alleviate administrative burdens.
- Implement bilingual grant processes to reduce language barriers for non-English-speaking communities.
- Partner with local intermediaries who understand the cultural and operational context.
- Utilise technology, such as AI and digital platforms, to automate and streamline processes.
- Avoid "philanthro-speak"—jargon that excludes those unfamiliar with the terminology.

⁶ [Philanthropy Dialogues](#)

⁷ [The SCAN Foundation](#)



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3.3. Embracing Cultural Diversity

Cultural competence is crucial for effective community engagement. Many philanthropy processes fail to reflect an awareness of culture or diversity in their applications. This not only hinders the success of funding strategies but also excludes marginalised voices. Understanding and respecting the cultural contexts of communities builds trust and ensures interventions align with local values and practices.⁸ Best practices include:

- Collaborate with local organisations to lead the charge, fostering non-hierarchical partnerships.
- Invest time in learning about local values, traditions, and societal norms.
- Employ individuals from diverse communities as advisors to support philanthropic networks to overcome cultural gaps and inform programme design.
- Equip staff and partners with cultural sensitivity skills to improve their ability to navigate complexities and build respectful relationships.
- Host listening sessions with communities to provide platforms to voice concerns, share experiences, and contribute to shaping philanthropic efforts.⁹

⁸ CCS Fundraising

⁹ Native Americans in Philanthropy



G20 Strategic Reflection: Understanding the Needs on the Ground in South Africa/Africa

The South African context is historically informed by the racist policies of an Apartheid government that was in power from the 1948-1994. This was preceded by centuries of colonialism and slavery, similar to many other parts of the African continent. The legacy of Apartheid continues to influence South African society, even 30 years after the rise of democracy. The theme of the South African G20, “Solidarity, Equality & Sustainability” should be understood in line with this history of struggle against oppression, imperialism and marginalisation.

While many organisations and programmes around climate finance and sustainability exist in the country, the so-called “Triple Threat” of unemployment, inequality and poverty are national priorities. International philanthropies seeking to engage stakeholders, whether NGOs, government or the public on matters of sustainable development must be mindful of this. Issues that may seem pressing to global North funders for example may carry less importance to those on the ground in South Africa. The solution to this mismatch is not to try convince local actors that they are wrong, but rather to understand their perspectives and find areas of alignment. For example, while some in South Africa/Africa may be receptive to issues around renewable energy replacing fossil fuels, the issue of sustainable and inclusive green jobs draws much greater support.

Important platforms through which philanthropies can come to understand and engage with South African/African perspectives include the C20 (civil society), Y20 (youth), W20 (women) and T20 (think tanks/academia). There are also several platforms and events running parallel to the official G20 events, including F20 initiatives like the [Climate Solutions Forum](#) in May and the [Transformations Community ESG Conference](#) in August. Local philanthropic organisations to follow also include the [Centre on African Philanthropy & Social Investment \(CAPSI\)](#), the [Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa \(IPASA\)](#) and the [African Youth Philanthropy Network \(AYPN\)](#)





SECTION 4: ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE IMPACT AT SCALE

4.1. Reporting for Impact

Traditional reporting methods often fail to capture the nuanced insights and lived experiences of local communities. Reforming these practices to include grassroots narratives can provide philanthropies with a deeper understanding of their initiatives' real impact and challenges. This fosters transparency, accountability, and trust between funders and communities. To ensure accountability and transparency reforming reporting norms and standards can also help close the data gap which exists within global impact reporting. The OECD highlights the importance of effective impact measurement and management practices to align finance with the SDGs.¹⁰ Currently, diverse assessment methods in the sector create inconsistencies and hinder comparability across projects. Establishing common standards and science-based frameworks provides a shared language for evaluating success.

- Focus on essential information making the process as simple as possible for organisations.
- Leverage tools like AI and digital platforms to automate data collection and analysis.
- Supplement written reporting with more authentic listening sessions with community members to learn about successes and challenges for early detection of misalignments.
- Partner with scientific institutions and impact measurement experts to help develop and promote research-based standards.
- Invest in training programmes for staff and partners to enhance their understanding and application of research-based impact measurement standards.
- Facilitate dialogues among donors, beneficiaries, policymakers, and scientists ensures that diverse perspectives inform reporting strategies.

4.2. Enhancing Organisational Capacity

Capacity-building is a cornerstone of empowering grassroots organisations to scale their work. Philanthropies can fund tailored training on topics that relate to the scalability of initiatives. By strengthening their capacity, grassroots organisations not only meet immediate needs but also position themselves as credible partners for future funding and collaboration. Areas for capacity building include:

- Grant writing, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Tools like data management software to track and manage their impact.

¹⁰ OECD



- Storytelling skills which enable organisations to articulate their narratives in compelling ways that resonate with funders and stakeholders.
- Leadership development, strategic planning, and organisational governance for long-term sustainability.

4.3. Supporting the Innovators & Risk-takers

Innovation and risk-taking are important components of scaling initiatives. However current philanthropic practices tend to be more risk-averse. Transitioning from short-term thinking to long-term, high-risk philanthropic investments is crucial for driving systemic change. Such a shift requires embracing [Venture Philanthropy](#) principles which focuses on the impact of the initiative and supporting those creating the impact, whoever they may be, for as long as needed. This acknowledges that while many initiatives may not succeed, a small number of enormous successes can account for a large share of the total impact, compensating for numerous failed projects.¹¹ Beyond financial support, this approach places greater emphasis on investing in organisational development—strengthening leadership, operations, and strategic planning for long-term sustainability. This way of thinking is demonstrated in [social entrepreneurship](#), which often gets overlooked, in favour of more traditional impact organisations. Social enterprises are naturally risk-taking and are more likely to become self-sustaining after initial funding support. Philanthropies can adopt several best practices to support social enterprises effectively including:

- Provide multi-year, unrestricted funding to ensure stability and flexibility, allowing organisations to adapt to evolving needs.
- Facilitate access to networks and mentorship connecting entrepreneurs with resources and partnership opportunities.
- Support leadership development to equip organisations to manage and scale initiatives effectively.
- Build collaborative ecosystems with diverse stakeholders to create an environment where social enterprises can thrive and support impact at various levels for the community.

¹¹ [Open Philanthropy](#)

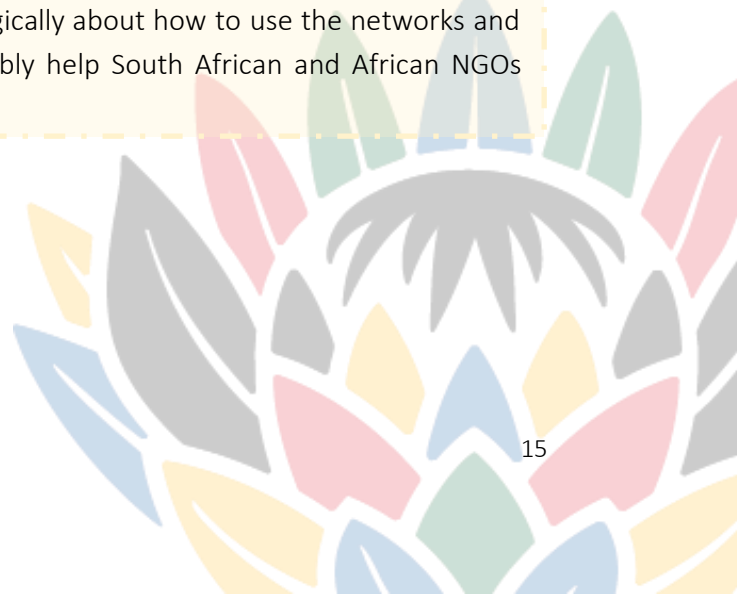


G20 Strategic Reflection: Common Challenges for Scale in South Africa/Africa

The NGO sector in South Africa plays a pivotal role in addressing various social challenges. Yet it faces significant obstacles that hinder the scalability and sustainability of initiatives. A primary concern is the underinvestment in fundraising capabilities. Many NGOs [perceive fundraising as secondary rather than integral](#), leading to limited financial resources necessary for expanding their programmes. Additionally, the [absence of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks](#) impedes the ability of NGOs to assess and demonstrate their impact effectively. This shortfall not only affects internal performance assessments but also diminishes credibility with potential donors who demand evidence-based results.

The sector also contends with donor fatigue, stemming from an [overreliance on a limited pool of contributors](#). This overdependence can lead to decreased financial support over time, threatening the continuity of vital projects. Furthermore, as of 2023 there were [approximately 270,300 registered non-profit organisations](#) and several thousand unregistered organisations in the country, making the competition for limited funding intense. This saturated environment makes it challenging for individual NGOs to secure the necessary resources to scale their operations effectively. The [impact of the recent USAID freeze](#) and threats by the US to cut funding to South Africa further demonstrates the vulnerability of the African development sector to external shocks.

To overcome these challenges, it is imperative for philanthropies to recognise the critical need for capacity-building support within South African NGOs. Investing in the development of fundraising skills, establishing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems, and promoting strategies to diversify funding sources are essential steps toward enhancing the impact and sustainability of the sector. Philanthropies engaging in the G20 South African forums will likely encounter many of these issues being raised by organisations when speaking about achieving impact at scale. They should think strategically about how to use the networks and partnerships created through the G20 to sustainably help South African and African NGOs overcome some of these hurdles.





SECTION 5: RESHAPING GLOBAL FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

5.1. Supporting the Watchdogs & Whistleblowers

Enhancing debt transparency and combating corruption are crucial for ensuring the long-term finance access for vulnerable countries. Philanthropy is uniquely positioned to drive progress in these areas due to its independence, availability of resources, and ability to convene diverse stakeholders. Transparent debt practices ensure that government borrowing and lending agreements are open to public scrutiny, which helps prevent unsustainable debt levels and corrupt practices. Philanthropic networks with financial independence are able to fund innovative initiatives and support long-term projects that may be beyond the scope of government agencies or private entities. They can directly and indirectly support civil society watchdogs that monitor sovereign debt deals, ensuring that both lenders and borrowers disclose loan terms, interest rates, and repayment conditions. The [Siemens Integrity Initiative](#) exemplifies how philanthropic efforts can support anti-corruption measures. With over \$100 million allocated globally, this initiative funds organisations that combat corruption and fraud. By supporting such programmes, the initiative enhances transparency and holds financial institutions accountable for misconduct. Other initiatives that philanthropic networks can adopt, include:

- Investments in developing open-data platforms that publicly disclose information on government debts.
- Provision of grants and technical assistance to civil society organisations dedicated to monitoring sovereign debt deals and exposing corrupt practices.
- Collaborating with policymakers and financial institutions to promote the adoption of mandatory debt transparency frameworks and standardised disclosure practices across all lending entities.
- Supporting robust whistleblower protection programmes, including legal assistance to safeguarded against retaliation, encouraging more insiders to come forward.
- Funding independent financial audits and governance assessments for multilateral development banks (MDBs), ensuring that funds meant for development are not misused.

5.2. Reforming Global Financial Flows

Addressing illicit financial flows (IFFs) and tax evasion is crucial for ensuring that resources are available for public services, especially in developing countries. Illicit financial flows deprive governments of essential revenues needed for infrastructure, healthcare, and education, thereby exacerbating poverty and inequality. Philanthropic organisations are strategically positioned to



fund innovative monitoring systems, support advocacy for stricter regulations, and facilitate dialogues that lead to the adoption of fair financial policies. One example of how this could be done is the [Financial Transparency Coalition \(FTC\)](#), a global network of civil society organisations, governments, and experts working collaboratively to promote transparency in the international financial system. Within regions like Africa there are also home-grown, activist-led initiatives aimed at reforming global systems to combat IFFs, including youth organisations like the [Youth for Tax Justice Network](#). Finding ways to support international reforms in this area may include:

- Partnering with financial institutions to develop and implement financial transaction monitoring systems that detect illicit capital movements and prevent tax evasion.
- Supporting policy dialogues between governments, banks, and regulatory bodies, to adopt fair capital flow policies that prioritise economic stability over speculative profits.
- Funding research and legal efforts that challenge corporate tax avoidance and illicit financial flows, ensuring that multinational corporations disclose where they generate profits and pay taxes.
- Advocating for stronger global tax frameworks to prioritise fair revenue distribution, particularly for developing economies that suffer from capital flight.

5.3. Making the Table Bigger

Philanthropic can drive advocacy for more equitable financial governance in ways that traditional stakeholders—such as governments and multilateral institutions—often cannot. Unlike political actors, philanthropic organisations are independent of electoral cycles, and can support long-term systemic reforms without the constraints of short-term political considerations. This means philanthropies have greater flexibility to fund innovative research and advocacy initiatives that may not align with the immediate priorities of governments or international financial institutions. An example of such an initiative can be seen in the 2022 public statement from the [Global South Impact Community](#), supported by various philanthropic actors, calling on G20 leaders during the Indonesian presidency to unite public, private, and philanthropic sectors for collective action on mainstreaming decarbonisation and strengthening responses to global health crises. This advocacy emphasised the need for structural changes to remedy root drivers of inequities in global financial governance.

Additionally, philanthropic networks can serve as neutral conveners, bringing together policymakers, civil society, and financial institutions to facilitate dialogue on reforms. Their access to both grassroots communities and high-level decision-makers enables them to act as a bridge, ensuring that the voices of historically underrepresented nations and marginalised groups influence financial governance structures. Using this strategic advantage philanthropies can advocate for



[participatory decision-making processes](#) that include diverse stakeholders, particularly from the Global South, is a critical strategy for enhancing transparency and accountability. Ways that philanthropic networks can leverage their position of influence to advocate for financial governance reforms include:

- Investing in independent research to analyse voting disparities and governance imbalances within global financial institutions.
- Fund capacity-building programmes that equip policymakers and civil society leaders from developing nations to effectively engage in global financial governance forums.
- Host side events at global forums such as the G20 to build consensus on governance reforms, and create pressure for meaningful changes in financial decision-making structures.
- Support movements advocating for fairer voting rights structures, revised leadership selection processes and greater financial disclosure in major global financial institutions.

5.4. Closing the Data Gap

Fostering sector-wide collaboration through knowledge sharing and joint initiatives is a powerful approach to enhancing transparency and accountability in the international financial system. Philanthropic organisations have a unique opportunity to pool data to monitor and map climate finance flows more effectively. Organisations like the Climate Policy Initiative (CPI) are closing the data gap in the global financial system by providing data-driven insights into climate finance flows and investment trends. The CPI [tracks and visualises](#) nearly USD 1.3 trillion in annual climate finance, offering clarity on where funds are flowing and where gaps remain. Initiatives like the [Net Zero Finance Tracker \(NZFT\)](#) enhances accountability by assessing the progress of nearly 1,000 financial institutions toward their climate commitments. Additionally, the [Global Innovation Lab for Climate Finance](#) drives investment in climate solutions by identifying and launching innovative financial instruments, mobilising over USD 4 billion to date. These open-access platforms and interactive visualisations ensure that policymakers, investors, and researchers have the critical data needed to align financial systems with global climate goals, bridging the information divide that often hinders effective action. Leveraging technology, such as data visualisation tools, can provide clear, actionable insights into the allocation and utilisation of climate funds. This transparency helps stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and local communities, understand the flow of resources, assess their impact, and identify areas for improvement.

- Support user-friendly platforms to share climate finance data in real-time, ensuring accessibility for all stakeholders, including non-technical audiences.



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- Create standardised metrics and reporting frameworks for tracking climate finance flows in collaboration with global financial institutions and NGOs.
- Offer training programmes to local organisations and communities on how to interpret financial data and leverage it for advocacy and decision-making.
- Partner with academic institutions, think tanks, and other philanthropies to fund and conduct research that evaluates the effectiveness of climate finance, identify gaps, and propose innovative solutions.



G20 Strategic Reflection: Long-term Vision

The G20 South African presidency, while significant, is barely a blip on the ever-changing landscape of international development. Philanthropic stakeholders should not view this G20 in isolation, but within the broader trends shaping our world, with this being one unique impact point to achieve more long-term objectives. Amidst the policy dialogues and collaborations, this platform offers an opportunity to reflect on the role Africa must play in reforming the International Financial Architecture.

As with the G20 Brazil, issues of debt and long-term financing for sustainable development remains central. However, in a region that relies heavily on a shrinking pool of both international government and private finance to combat severe climate change, conflict, famine, mass displacement etc, new strategies are needed. Collective action is crucial beyond the fanfare of 2025. Engaging in G20 platforms such as the [Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion](#) meetings provides avenues to advocate for these reforms, ensuring that global financial systems become more inclusive and equitable. However, what comes after? What footprint will be left behind in the end?

The G20 South African presidency offers a chance to strengthen the local philanthropic ecosystem that has emerged in the country and region. It is an opportunity to rethink how we define philanthropy and who gets to define it. Opening the door to individuals, groups and networks that don't "look like changemakers" by conventional definitions, all the while considering the needs of current and future generations.





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ANNEXES AND INFORMATION

About the Authors

Reon van der Merwe is a South African development cooperation practitioner with a decade of experience providing high-level support to national, regional, and international development organisations. He has worked on projects linked to the UN, AU, SADC, BRICS, EU and the Commonwealth. Reon specialises in partnership development and civic engagement, with a focus on the global South. He serves as Global Partnerships Officer for the Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF), one of the largest youth-led civic platforms in the region. He has a particular passion for helping organisations work better with younger generations and is the Founder and Director of Impacting Youth. Through his work, he also helps philanthropies achieve greater results through strategic investments in youth and civic organisations and networks. Reon holds a Masters in International Relations from the University of Cape Town and is frequently invited to speak on topics related to multilateralism, sustainable development and education. He is a fellow of several international institutes, including the Managing Global Governance Academy at the German Institute for Development & Sustainability (IDOS), and the International Youth Think Tank (IYTT).

Katrin Harvey is the Secretary General at Foundations Platform 20. Before joining F20, Katrin was Chief Operations Officer of the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens. In that role, she worked closely with global leaders and young changemakers to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, as part of the legacy of former UN-SG Ban Ki-moon. In over 15 years working in the fields of sustainability, climate action, clean energy, and organizational management, Katrin has managed projects in Europe, Africa, and Asia in partnership with philanthropic organisations, UN agencies, the EU, and governmental development agencies. In her work she focused on climate change adaptation, sustainable agriculture and food systems, clean energy access, climate change education and capacity building, public-private dialogue, and on facilitating South-South and South-North knowledge exchange among experts in energy efficiency, energy regulation and international law.

Larissa Bricis is the Project Manager Communications and Outreach at Foundations Platform 20. She joined the Foundations Platforms 20 in October 2024 as Project Manager Communications and Outreach. Her work is informed by a Master's in Digital Media and Society, where her thesis focused on the role of efficacy and networks within youth-led environmental organisations in Germany and Australia. Before joining F20, Larissa worked in communications roles across a wide range of industries, most notably publishing, technology, and environmental services.

The F20 Sustainable Finance Working Group

In collaboration with the civil society organisation Germanwatch, Foundations Platform F20 leads an international Sustainable Finance Working Group (SFWG). The working group seeks to



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enable F20 partners to advance sustainable finance discussions and positively influence the G20's sustainable finance agenda.

With its experts from a range of different academic and professional backgrounds, the Sustainable Finance Working Group aims to conduct research, compiling briefings for the G7/G20 and sharing insights on sustainable finance with a special lens toward the role of philanthropic organisations. After its implementation in 2022 (co-funded by the DBU), F20 is continuing the work of the Sustainable Finance Working Group in Phase II from 2024-2026. Discussions in Phase II will focus on addressing the urgent need for improved access to finance and how to handle cost of capital in view of de-risking renewable energy investments, access to capital and the management of investment funds.

In September 2024, a SFWG roundtable took place at New York Climate Week. The theme of the event was Unlocking Climate Finance: Reducing Barriers for More Equitable Climate Finance Access. At this event, the 2025 implementation plan for the SFWG was formulated. In October 2024, the HSC side event, *How Philanthropy & Philanthropy Networks Can Act and Commit*, was held in Hamburg, Germany. This event was a collaborative half-day event which encouraged participants to engage in dynamic, solutions-oriented dialogue about sustainable finance solutions through a philanthropic lens. The revelations at this event inspired the creation of this F20 white paper.

About F20

The Foundations Platform F20 is an international network of around 80 foundations and philanthropic organisations that calls for joint transnational action towards sustainable development. It is an independent engagement group to the G20 with a concrete focus on aligning the G20 agenda with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement. F20's aim is to provide solutions for today's most pressing challenges – climate change and a just transition based on renewable energy and sustainable development.

About Germanwatch

Germanwatch is an independent development, environmental, and human rights organisation. It seeks to influence public policy on trade, the environment, and relations between countries in the industrialized north and underdeveloped south. Germanwatch advocates for sustainable global development based on social equity, respect for nature, and economic stability.

About the Hamburg Sustainability Conference

Held in early October 2024, this two-day conference provided a shared stage for more than 1600 global participants active within governments, business, science and civil society to commit to concrete progress on sustainability and to engage in a renewed push towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.



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Foundations Platform 20 held two side events as part of the HSC. The first being the roundtable discussion, *How Can Philanthropy Make Climate Finance More Accessible for Women?*, a participatory roundtable focused on the central role that women's (grassroots) organisations play in climate action. The second event was a world café, *How Philanthropy & Philanthropy Networks Can Act and Commit*, which was co-hosted with ZEIT Stiftung Bucerius and WINGS in Hamburg.



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