

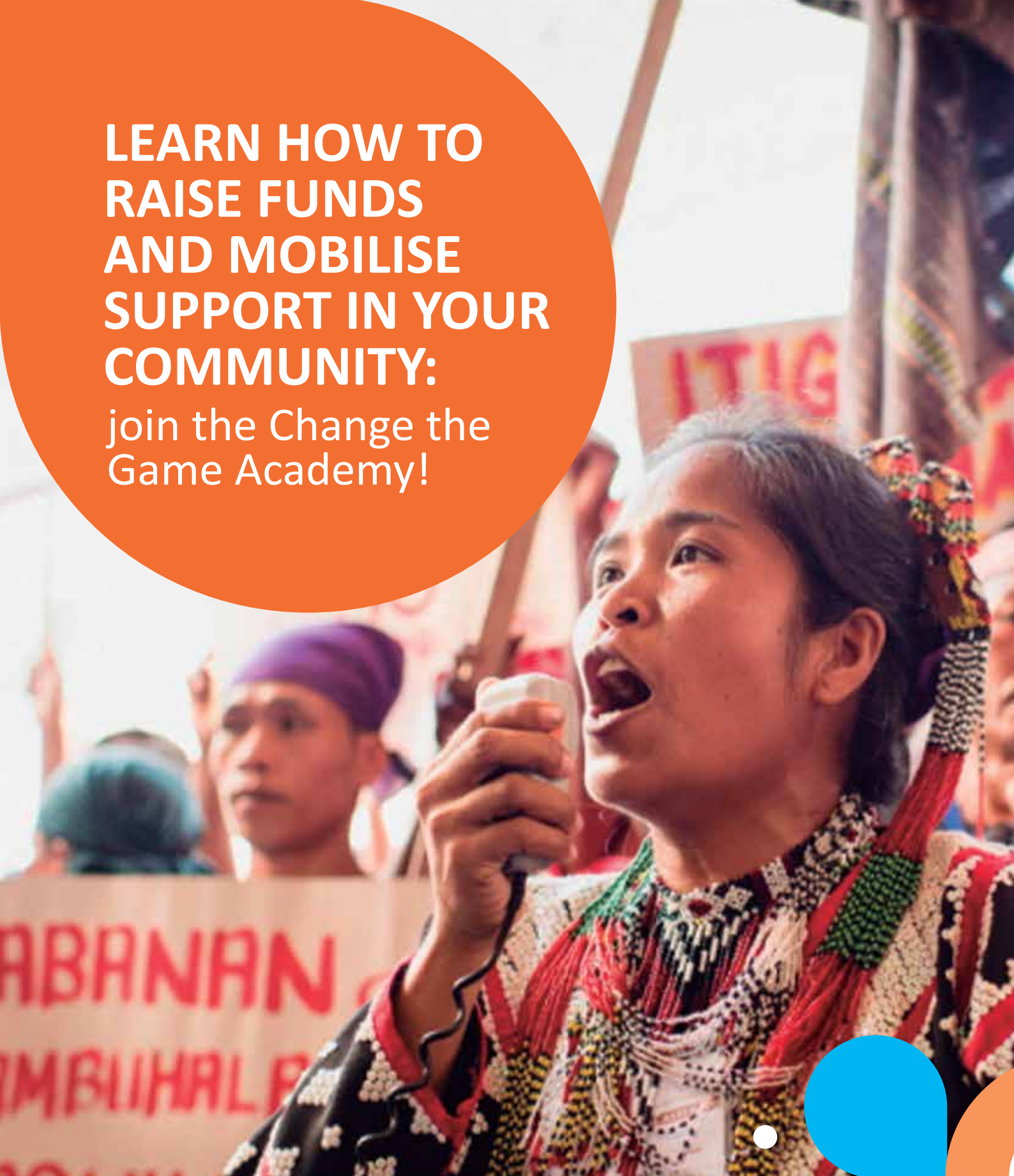


COMMUNITY GIVING SPECIAL
AUTUMN 2023

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EDITORIAL



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Community Giving SPECIAL

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journalism on
global development

'In Africa, we are so cultured that you don't die with your problems when you can appeal to the community and solve that problem together. Everyone born in Africa is a member of a community and the larger family.'

These are the words of Tom Were, a researcher working on a PhD that delves into the concept of *Harambee*. In Swahili, *Harambee* translates to 'all pull together' and serves as Kenya's official motto. It is a cultural touchstone deeply intertwined with the country's historical struggles and ongoing socio-economic development.

In this special edition, a collaborative effort between Vice Versa Global and Vice Versa, we delve into the world of *giving*. What trends do we observe in Africa, as well as other parts of the world such as Brazil and Nepal, when it comes to giving and community philanthropy? What motivates individuals to contribute to various initiatives and projects?

As described in the overview story in this issue;

'Community philanthropy encompasses all forms of giving—in money, time and in-kind—originating from within the local community. This type of giving yields more impactful poverty reduction, as sustainable change can only be achieved when driven by the communities themselves. Community giving aligns with the rich cultural and religious traditions of Africa, emphasising solidarity and generosity towards family, friends, and neighbours. Examples include *Harambee* in Kenya, *Ujamaa* in Tanzania, *Ubuntu* across the continent and *Al Ounah* in Palestine.'

This topic holds great relevance and deserves attention. It also contributes to the ongoing discourse of 'Shift the Power,' promoting more equitable relationships in international cooperation. 'The prevailing Western narrative on philanthropy often fails to capture the reality of every day giving deeply rooted in African cultures. A new generation of African researchers and practitioners is reframing this narrative, placing communities and organisations at the core of a model that values agency, ownership, and trust. By being accountable to their constituents rather than foreign funders, African communities and organisations can foster their inclusive development.'

Apart from this, community giving is seen as an important weapon in the fight against the shrinking civic space worldwide. Local resource mobilisation forces organisations to root themselves deeper in society and be accountable towards their constituency. With many local organisations still depending on international funding, the development agenda is often determined by the interests and priorities of these donors.

This makes it easy for governments to dismiss them as the mouthpiece of the West. Local constituency gives organisations more credibility as representatives of local interests. This can lead to a stronger negotiating position with the government.

There are ample reasons to view community giving as a way to tackle various challenges and shape development cooperation more effectively.

Marc Broere and Eunice Mwaura

How Do You Give?

Have you ever provided financial assistance to someone? What is your main motivation for supporting others? Nicera Wanjiru has gathered a variety of interesting responses that shed light on people's giving behaviour.

by Nicera Wanjiru



'My name is Nathlyn Patience Bestman, a 26-year-old Liberian. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and I'm the founder of Job-Us Liberia Incorporated, a staffing agency that focuses on advancing youth career development, employability, and reproductive healthcare. My passion lies in providing diverse empowerment training and connecting young individuals with various opportunities for both wage employment and entrepreneurship. As a social worker, I strongly believe that access to financial support plays a crucial role in establishing sustainable livelihoods. That's why I offer financial assistance to individuals who demonstrate enthusiasm for improving their lives. What motivates me most is knowing that by helping others solve problems, while encouraging self-improvement, we can achieve long-term sustainability. There's an old saying that perfectly captures this sentiment: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for life."



'I am Xola X Mteto, 27, from South Africa, the coordinating officer for youth and media at Slum Dwellers International. Rather than providing financial support directly, my focus lies in imparting knowledge through training for young individuals seeking skills in photography and cinematography. With this they are better off than someone relying solely on monetary aid, not knowing exactly what is it they want to do.'



'My name is Anyasi Jeffrey, and I am 44 years old from Nigeria. I have frequently given financial support intending to make a positive impact on someone's life. My motivation stems from an innate desire to uplift others and bring about positive change. The smiles of gratitude and the transformative effects of my assistance fuel it further. Through selfless actions, I aim to create a world where kindness and support generate lasting ripples of positivity. I might embody the true essence of making a difference and leaving indelible marks. With this, I hope to ignite a passion for giving to those I touch.'



'I am Vian Abucheri from Kenya, a 26-year-old content creator, voice-over artist, actor and single mom of one. Although I am sometimes unable to support the individuals in my community financially, I prioritise offering my time, talent and treasure which is equally valuable. When I get rich, I will think about financial support as well.'



'I am Godson Mireille C. Pearl, 28, from Benin. I have supported a lot of people and am happy to have impacted their lives. One particular experience that deeply touched me involved a young woman. At just 19 years old, she was forced to leave her family home due to an unexpected pregnancy. Recognising the importance of providing stability for her, I decided to provide financial support and help her secure housing. Over the course of a year, I covered not only her educational expenses but also ensured she had a safe place to live. Once she completed her studies and obtained employment that allowed her to support herself and her child independently, we worked together toward reconciliation with her parents. Her mother agreed to take care of the child so she could focus more on her future. My main motivation was to see her happy. There is immense joy derived from giving selflessly without expecting anything in return; it is truly one of life's greatest blessings.'



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Kenya's official motto or call to action is *Harambee*: community spirit. You help each other solve problems. A conversation between Tom Were, who is doing doctoral research on it with Radboud University in the Netherlands, and Vice Versa Global Editor-in-Chief Eunice Mwaura, unravels the value and pitfalls of this principle. 'Watch out for over-structuring *Harambee*. After all, we give in Kenya because we want to, not because we want to reduce our tax burden at the end of the year.'

Text by Marc Broere
Images by Michael Timonah

'Everyone born in Africa is a member of a community and the larger family'

Philanthropy is at the core of Tom Were's passion. He is the CEO of Act Change Transform, an organisation focused on democracy, governance, and human rights. He adeptly manages a team of nearly fifty individuals and secures funding for the organisation. Furthermore, he devotes a significant amount of time to his doctoral research. It explores *Harambee*'s profound impact on Kenya's socioeconomic development since independence. *Harambee* means "all pull together" in Swahili and is even the country's official motto.

He previously worked at the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF), one of Kenya's pioneers in community giving and community philanthropy. There, he was also involved in the founding of the East Africa Philanthropy Network. 'I've always remained immensely interested in philanthropy,' he explains. 'It's about how people give and receive and the channels for delivering gifts.'

Across the table is Eunice Mwaura, 27, the Editor-in-Chief of Vice Versa Global. It is a media platform run by young African journalists who produce journalistic productions focused on social change. The target audience for the platform is socially engaged young Africans.

She offers a fresh perspective on Were's contemplations, representing the new generation's insights. 'For me, *Harambee* translates to when a community comes together to give,' she says. 'It is always natural—at least from my community—to see people come together and give, to help uplift a community member. I have witnessed this when the community unites to raise funds for someone's medical bills, or simply knocking on your neighbour's door because you are out of some supplies and need assistance'

According to Were, *Harambee* is inseparable from Kenya. 'Its essence lies in the unity of individuals striving towards a shared objective,' he clarifies. 'You can be both giver and receiver on the same day.' It is a natural giveback circle, from beneficiary to benefactor.

His research commences from Kenya's struggle for independence against English rule. 'In the 1940s and 1950s, *Harambee* played an important role in the independence struggle. Women made sure the *Mau Mau* fighters got food. That was their contribution to the struggle. The common interest was to become free so that Kenyans could run the country themselves.

'After independence, Kenya needed educated people to continue building the country. There was an investment in education and people contributed school fees under *Harambee* and in other ways. For example, when my father went to college, he lived for



free with another family not far from his university. It was common to find a community next door and live with them until you finished your studies.

'Even if you came from the countryside and started working in the city, you would live with other community members. So, in this case, it expressed itself more as a self-help situation rather than giving money. It was about giving value to one's life and educating young people collectively.'

Over the years, he saw the concept evolve. Kenyans travelled abroad to study and work and sent money home. 'The Kenyan diaspora transfers about 300 million US dollars a month back home,' he says. 'That's a huge amount. Would Dutch people living abroad do the same? I don't think so. This is because you have been raised to do everything you can to be financially independent.'

He comes back to this later in the conversation.

He also saw the entry of mobile money, which made it very easy to transfer money nationally and internationally. 'On the one hand, that's a positive development. However, it makes *Harambee* less personal. It's no longer meeting someone in person and seeing their excited face as you help them. We still contribute to funerals, weddings, and hospital bills. But the emotional and psychological distance of giving has increased.'

And with a nod to Eunice Mwaura: 'Moreover, there is a new generation that looks at giving more critically.'

Mwaura nods. She calls it a 'meaningful rich tradition' of which she is proud as a Kenyan. 'But I also sometimes find it difficult to measure the impact,' she adds. 'What is the impact of your hundred shillings?'

And she struggles with something else: 'In practice, I still give to people I know. Yet at the same time, I don't think this should be a factor. You should look objectively at where your contribution has the most impact. For me as a young person, giving is really about a cause—and it should be deeply rewarding for me too.'

She sees new forms of solidarity emerging among her generation that also fit within the concept of *Harambee*. 'I get a lot of requests to give, but this is certainly not just about money. Offering skills is just as important. For example, you might be good at management or writing letters. I see young people increasingly offering their skills, not just giving money.'

'Take for example the Rotaract Club—the youth section of the Rotary Club—that many young people join. I am a member of a circle called *Good Deeds*. We organize ourselves in a WhatsApp group and visit a slum or orphanage every Sunday, where we take food that we prepare for them on the spot. Sometimes we also raise money.'

Interest among young people in this is high, Mwaura notes, and she is pleased about that. 'I think it's important that young people are aware of the importance of community spirit, and they are. That's why I think it's easy to pass the philosophy of *Harambee* to a new generation.'

'After all, in Kenya, we give *because we want to*, not *because we want to reduce our tax burden*'

Tom Were nods with satisfaction. 'It's also good for young people themselves. When you see that you have it a little better than others, it's good to share. Because if it makes the other person's situation a little better, that's good for everyone. You see smiling faces, you get connected, and Kenya becomes a slightly healthier society to live in again. It's important for the country's mental and social stability.'

He continues: 'It is also good to see how today's youth have put a slightly different twist on *Harambee*. It still exists, but it's like a garment whose parts have become torn and stitched with a new fabric. You still feel warm in it, but it is slightly more updated to what is in fashion today.'

We talk further about various topics, including its pitfalls. Were explains that in times of election campaigns, its principle is fully invoked by presidential candidates. This is through joint road construction and school building, intended primarily for the honour and glory of those candidates. This has now been outlawed.

He warns of something else. Professional Western donors have also discovered its power. They want to restructure it and have it benefit development projects instead of supporting family and friends. He understands the philosophy behind it, but cautions; 'The danger is that you take the soul out of it. Will its core remain if development organisations operate a policy around it or the government introduces legislation?'

He continues: 'If you can deduct a donation from taxes, for example, as in the Netherlands, there is a risk that it will lose the sense of community. People will start giving with an ulterior motive; to reduce their income tax. For companies, it is good because it allows them to do more corporate social responsibility, but for citizens, it isn't. This gives it a whole new dynamic. After all, in Kenya, we give because we want to, not because we want to reduce our tax burden. It has been a part of our lives for generations, and we can imagine that it will continue to have a place in the future.'

I tell them that I get requests almost daily from Facebook friends, especially from Uganda and Kenya, to give money. Sometimes I struggle with it and feel guilty if I say no. In the Netherlands, it is almost inappropriate to ask for money. Mwaura and Were laugh at this.

Mwaura advises: 'Look very carefully at every request you get. When friends ask for money, it can be challenging since you have to consider your friendship. As a general rule, never give someone money that you wouldn't be ready to lose yourself. But one's capacity to assist also matters in this. This does not imply that we should withhold our assistance. Instead, we ought to focus on providing long-term assistance while also being realistic and considerate.'

Were adds. 'Don't worry. It's easy for people to accept that you're not in a position to help today. Tomorrow is another day. The system rotates. And about that discomfort: the difference with your society is that in the Netherlands you are so enormously independent. One of the main goals a person works for in Western countries is to be self-reliant.'

'You have to be able to take care of yourself and pay your bills. By paying taxes you get clean drinking water running through pipes, and you can take your children to school without paying school fees. In Africa, we do not have the privilege of paying taxes once a year and then enjoying wonderful government services. This social difference between the West and Africa forces us to have our communities contribute and fill the gap.'

'Of course, you would prefer it differently. But we are so cultured that you don't die with your problems when you can appeal to the community and solve that problem together. Everyone born in Africa is a member of a community and the larger family.'



@Ashi Kariki

The Transformative Power of Philanthropy

By Eva Nakato

Philanthropy is an integral part of our African identity; whether contributing to family support, community or national development. It serves as the glue that binds communities together and contributes to the development of our continent.

Community giving can mean different things. For some, it can be about supporting a place close to home or work. For others, it may mean giving back to the community in which they grew up or where their family originally came from. But in all senses, it's focusing your giving around a geographical area that matters to you.

One of the most memorable moments was during the COVID-19 lockdown. Nuwamanya Hillary, a young person living with HIV, and his friends decided to ride their bicycles to distribute HIV medicine to those who couldn't access their health facilities due to the transportation ban. On the day he was supposed to deliver mine, he contracted COVID-19. He had to send his colleague who had just recovered to deliver.

I was touched by how they risked their lives for others. When he recovered, I hosted him on my show *Upclose With Eva Nakato* to share this remarkable deed with the world. It was wonderful to witness the power of sacrifice amidst a deadly pandemic.

Local philanthropy or philanthrolocalism is the ability to meet a sudden need, an approach to giving that benefits the community. There's no shame in wanting to fix problems, but ignoring a local need is not the appropriate way to go.

A community in Fort Portal District, Uganda, decided to collect money locally to renovate a dirty community well. Children were prohibited from fetching from it after the renovation. A barbed wire fence was installed to prevent them from playing and dirtying the well and avert unexpected accidents. At the same time, women are not allowed to do their laundry there while men

are banned from washing their motorcycles and bicycles in it. Cleaning is done in shifts depending on the number of households. A fine and punishment were imposed on anyone found breaking those rules.

Giving back to the place you call home unites the community and bridges social, economic and political gaps. It also impacts and improves the lives of people in need and is a memorable experience for generations to come.

During his school days, Mr Kaweesa Christopher walked 14 miles, 5 times a week for 3 years to attend school. This was because there were no secondary schools in his village at the time: a situation that affected his education growing up.

Having lived through many hardships, he decided to start a secondary school for two reasons. One was to inspire and change the mindset of the villagers who didn't value higher education since they couldn't afford secondary schools. The second objective

was to stimulate the rural socio-economic development of Kiryokya and its surroundings.

He shared the idea with his father, negotiated, and bought five acres of land from him to start a school. Luckily his father understood the essence of putting up a secondary school in the area and was fully on board. Right now, Kiryokya Parents Secondary School is ranked among the top 3 schools in the district. It has changed the literacy level in the area with 600 students from all parts of the country.

There is a special kind of joy you feel as a contributor especially when it is your community that is being impacted. Community giving might not solve the root of the problem in society entirely, but it can create a huge change for those in need. Don't resist the urge to better your world. Your financial status is irrelevant. It's not about how much you offer but what you can offer. Remember, the real recipient of the blessing is the giver, not the receiver.



COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY IN AFRICA;

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

The Western narrative on philanthropy does not rhyme with the reality of everyday giving that is embedded in African cultures. A new generation of African researchers and practitioners is reframing the narrative so the communities and organisations are at the heart of a model that embraces agency, ownership and trust. By being accountable to their constituencies instead of foreign funders, communities and organisations on the African continent can grow their own inclusive development.

by Marlies Pilon

As a young girl growing up in Johannesburg, Halima Mahomed witnessed the spirit of philanthropy in her community. In her parent's house, they welcomed strangers and those in need. 'Like a neighbour who needs food or has to go to hospital,' she recalls.

This culture of giving was ingrained in African societies, seen through acts like lending equipment, sharing food and land, and caring for the sick and elderly. The concept of collective care was evident as communities and extended families took care of each other.

Next to *safari* and *hakuna matata*, the most famous word Africa gifted the world is *Ubuntu*. It's part of the Zulu phrase '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*,' meaning 'a person is a person through other people' or 'I am because we are.' In Xhosa, it is usually meant more philosophically; 'the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity.'

Its philosophy feels very similar to that of philanthropy. Philanthropy is a combination of the Greek words '*philos*' (loving) and '*antropos*' (humankind), meaning the love for others and the wish to advance mankind. Who are your loved ones? Who can count on you? And who supports you in times of need?

After completing high school, Mahomed pursued a degree in Development Studies at the University. She later joined the Ford Foundation, where one of the programmes she worked on was '*Strengthening philanthropy in Southern Africa*.' Inspired by this, she decided to learn more about philanthropy and the role of giving for a better and just world. But when she searched for universities in South Africa that offer courses in philanthropy, she hit a wall.

'Twenty years ago, not a single university in Africa offered philanthropy as a field of study. The word itself is imported and not used in the streets. I was raised in a culture of giving, yet there were only a handful of people on the continent with both the experience and academic background in philanthropy.' Despite lacking a supervisor in philanthropy at her university, she turned to colleagues at the Ford Foundation for guidance.

Through her research on philanthropy and social justice in South Africa, she noticed stark differences between Western and African approaches to giving. In the West, philanthropy revolved around monetary donations from affluent individuals or corporations, with a formal and bureaucratic top-down approach.

This has implications for other forms of giving. Mahomed realised that when someone in South Africa wants to establish a philanthropic foundation, they often look to models from Europe and/or the US. 'You look at the hierarchical and bureaucratic models and systems they use. As you incorporate those, you also import a certain worldview which determines who controls the money, decides what gets funded, and how the impact and value are measured.'

This culture of giving was ingrained in African societies, seen through acts like lending equipment, sharing food and land, and caring for the sick and elderly

As a result, people on the receiving end often have little say in what is given to them. Colonialism and the dominance of Western discourse on giving further marginalise, ignore, and understudy locally embedded and diverse African giving traditions. Because these everyday forms of giving don't officially 'count,' they are swept under the umbrella of 'informal economy.' This leads to the assumption that they don't exist or hold any real value.

The narrative on the value of African giving is changing. Halima Mahomed is now a TrustAfrica Senior Fellow on African Philanthropy and a consultant and researcher on philanthropy in Africa. Over the past two decades, she has worked alongside a diverse community of researchers, activists, and organisations such as the African Philanthropy Network (APN), TrustAfrica, and the Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI).

Together, they are shaping new narratives on African giving that embrace the notions of trust and solidarity. Their goal is to foster a deeper comprehension of both the existing and potential forms of institutionalised African philanthropy, while also recognising the significance of everyday acts of giving. 'The role of institutional philanthropy is to be in service of the agency of justice-based constituencies.'

Besides tending to her two young children, she dedicates much of her time to exploring the various African giving traditions. She critically examines the dynamics of privilege, power, and agency within the existing philanthropic system, acknowledging how these factors paradoxically hinder its goal of creating more equitable societies. While she doesn't discredit official philanthropy, she believes it could have a greater impact and value if approached differently.

This critique is not new, but the window of receptiveness and transforming the concept of giving is more open now. It aligns with current global discussions on the effectiveness and neo-colonial tendencies of international development. Aid has traditionally been presented as an act of kindness, providing economic and social development to Africa.

However, it often comes with strings attached—political influence, economic interests, and resource exploitation. African organisations must meet strict bureaucratic requirements and adhere to formal rules and frameworks to qualify for a specific grant or call. Unfortunately, these requirements often overlook their unique ideas, values, and realities.

Who decides the rules of the game? To receive the gift of development, receivers need to learn to speak the language and models of giving that are alien to their realities. There is a saying in the Netherlands, *'don't look a gift horse in the mouth,'* meaning that one cannot critique a gift. Instead, be grateful that something is gifted to you (even if that means you are now the owner of a sick horse with bad breath). A gift is never really just a gift.

Local organisations and civil societies relying on foreign funding often face credibility challenges. They are accountable to

Total cross-border resources in the Global Philanthropy Tracker 2023 represent a combined 61% of the world population and 85% of the world's total GDP. The Global Philanthropy Tracker was launched in April 2023 and is a first-of-its-kind research project. It bridges the gap between an increasing need for philanthropy and the lack of knowledge about the scope of cross-border giving. It puts on the map new kinds of money flows that are normally not as visible. It was created by Una Osili, Associate Dean for Research and International Programs at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.



Halima Mahomed

foreign donors rather than their constituents. This allows African leaders to dismiss them as Western mouthpieces, leading to a crack-down on civic space and democratic institutions. The legitimacy of Europe and the US is undermined by Brexit and the growing influence of China, Russia, and far-right movements. Coupled with the ongoing exploitation of natural resources, the situation becomes increasingly complex.

These communities also have ties to the diaspora, which contribute significant funds to the continent. In some cases, such as Zambia, this can make up nearly thirty percent of the national GDP (World Bank 2022). Global remittances in 2020 exceeded the combined amount of official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI) by three times (UN 2020).

It's not just about the amount of money sent back 'home,' but the impact it has on people's lives. Almost half of all global remittances go directly to rural families who have the autonomy to decide how to use it. In contrast, international development assistance is often inefficient. Only ten percent reaches the intended communities and local activists due to bureaucratic processes and intermediaries.

Preserving the integrity of international aid is crucial to serving the needs of people, rather than the interests of countries in the Global North. With Africans now holding influential positions in global philanthropy, there is an opportunity to challenge the system.

Research by Mahomed, in collaboration with TrustAfrica in Senegal, shows that everyday forms of African giving are deeply embedded in social relationships. These forms foster agency, trust, and accountability, which foreign aid organisations and philanthropic foundations cannot replicate.

Mahomed: 'It's important to recognise that there is already significant funding on the continent, supporting our priorities through philanthropy. The key to institutionalised philanthropy in Africa lies not in increasing the amount of money, but in the principles behind its allocation.'

'We have African institutions like TrustAfrica, Africa Philanthropy Network (APN), and the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF) driving progress towards a more equitable continent. Some began with international funding but now have a blend of international, national, and local resources. KCDF even assists communities in establishing their endowments.'

For over a year, Mahomed, in collaboration with TrustAfrica, Urgent-Action Fund Africa, and other organisations, has initiated a collaborative effort to unite individuals in Africa's civil society and philanthropic sector. The objective is to present a fresh narrative framework and guiding principles for the advancement of Pan-African and feminist philanthropies.

These were discussed during the East African Philanthropy Network in Zanzibar in July 2023. Shaun Samuels also hosted a workshop at the conference in Zanzibar and recalls the refreshing atmosphere from his home in South Africa. 'This meetup was unique,' says the Executive Director of SGS Consulting.

'We focused on systems change, greater youth involvement, feminist philanthropy, and what we mean by shifting power. It emphasised our authentic African values, recognising our values, relying more on research and writing, and finding innovative ways to collaborate. The idea of leveraging existing resources instead of constantly seeking funding from foreign sources set the tone in Zanzibar.'

Samuels is highly experienced in establishing community foundations, developing support organisations, and addressing the challenge of fostering community philanthropy. Southern African community foundations actively empower grassroots communities to leverage their resources for sustainable development. Trust and a deep understanding of local communities are key for community foundations to inform their programming effectively.

For Samuels, traditional philanthropy, while well-intentioned, often falls short by lacking community ownership and the opportunity for self-driven development. 'Community philanthropy, on the other hand, is a game changer. It encourages communities to utilise their existing resources to tackle their challenges, including money, time, skills, volunteering, networks, and trust.'

Giving for a more just world is a fascinating way to explore societal questions. Is the goal of development to become self-sufficient? Is philanthropy merely a temporary solution to systemic unfairness? What motivates giving? Samuels says it is important to understand African giving through the lens of reciprocity.

There is an element of reciprocity in the sort of giving that builds trust and glues communities together, he says. That is the most impactful outcome in and of itself. He highlights the concept of *'Black Tax'* in South Africa. 'Imagine you have just finished university with financial help from the whole community or a 'super granny.' Your white friends will plan their futures in the context of their privilege.'

'But as a black person, you can't think along those lines because you come from an extended family that expects you to give back, just as they gave to you. In other words, you have to look and give back while advancing your career. You have to help. This raises the question, is it a duty or is it being philanthropic? We are giving language to our African forms of giving because all giving, in whatever form, is giving with love.'

Both Samuels and Mahomed underscore that changing the narrative is not about downplaying one form of development or philanthropy over the other. Rather, it is about recognising and validating the multitude of everyday practices of giving that are already present, strengthening each other. One problematic issue Samuels sees is community philanthropy supporting local NGOs.

'Because there is still so much distrust around the management of resources and corruption, it would depend on the attitude of the local NGO if a community is willing to contribute. It is what the community perceives in the lifestyles of the NGO leadership and staff, and how they are spending resources, that often reinforce negative stereotypes.'

That is why community foundations are important as they are place-based. They focus on supporting communities to unlock their assets and to use these assets to leverage giving by vertical, formal sources. Community foundations are equipped to approach businesses and high-end donors to encourage them to co-invest with communities in local development. For instance, they can say this community took matters into its hands and built the building, now they need money for the roof to complete the project and ask for your help.

To be sure, Mahomed says this new narrative is not just about some tweaks to an existing system. 'Philanthropic institutions might say *okay, we are shifting power. I am changing my grant term from one year to three years.* Or they call it 'decolonising' when they move from project grants to proposal grants, or make grants a little bit more flexible.'

'But the underlying system stays the same. The donor party usually still decides what the problem is, what the theory of change looks like, and what the rules of the game are. All those things are not done together with the constituents in the project who have expert knowledge in their lives. That is what needs to change.'

The world may have heard of *Ubuntu*, but the global conversation should focus on its specific cultural shapes and forms. 'Words like *'undugu'* and *'ujamaa'* represent notions of brotherhood and support. *'Aaro'* refers to pooled labour during harvest or building time, while *'ukusisa'* describes the time-limited lending of cattle with the option to keep the offspring. All these forms of giving enable neighbours to build upon what they have received from others.'

This way, African philanthropy has the potential to add value to the current official giving system by infusing it with notions of solidarity, ownership and trust. Community foundations and community philanthropy bring communities together to address local issues. Through this process, they become more aware of their rights and their collective power.

Grassroots organisations are also joining this process, becoming proactive in demanding rights and holding local governments accountable. When local NGOs are rooted in place and accountable to their loyal following, they can rebuild trust and credibility for a strong civil society.

Shaun Samuels



‘We are funding political minorities – and the resistance’

In an overwhelmingly—and aggressively—conservative society, advocacy groups are working together with civil society organisations. They are trying to (re) create living and breathing space for political minorities. Is it possible for philanthropy to drive change? In Brazil, where the country underwent extreme right-wing leadership during ex-president Jair Bolsonaro's reign, the question becomes even more relevant: Can philanthropy serve a different purpose?

by Bram Posthumus

Speaking with actors in Brazil's non-mainstream philanthropic sector exposes the horror that followed ex-president Jair Bolsonaro's regime, as well as how long it will take to (re)create adequate space for Brazil's progressive civil society. Graciela Hopstein, the Executive Director of *Rede Comuá*, looks and sounds visibly relieved to see the end of her country's bruising battle with the extreme right-wing rule. 'Yes, we can breathe again.' However, she warns: 'They have not gone away. Brazil is still a weak democracy.' Part of the reason is that even with a more benevolent head of state in place—President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva—Brazilian society remains very conservative. This is reflected in mainstream philanthropy, and Hopstein emphasises the difference. 'Mainstream philanthropic organisations, related to powerful businesses and families, do not fund any of the groups we do. They do not fund minorities, LGBTQ+ communities, black women, or indigenous peoples' fights for their rights. We do that.'

She continues: 'Most people have no idea what we do and are unaware of our existence.' In its first decade of existence, *Rede Comuá* has grown steadily. It was created in 2012 by seven Brazilian grant-making organisations. It now consists of sixteen similar independent funds working in the fields of social justice, environmental justice, and human rights.

They focus on indigenous people, women—particularly black women's rights—and strengthening their communities. '*Philanthropy that Transforms*' is their tagline and appears next to their logo. Hopstein summarises their work as 'Resistance and capacity building.' Member organisations raise funds from national and international philanthropic organisations in consultation and collaboration with these communities. In all of this, transparency and trust are key.

The *Quilombolas* are an example. The name is Angolan, where millions were forcibly taken and transported to Brazil on Portuguese and Dutch slave ships. Hopstein confirms the African origin of the name. The 2022 census estimated that there are 1.3 million *Quilombolas*. Their origins can be traced back to their resistance to slavery—which Brazil abolished in 1888—and their desire to be economically viable and independent.

Land rights have always been critical to their survival. Brazil's current president recognised them as a legal community, yet his immediate predecessor wanted to take away their rights. Member organisations of *Rede Comuá* fund them as they self-identify. A community's survival begins with accepting its right to call itself by its proper name. This point was brought home brutally in August this year.



Graciela Hopstein

They focus on indigenous people, women—particularly black women's rights—and strengthening their communities

News broke of the murder of María Bernadette Pacífico, a 72-year-old tireless fighter for *Quilombolas*' rights. Five years prior, she had lost her son to hired assassins. *Quilombolas* and similar communities exist in neighbouring countries like Colombia and Surinam, and further away in Nicaragua and Belize. Some of them call the Amazon rainforest home. That brings us to the global significance of the work done by the funds in *Rede Comuá*, notably in the field of indigenous peoples' rights in the country.

The Amazon is one of the world's major carbon storage facilities and, therefore, a climate stability guarantor. Like forests everywhere—from Congo to Indonesia—the Amazon has been under pressure from commercial interests that work in logging, mining, and land clearance, for farms and plantations. The principal groups that protect these forests against encroachment are the original inhabitants, whose presence predates colonial conquest and slavery.

Hopstein: 'We have funds to support indigenous people living in the forests. Our work's central theme is access to rights, the first of which is the right to exist. They do not have citizens' rights and are still under threat from the so-called *Marco Temporal*. Have you heard of it?'

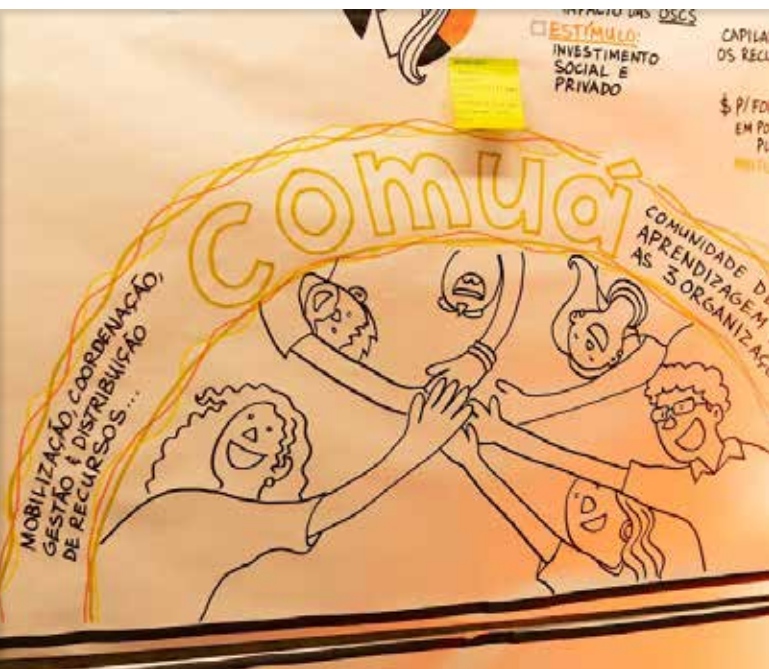
This terminology requires some background information. When Brazil emerged from two decades of military dictatorship, it required a new constitution, which was enacted in October 1988. It granted indigenous people the right to reclaim the land they had previously occupied. *Science* magazine reports that this enabled

them to claim 1.2 million square kilometres (the size of Mali) as *their* land. Logging, mining, and farming interest groups have fought this constitutional article tooth and nail.

This is because it curtails their ability to destroy the forest and poison its waters and soil (Highly toxic mercury is used extensively in gold mining). These groups have friends in Congress. Last May, the Chamber of Deputies approved legislation including the *Marco Temporal* (time frame) invention. Indigenous people will have to demonstrate that they occupied the land before the enactment of the 1988 constitution, or they could lose the right to claim the territory as theirs.

This is a direct threat to their survival and, by extension, the forests. Farmers, miners, and loggers love it, but those battling for what *Rede Comuá* refers to as 'socio-environmental justice' want it gone. They have staged demonstrations in the capital Brasília and lodged a lawsuit to that effect. The case is currently pending at the Supreme Court while the Senate examines the bill that was passed by the House.

It is a matter of life and death, and as Hopstein says, 'We are funding the resistance—again! Mind you, especially in the Amazon, there have been attempts to criminalise organisations working with indigenous peoples and the protection of the forest. They have constantly been under attack. You have vested interests demanding accountability of local organisations while corruption thrives at corporate levels. NGOs were said to be part of an international conspiracy for making legal action and demonstrations possible.'



'Under ex-President Bolsonaro's regime, it was worse. There were countless threats and attacks against network members. We had to be very flexible,' she recalls. 'There were physical and digital attacks, as well as the dissemination of fake news. We had to organise a rapid response and facilitate activists' withdrawal in case of physical attacks. Now we have room to grow again.'

But *Marco Temporal's* threat remains real. Even though President Lula da Silva has said he will veto it because it is unconstitutional, Congress may overrule him. By funding the resistance against this law, *Rede Comuá* and its member funds highlight a raft of interlinked issues at the same time. 'Brazil is a social laboratory,' she argues. 'Our work is where social justice, community development, the environment, and human rights all come together.'

Ultimately, it is about democracy itself. Democracy survives, in large part, thanks to a vibrant civil society. This is where Brazil's non-mainstream philanthropic sector plays a critical role. In September of 2023, this will all become more visible. *Rede Comuá*, together with its member organisations and partners, will dedicate the month to community-based philanthropy. The banner headline reads '*Philanthropy that Transforms*.' Details can be found on the website, redecomua.org.br, which also links to the other members of the network.



Aline Odara

Black philanthropy, especially relating to women, is a vital part of the *Rede Comuá* member funds. One of them, *Fundo Baobá*, was created in 2011 to promote racial equality. The *Fundo Agbara*, a more recent addition, is the first of its kind. It is dedicated entirely to improving the lives of black women.

Agbara is a Yoruba word meaning power and potential. On the website, the fund states: "It is no coincidence that the first victim of the Covid-19 virus in Brazil was a black female domestic worker." Black women in Brazil have less income, less access to basic services like health care, and are more likely to be unemployed. They were also the largest group of victims of the Covid pandemic, infamously described by ex-president Bolsonaro (not black, female, poor, or marginalised) as "*gripezinha*," just a little flu. *Fundo Agbara*, created in 2020, was a direct response to black women's marginalisation in Brazil, made undeniably visible by the pandemic.

Its director, Aline Odara, says this of the first three years of their existence: "It is impossible not to feel profound pride about the road we have travelled. With our team of twelve highly qualified black women, we have come from the sidelines and made inroads in the traditional spaces of philanthropy. To me, this is proof of how resilient and determined we are."

She continues: "Our main achievement is that despite all the initial challenges we faced, we have managed to reach out to 2,500 women. They came to us in search of assistance, inspiration, and ways to be empowered. For us, each of these women is a story about overcoming obstacles, a life transformed sustainably."

Women like Vanessa Luz, who runs *Chupada Gourmet*—a catering business in Salvador—managed to grow her confidence. She is now a mentor in the *Agbara*-supported *Programa Ajeum*. It provides capacity building and financial assistance to women who have started their food businesses. This year, the programme will reach out to twenty women this way. Because it supports women's entrepreneurial initiatives, it creates a multiplier effect, rendering the impact much larger than mere numbers suggest.

Another *Agbara* beneficiary is Bianca Oliveira, who calls herself 'Afrochef.' She runs a restaurant, Casa de Dendê, in Aracaju, not far from Salvador. She describes how she was able to overcome the fear of taking up space and talks about black entrepreneurship. Both Luz and Oliveira embrace what they call 'the ancestral cuisine.' This is a concept where taste is not just taste but incorporates black history and culture.

Luz, Oliveira and dozens of others have been able to benefit from *Fundo Agbara's* flagship programme, *Avança Prefa!*. It supports women's initiatives in setting up businesses and creating employment based on pitches they have made. Each of these initiatives can count on support worth 20,000 reais (€3,750). And more activities share knowledge, raise consciousness, and spread ideas, as Odara explains.

"Our *mega aulas* (aula means classroom) are open, online, and enable us to reach out to black women across the country. We want to build a solidarity network that takes into account all voices and points of view and works towards a fair and antiracist Brazil. This is why we adopt the *mega aulas* model as an educational tool; it breaks down the barriers that have traditionally hindered access to education and reaches a vast and diverse audience."

"We held our first Festival Agbara to celebrate our first anniversary. The third one is in October and will have debates and artistic presentations. The Festival is another way to reconstruct our history. Black people and black women were key to the construction of Brazil. This is a way of restoring our self-esteem against a system that violently seeks to erase our histories, images, and potential. To us, memory means healing. It is our battle cry against historical domination."

Fundo Agbara has a website: fundoagbara.org.br

Empowering Communities for Lasting Change



Text and images by Emmanuel Mandebo

The Twerwaneho Listeners' Club (TLC) developed an innovative strategy to address human rights breaches. They gathered community support through radio advocacy, data tracking, combining entertainment and education, and exploring non-judicial means. By advancing individuals' rights, dignity, and well-being, they ultimately aim for sustainable progress.

The nexus between human rights and development emphasises that development should not be pursued solely for economic growth. Instead, it should also prioritise individuals' and communities' well-being, dignity, and rights.

This implies that disregarding human rights in development can create a vicious cycle of poverty, inequality, and social unrest. It hinders sustainable, equitable, and lasting progress for societies. It is essential to recognise that human rights and development are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Incorporating human rights principles into development initiatives is vital for positive and sustainable outcomes.

In Fort Portal and surrounding areas in southwestern Uganda, the detrimental impact of politically sensitive development projects on local communities has been a persistent issue for years. In the past year alone, there have been many cases reported where human rights were violated.

For example, the case of the Chinese Consortium's takeover of the salt lake; communities affected by the Fort Portal-Kasese Highway; those evicted by the Uganda Wildlife Authority; and another pending case at the Court of Appeal of Uganda where about 20 crater lakes were leased to a private company.

Amidst these challenges, a dedicated group of activists known as the Twerwaneho Listeners' Club (TLC) has risen to the occasion. Comprising passionate human rights defenders, they have taken an innovative approach to addressing human rights violations caused by these projects. Rather than relying solely on donor funding, they have proactively sought to mobilise community support and involvement.

'Our work involves communities, so we must walk side-by-side with them to find local solutions. We do this by partnering with communities, taking on a facilitation role, or providing support,' Gerald Kankya, the team lead at TLC, states.



Gerald Kankya, team lead at Twerwaneho Listeners' Club in his office

‘The communities already know what they want to achieve, and we only facilitate them through the process’

Leveraging radio to raise awareness:

TLC was born through radio, initially as a group of radio callers. Shortly after, they recognised radio's influential role in raising awareness about human rights violations. With the establishment of their radio station, 98.5 Clouds FM, they have engaged with local communities. This has created a platform for open dialogue and discussion to confront challenges. Through captivating programmes and interactive discussions, the initiative has created a vibrant space for the public to voice their concerns. This has helped them actively contribute to the cause.

Tracking impact through data and community feedback:

To measure the effectiveness of their interventions, TLC adopted a diligent approach to collecting recordings, monitoring call-ins, and gathering data and feedback from the area. This comprehensive method enabled them to assess the impact of their initiatives and adjust their strategies accordingly. Concrete findings and resolutions provided tangible evidence of radio advocacy's positive influence, further reinforcing community engagement.

Combining entertainment and education:

TLC recognises the power of storytelling and emotive narratives effectively. It intertwines entertainment and education to communicate messages related to marginalised groups' plight. By crafting engaging content that captivates listeners while conveying valuable information, they maximise their programmes' impact. Engrossing dramas, thought-provoking discussions, and empowering stories serve as catalysts for change within the community, fostering empathy and solidarity.

Exploring non-judicial mechanisms:

Facing the complexities of politically sensitive projects, TLC initially pursued the legal route by instituting cases in the usual courts of law. However, they soon realised the efficiency and rewards of non-judicial mechanisms. Redirecting their efforts towards alternative approaches, such as mediation, dialogues, and grassroots advocacy, they achieved quicker results, saving valuable time and resources.

In particular, they are exploring the use of the Independent Recourse Mechanism (IRM) concerning international organisations that fund development projects like the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and KfW (a German bank). It is a structure present in most international development project funders. It acts as an independent supervisor of these projects. If a community is harmed by one of their projects, a complaint is made to IRM, which investigates it to a conclusion.

‘As TLC, our role is to mobilise the communities and raise as many resources from within as possible and file a case before the IRM,’ he states. He adds that when the entire community participates in such a process, it further assures them that they will get remedies within the shortest time. These alternative methods have proven to be powerful tools for rallying support.

Letting their projects speak for themselves:

TLC firmly believes in demonstrating the worthiness of their projects through tangible results. By showcasing the transformative impact of their work, they have attracted donors and individuals who share their goals and values. Some of these individuals are from within the communities. Real-life stories and positive outcomes inspired support from organisations and individuals alike.

Focusing on doing the right thing:

Community support has been aided by TLC's unwavering dedication to upholding moral principles. This is besides their mission of promoting good governance and respect for the rights and freedoms of the most marginalised. This ensures better service delivery, equitable development, and peace. Their authenticity and dedication have attracted like-minded organisations and individuals who have recognised and supported their efforts. Integrity has become a key pillar of their approach, fostering trust and credibility.

Emphasising results and accountability:

To build trust, TLC emphasises delivering tangible results. While reporting is imperative, their primary focus remains on achieving positive outcomes and making a tangible difference in the lives of the affected communities. Ensuring transparency in financial matters and involving stakeholders transparently further solidifies accountability as a cornerstone of their work.

Further empowering communities:

Understanding the pivotal role of community support in the success and sustainability of their projects, TLC actively involves and empowers the locals. They implement various engagement strategies, such as facilitating participation, seeking input, and ensuring that the community's voice remains at the forefront of decision-making processes.

‘Our engagements are more like collective hunting; you go out, find an animal, slaughter it, and skin it together. Everyone at least learns something from the process. It's empowerment,’ he says.

Kankya notes that while working with people who had been evicted from around the 20 crater lakes, communities walked with them throughout the journey. Today, the most civically active and legally empowered communities are those around these crater lakes. These crater lakes are attractive to the hospitality business and are rich in minerals.

They are now negotiating agreements with investors about how they will continue using these lakes and the resources. This is due to the empowerment they received from TLC's intervention and involvement with them. Therefore, organising support and involvement for politically sensitive projects demands strategic and innovative approaches that foster a positive impact.

The club's journey in Fort Portal, Uganda, offers invaluable lessons for organisations and individuals worldwide. By leveraging media power, tracking impact through data, combining entertainment and education, emphasising results and accountability, and fostering genuine community involvement, organisations can navigate the challenges of mobilising support effectively.

Empowering communities and driving change can ultimately create a world where marginalised voices are heard, and their rights are protected. TLC's commitment to making a difference exemplifies the power of community-driven initiatives in effecting meaningful change.



*'While we do our good works let us not forget that the real **solution** lies in a world in which charity will have become **unnecessary**.'*

- CHINUA ACHEBE

*'Tenderness and **kindness** are not signs of weakness and despair, but manifestations of **strength** and resolution.'*

- KAHLIL GIBRAN

*'How wonderful it is that nobody need **wait** a single moment before starting to improve the **world**.'*

- ANNE FRANK

*'I have found that among its other benefits, giving **liberates** the **soul** of the giver.'*

- MAYA ANGELOU

*'The simplest acts of kindness are by far more **powerful** than a thousand heads bowing in **prayer**.'*

- MAHATMA GHANDI

*'**Service** to others is the rent you pay for your room here on **earth**.'*

- MUHAMMAD ALI

Ending **Child Labour & Abuse** On **RUSINGA** **ISLAND**



Emily Adhiambo holding her baby

Text and images by Cynthia Omondi

Throughout the decades, exploitation and abuse of children and women have been rampant on Rusinga Island. Beyond mere statistics each case represents a shattered life, a survivor who endured unimaginable suffering. But amidst the darkness, glimmers of hope emerge. Through weekly training and practical policies, the island inhabitants are gradually dismantling and discarding harmful and exploitative norms to create safe spaces for all.

A cool breeze blows from the lake. Wafting in the breeze is a mildly acrid, fishy smell that defines Lake Victoria beaches. The business of silver cyprinid fish, locally known as *omena* in the Luo dialect, is booming here. Women, old and young, are busy packaging, sorting or finding the finest bargains for the day. About a decade ago, the scene was different. Children would storm the beach to help their mothers do this work instead of attending school. We are at Litare Beach, headed for Luanda Village on Rusinga Island.

Just a few kilometres after trekking the hilly paths, and traversing empty homesteads, we are received by Emily Adhiambo. Her skin tone pops with a black star-shadowed look, and her hair is nicely done in spiral braids. Casually dressed in a white t-shirt and a black skirt, you can tell she has been busy working. With a room-grabbing smile, she offers us seats under a tree by their semi-permanent house roofed with shiny silver iron sheets. Behind her is a shirtless toddler who looks cheerful. This is her sister's home. 'My parents died when I was young. Being the last born in our family, I was left to my siblings. I struggled with school and took longer to complete my primary education. Life was hard.'



Women sorting fish at Litare Beach

Emily's experience is not an exception. Many children here have fallen prey to fishermen

Orphaned at a young age, the 21-year-old mother of two has a past that she feels uncomfortable talking about. She got her first child after clearing her primary education at 14. Abandoned by the man responsible, she struggled to raise her child. No sooner had life begun to take shape than the unexpected happened. She was molested, resulting in her second pregnancy. She never finished her secondary education.

She struggles with her words as she holds back tears. 'Life turned bleak. The thought of how I would raise my children tormented me daily. It took a neighbour who introduced me to Victoria Friendly Montessori. After counselling, I was trained in soapmaking skills, which is what I currently do to provide for my children. My firstborn is currently in Pre-Primary 2 (PP2). This is my second baby,' she says as she carries the toddler. Despite the long-lasting scars, she focuses on the future. She hopes Rusinga will become a safe space to raise her children for a better tomorrow.

Emily's experience is not an exception. Many children here have fallen prey to fishermen. The island is one of many scattered along Kenya's shores of Lake Victoria. Most households on the island depend on fishing for their income, leading to a very competitive environment where immorality dominates. As a result, women are forced to trade sex for fish.

Communities around Rusinga have seen an increase in teenage pregnancies and HIV/AIDS infections as fishermen and family members lure girls into transactional sex. A form of sexual exploitation which involves exchanging sex for material support or other benefits. Girls are coerced into sex in exchange for fish to meet basic needs.

The fish business consists of boat owners, fishermen and the 'middle woman' popularly known as *jaboya* a term also used to refer to 'sex-for-fish'. Men catch fish, while women sell them. For many women, living in poverty and with minimal education and no job opportunities, there is no other way to earn a living and support their children besides being fishmongers. Due to the manual nature of the business, prices depend on the whims and moods of the fishermen. As supplies diminish, fishermen tend to demand sex in exchange for providing fish. Being a *jaboya* is the fulcrum on which sexual exploitation revolves, and has been for decades.

Fishmongers used to drag their children into the business to make more money. One such case is that of Millicent Ororo, a 32-year-old mother of six who for five years, deprived her children of their rights by making them work at the beach. 'I have been in the business since 2014 and it comes with its challenges. I started by sorting out and spreading the small fish. There is very little pay since it depends on how many kilograms you can sort. I needed extra hands for more pay and that is why I went with my children,' she confesses.

She lacked a healthy relationship with her children as they barely talked to her about anything. They missed school most of the time and performed poorly, but to her what mattered was putting food on the table. 'Sometime around 2018, while working at the beach, I heard another woman talk about a training she had attended on how to be a responsible parent. I was curious. I have always been a strict mother, which pushed them away. I inquired more about the training and attended. It had been organised by Victoria Friendly Montessori. The first session was an eye-opener. I realised I was not being fair to my children. It made me comprehend how important simple things like keeping your children close are. This

makes them open to you. There was a feeling of guilt in my heart. The training happened once a week for six weeks. It changed me,' she admits.

After five years of harsh labour at the beach under the guise of helping their mother, Millicent's children finally got relief. Her firstborn is now in college, another in high school, and the rest in primary school. She confesses to the significant change she has seen in her relationship with her children. 'I realised it was just a mindset that I had to work with them to make ends meet. Years later, I can provide enough for them on my own and am happy that their academic performance has improved as well,' she adds with a smile.

Recently, communities have taken a step back to figure out where they erred. According to Ouma Atieno, a thirty-eight-year-old volunteer at a Beach Management Unit in Litare, the alarming rate of teen pregnancy cases, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to a call for action.

'We came together as a community with different stakeholders to brainstorm about how to protect our children. The Beach Management Unit, together with local leaders and the area chief, assembled the local communities to have dialogue. We agreed to have a child protection desk at the Unit and I was selected with Monica to man it,' she tells us. The desk was created to address child abuse cases common on the beach and in communities.

For an island with a population of around 30,000 people, bringing them together was not a hustle. Changing their mindset was. It took a lot of effort and commitment from the local leaders. They would gather people at the beach every Friday for briefings and discussions on how ideally children could be protected. This was to reduce teenage pregnancies and stop children from working at the beach.

'Not all women were receptive. Some wondered why we were dictating how they raise their children. However, most saw sense and together we developed a set of rules that guide all beach activities,' she adds. Among the rules, which she takes us through are; every fisherman and fishmonger who operates at the beach must be registered by the Beach Management Unit; children are barred from accessing the beach at given times; no child is supposed to be loitering at the beach during school days; and no child is allowed to do any kind of work along the beach.

'When we began around 2021, people were reluctant to bring cases, but with time, cases began flowing. Most of them were sexual abuse in nature. However, the cases have gradually declined this year compared to previous years,' Monica, Atieno's fellow volunteer, says. Both are fishmongers at Litare Beach.

For a town that relies extensively on cycle taxis, commonly known as bodaboda, cases of riders defiling young girls have also been pervasive here



Victor, a bodaboda rider who operates on Rusinga Island

A first-time visitor to the island would be awestruck by the majestic views of Lake Victoria. When the sun sets, the lake comes to life in a whole new form, with small yellow lights popping up across the water. Only a fisherman like George Wesonga Opoe who has worked in Rusinga for over twenty years, can confirm to you that the lake appears as a sea of lights at night as a result of fishing.

The thirty-two-year-old father of six, whose expertise is in Tilapia, or *ngege* as the locals here call it, admits to noticing a significant change at the beach in the recent past. 'Some five or ten years ago, this place flooded with people of all ages. Most fishermen here are drunkards and, in most cases, nuisances. I cannot remember how many times I witnessed women and children being raped.'

He confesses that he has never abused a child or a woman. He attributes his exemplary character to religion and family. He prays that his daughters may never fall victim to fellow fishermen's abuse. 'Things began to look different in the last three years when we began receiving visitors at the beach. Through the Beach Management Unit, no fisherman or fishmonger can operate here without proper registration. There have been some new strict rules, which has helped reduce some of these cases,' he affirms.

Fishermen are not the only threat to women and children in Rusinga. For a town that relies extensively on cycle taxis, commonly known as bodaboda, cases of riders defiling young girls have also been pervasive here. Victor is a twenty-two-year-old bodaboda rider who operates on the island. He tells us, 'It reached a point where we were all seen as rapists. It is very difficult to operate in a space where you are not wanted.'



Left: Monica(right) and a fellow fishmonger sorting fish at Litare beach
Below: A student at Victoria Friendly Montessori School poses on a swing

It has taken many interventions by the community to bring sanity to their sector as well. Thanks to the strict rules of the Bodaboda Sacco, all operators must be registered. 'We have rules and regulations that guide how we operate. For instance, as a Bodaboda Sacco member of Litare, I am only allowed to operate in this area and not in any other. If I went to Mbita, I would have to register again. In that case, if I make any mistakes, I can be easily traced,' he explains.

Even though child defilement cases are still there, Victor tells us they are minimal since they came together to protect their reputation. Any offender they come across is firmly dealt with. 'The last incident I heard of, a rider was accused of molesting a schoolgirl and thought he would escape. Other riders ganged up and set his motorbike ablaze. The police intervened and he was arrested.'

Kenya is set to conduct a child labour survey this year after 15 years. The last Child Labour Analytical Report was developed in June 2008 from data generated under the *Kenya Integrated Household Survey of 2005/06*. The report indicated that 1.01 million children were in child labour. A 2018 report released by Childline Kenya said the most frequently reported abuse was child neglect with 116 cases. This was followed by physical and sexual abuse at 100 and 76 respectively. Rusinga was one of the leading areas with a high rate of child abuse and neglect.

With communities on Rusinga island coming together to end child exploitation, one can see the power of local contribution within communities. Once the child labour survey is conducted, communities are optimistic that child labour and abuse cases will decrease significantly.



VICTORIA FRIENDLY MONTESSORI

VFM is a local organisation that focuses on developing capacities among grassroots communities along Lake Victoria. It seeks to mitigate the effects of poverty through sustainable community-led interventions. Through their social services, VFM runs several programs, among which are child protection and skilful parenting. These programmes are committed to changing livelihoods on Rusinga Island in collaboration with different stakeholders.

Nepalese women leading the way in philanthropy



In Nepal, a remarkable tale of empowerment and community resilience is unfolding through the tireless efforts of Tewa. It is a women's organisation dedicated to driving change and empowering communities through innovative initiatives. With a focus on women's empowerment and addressing community needs, Tewa fosters grassroots transformation and cultivates a culture of shared empowerment.

by Eva Nakato

Nepal, the land of the Himalayas, boasts Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world. Its people, known for their generosity and acts of kindness, embody the spirit of giving. However, the CAF Annual Report 2022 reveals that Nepal ranked 56th in the World Giving Index. Nevertheless, the rise of community philanthropy supported by women's organisations like Tewa signifies a promising trend.

Upon entering the Tewa premises, one cannot help but be captivated by its distinct architectural style, known as the pagoda style. These multi-roofed structures are adorned with intricately carved wooden struts, adding to their allure. The pagodas themselves stand as the epitome of Nepalese architecture.

The compound is adorned with Nepal Prayer flags, which come in a vibrant array of colours. Each colour holds significance: blue symbolises the sky, white represents air or wind, red signifies fire, green embodies water, and yellow symbolises earth. Traditionally printed with images and texts, these flags add an enchanting touch to the surroundings.

As per tradition, we respectfully remove our shoes before entering the room where we are warmly greeted by Urmila and Anuja, two remarkable ladies. Urmila Shrestha Amatya, the Executive

Director, has been diligently working with the Women Fund since 2004. During her time as the volunteer programme officer, she exhibited exceptional skills in mobilising local resources for sustainable development programmes. Notably, she played a pivotal role in leading the recovery programme after a devastating earthquake.

Anuja Shrestha, the Senior Grants Making Manager, has been the Executive Director of Tewa for 12 years. Under her guidance, Tewa has successfully disbursed approximately 140 million Nepali rupees as grants to 598 women's organisations across 73 of Nepal's 77 districts.

Tewa places a strong emphasis on community needs. To be eligible for grants, women's groups are required to submit proposals aligning with women empowerment initiatives, a key criterion. Tewa conceptualised a volunteer programme that included a three-day training session.

During this training, women volunteers were equipped with knowledge about community philanthropy, the significance of women empowerment, feminist values and principles, as well as fundraising skills. Subsequently, these volunteers shared the information they acquired with other women and communities, encouraging their active participation.

Throughout the training, they were enlightened about the status of women in Nepal and the need to improve it to foster a more equitable society. To date, more than 1000 volunteers, predominantly from Kathmandu, the capital city, have actively engaged in volunteer training and made significant contributions to Tewa's local fundraising efforts.

'In the initial phase,' Shrestha shares, 'the programme aimed to provide a platform for educated women in Nepal. This was mainly for those from urban areas, who were confined to their homes after marriage due to societal norms. Women were not accustomed to participating in public spheres during that time.'

'Our objective was to bring them out of their homes and involve them in social work, creating a space for their personal development. Now, our volunteer programme welcomes anyone who wishes to join.'

Tewa engages in community philanthropy by organising local fundraising events and campaigns aimed at collecting funds at the local level. These are then supplemented by contributions from donor organisations such as international women's funds, private foundations, and community foundations, among others.

Throughout the fundraising process, various events are organised to support causes such as tree plantation. Here, saplings are sold and the proceeds are collected to provide grants to women's organisations in diverse communities.

'We also have what we call the *88 Days Campaign*,' Amatya adds. 'It runs between December 10th, National Human Rights Day, and 8th March, International Women's Day. During this campaign, a Nepali purse called *Thaili* is distributed within the network.'

'Each person is requested to put 1 rupee a day in it for the entire duration of the campaign. By the end, each person will have contributed a total of 88 rupees, which is given back to Tewa. This money is kept and used for grant-making as per the need of the women's groups in the community.'

On April 25, 2015, Nepal experienced its most devastating earthquake in eighty years. It resulted in widespread destruction and severe damage to remote communities. Two weeks later, another earthquake struck, affecting over 8.1 million people throughout the country.

Without any experience in response work, these women volunteers jumped right into it. Tewa coordinated with its grantee partners for relief distribution in the affected districts. It also collaborated with Nagarik Aawaz—its grantee partner—to address the effect of ten years of conflict upon youths—to set up a joint Earthquake Relief Fund (ERF) and boost the recovery efforts. They began by using the funds they already had. Luckily, more funds began to pour into the ERF.

In the first seventy days, they were able to reach out to 120 communities in fifteen affected areas. Together, they distributed goods, cash—around seventy million Nepali rupees (US\$ 527194)—and temporary shelter. Through this initiative, they successfully reached out to twenty-three thousand households, providing direct support to approximately seven thousand postnatal/pregnant women, elderly individuals, and children.

Uncommon in these disasters was when members of the affected community, who had received support, chose to reciprocate based on their abilities. Even in the direst situations, these survivors prioritised the well-being of others and displayed a genuine eagerness to practice philanthropy for the greater good. This has been a profound lesson for the women volunteers.

Under her guidance, Tewa has successfully disbursed approximately 140 million Nepali rupees as grants to 598 women's organisations across 73 of Nepal's 77 districts

Shrestha notes that this experience was a unique opportunity for the volunteers to actively participate, leaving a profound impact on their lives. Their satisfaction in serving and giving back to the community has fostered a stronger connection to their work. It has also provided them with valuable insights into how to compassionately care for affected individuals and respond swiftly in times of crisis.

'Our philanthropic efforts extend beyond fundraising; they revolve around fostering connections within communities. Out of the seventy million Nepali rupees contributed by donors and community members, 700,000 Nepali rupees (US\$ 5,000) was jointly contributed by both unaffected and affected communities,' Amatya asserts.

Before the calamity, various grassroots women's groups had already started emulating the local fundraising efforts within their respective communities. This experienced a rapid surge in the aftermath of the disaster. Additionally, others have actively encouraged their children to engage in volunteer work.



Tewa, which means support in the Nepali language, is a National Women's Fund. It supports women's groups, movements and women's rights, and has been working since 1995 to empower women in Nepal. It practices community philanthropy and local fundraising within Nepalese communities through its Fundraising program. It tops this up with support from international donors and also provides grants to women's organisations within Nepal.

Anuja Shrestha (left) with Urmila Shrestha Amatya

One of the grant partners practices 'Mutthi Daan'—giving a full fist. It is a tradition where women set aside a handful of rice while cooking. They then collect and convert it into money, which is used to purchase laptops for their organisation.

Another group of women has embarked on a remarkable venture of recycling clothes. They transform discarded garments into black cotton material, which they then skilfully craft into cosy cushions and sell. Not only does this initiative provide employment opportunities, but it also plays a vital role in waste management within their communities.

Additionally, they collect donations such as utensils and clothing, reselling them to generate more funds. Some of these women have developed the courage to go for leadership positions at the local level. However, it's still not as easy as it seems for them to be accepted by society, especially by the men who see them as a threat. At times they are even threatened.

During a meeting of the municipality, something extraordinary occurred. Several grantee partners, who had previously participated in capacity-building training and received grants for their environmental justice work—supported by the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)—happened to be present. Coincidentally, they had attended the meeting to advocate for equitable financial allocations towards local climate action.

One male government official was extremely resistant, going as far as to swear that he would cut off his ear if women from his community contributed to community development. The president and members of the grantee organisation were deeply disheartened by this statement, considering the immense effort they had invested in advocating for this cause and more.

However, they later received counselling and encouragement from a team at Tewa, reminding them not to lose hope. 'The good news is that after the recent elections, the new local government is very much willing to support women in leadership positions. This is a promising step for our women,' Shrestha says with a smile.

Although the majority of Tewa's grant partners are local women, some of them have begun to include men in their circles during group discussions and activities. This decision was made in response to some men feeling excluded from these conversations. Around ten to twenty couples are invited to various talks addressing violence against women and related topics. Notably, during the skills programme, men have also begun actively participating.

During the construction of Tewa's offices in 2011, these women groups joyfully united and selflessly contributed to its establishment, driven by a deep sense of sustainability. The distinctiveness of the women's fund, as described by other donors, made them feel a profound connection. As a gesture of gratitude and a way to give back, they willingly donated up to ten thousand Nepalese rupees to support it.

Besides work-related issues, Shrestha tries to contribute to their lives as a mentor, counsellor, friend and sister. Even on her off days, she always spares time to chat with them. Leadership is not solely about perceived power, but rather about service and responsibility, guided by love. They firmly believe that the trust and confidence bestowed upon them by their donors has made a tangible difference in the lives of women and communities.

By strengthening leadership, amplifying voices, increasing visibility, and fostering collective organising power, they have been able to create a positive impact. With good intentions, the right approach, and a clear model, they work with cohesion and remarkable efficiency.

'Our vision for the years to come is that Tewa's work will flow continuously, whether we are here or not. The good things and synergies will be transferred to the new leaders to come and Tewa will keep flowing because it is like a river that never runs dry,' Amatya confidently states.

The power dynamic between Tewa and its grantee partners operates on an equitable foundation. This is as opposed to the conventional notion of one party giving and the other receiving. In my belief, community giving should encompass both the capacity to receive and the ability to reciprocate when the need arises.

CHANGING *the* GAME, ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

by Bram Posthumus

Being a poster child for donor dependency is not a status to be proud of. For decades, Burkina Faso's development has been hobbled by this unhappy status. But there is a modest movement towards change. Part of this effort is the *Association burkinabè de Fundraising* (ABF), the partner for Change the Game Academy in (nominally) Francophone West Africa. Bram Posthumus spoke to its director, Abdoulaye Sawadogo.

The villa where ABF has its head office stands in a walled garden on a quiet sandy street. It is near the entrance to the popular Gounghin neighbourhood in the Burkina Faso capital, Ouagadougou. Around the corner is good company: the international Norbert Zongo Press Centre, named after the country's iconic investigative journalist murdered by ex-president Blaise Compaoré's government.

Compaoré ran Burkina Faso from October 1987 to October 2014. He came to power in a bloody coup that ended the life of his friend and predecessor, Thomas Sankara. The end of his regime came when a huge, angry and determined crowd marched to the large luxurious presidential palace he had built for himself. Compaoré escaped the country aboard a French military helicopter. For Zongo and Sankara, the people revolted and removed the autocrat.

That uprising, insists ABF director Abdoulaye Sawadogo, was the result of what he calls 'an awakening of consciousness.' That



THE SPIRIT OF SANKARA

When you go to the ABF website you will find this quote from a speech by Sankara (translated by the author): “The most important accomplishment, I believe, is when you have given people self-confidence and the understanding that they can sit down and write their development, write their happiness and say what it is that they want, while having a sense of the price at which happiness comes.”

Yes, Sankara. Sawadogo pauses for a moment when the name is mentioned and says: “He wanted true development. During those short four years between 1983 and 1987 when he was in power he promoted self-sufficiency. And it brought results. At ABF, we have adopted his words as our motto. And keep in mind: adhering to what he advocated for is not a choice. It is a necessity. His vision and ours are the same.”



awakening got compressed into one little phrase that became the defining slogan of the 2014 popular uprising: *‘Plus rien sera comme avant.’* (Nothing will be like it was before.) And of course, this emphatically includes the way Burkina Faso related to its (Western) donors.

During his 27 years in power, Compaoré cultivated a culture of donor dependency, which Sawadogo describes as follows: ‘For decades we have had a mindset that consisted of asking and waiting. Asking for assistance and waiting...for the government, donors, or anyone. When we started ABF in 2008, we wanted to do things differently. There were some pertinent questions we needed to ask.

‘Why is it that, after receiving all this development aid, all this investment in all these different sectors—health, education, agriculture—the results were not encouraging? Were the strategies wrong? Could it be that all these projects and programmes designed by donors in collaboration with our government did not meet communities’ requirements? And that the upshot of all this was that the receiving communities, the supposed beneficiaries, simply had no interest in these projects and programmes? If that’s the case, that money was wasted.

‘One welcome side-effect of the coups is the end of politics as we know it’

Even a casual visitor to Africa will see landscapes littered with abandoned projects, from idle village pumps to disused storage rooms and even factories. While discussions about this waste are not new, they rarely result in different development practices. ABF changed the methodology. What this means in practical terms is that community beneficiaries get involved right from the beginning.

‘This is how we normally work,’ says Sawadogo, ‘The community maps its problems. That is the starting point. The community then decides on its priorities and identifies its most pressing needs. To do this right, we work with all the actors: traditional leaders, religious leaders, women’s groups, youth groups, and the local administration. Once the issues have been mapped, the community leads the search for solutions. And it prices those solutions. Only then can financial resources be sourced domestically and abroad. This is how we guarantee continuity because the entire community feels responsible.’

He tells a story from Burkina Faso’s second city, Bobo Dioulasso. In this story, one neighbourhood in tandem with ABF started a local fundraising effort but also got a local businessman to donate 35 million CFA (€53,000) towards the construction of three classrooms. Yes, that is philanthropy, a common phenomenon across the continent. Not far from the neighbourhood where ABF has its office, there is a stretch of road named after another rich businessman. Why? He paved that road; decades later, it is still there. Whether it is Zimbabwe’s telecoms tycoon Strive Masiyiwa, his Sudanese counterpart Mo Ibrahim or Nigeria’s king of industry Aliko Dangote, they have all set up foundations in their names dedicated to worthy causes.

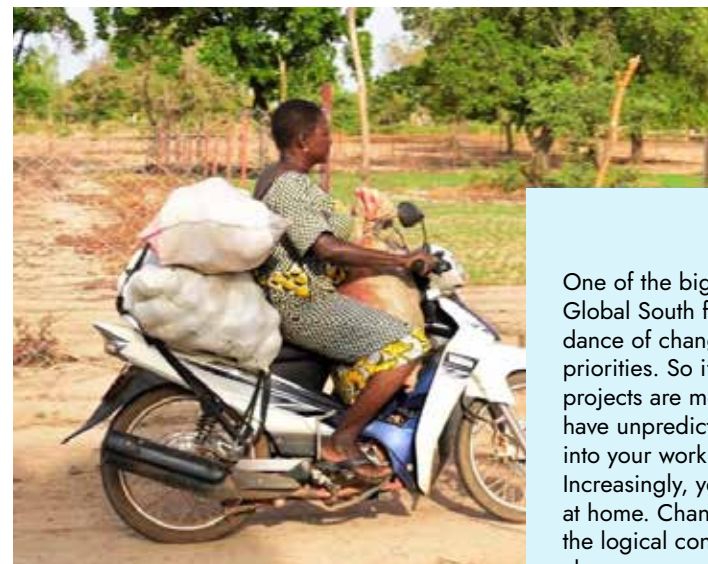
Philanthropy is big around Africa. And there is evidence that it works. ‘I can tell you,’ says Sawadogo, ‘that the things we have helped finance as ABF, like those classrooms in Bobo Dioulasso, are still in place and working.’ The message could not be more straightforward: when a community owns a project or a programme it is more likely to be sustainable. Or, as the ABF director puts it: ‘If you impose your themes, you will have no impact. Gifts nobody asked for will be neglected or sold.’

Interestingly, Sawadogo thinks that this revolutionary way of doing things is also applicable to the current insecurity situation in Burkina Faso. ‘Every day you see people contributing to the army’s efforts. They also help displaced people. You will see families caring for up to 20 people in their homes. And all of us contribute one percent of our salary towards winning this war.’

In April 2015, Burkina Faso witnessed its first attack by a non-state group of armed men from across the border in Mali. They call themselves ‘jihadists’ but in Burkina Faso, these groups are overwhelmingly called ‘terrorists’ or ‘bandits’. There have been three attacks on Ouagadougou (2016, 2017, and 2018). Since then,

violence has spread far and wide in rural areas, especially along the border with Mali and Niger. More recently, it has also been witnessed in several spots on Burkina Faso’s southern borders with its four coastal neighbours; Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin.

These groups are an existential threat to the country. Estimates are that at least 40% of the country has become inaccessible due to the violent acts of the terrorists. The groups earn income from exploiting artisanal gold mines, raiding cattle and extorting money from travellers at improvised roadblocks. When they arrive in a village, people know what to expect: murder, rape, theft, pillaging, or arson. More than two million Burkinabè have fled to urban centres, where they live with relatives or in the new sprawling settlements that ring these towns and cities. Ouagadougou, for instance, has seen a dramatic increase in street begging as a result.



One of the biggest problems NGOs in the Global South face is the never-ending dance of change in donor agendas and priorities. So if your programmes and projects are mostly externally funded, you have unpredictability and instability built into your work. Is there a way around this? Increasingly, yes. The answer is: find funds at home. Change the Game Academy is the logical consequence of this thinking change.

At the request of some NGOs from the global South, Wilde Ganzen Foundation began developing the concept in 2007.

In response, ABF has changed the way it works. In the heavily affected Sahel Region, where thousands have fled their villages, the organisation can only work in the regional capital, Dori. Everywhere outside Dori is, as Sawadogo puts it, ‘basically closed.’ Through its local associations, ABF helps these refugees in their own country (the jargon term is IDPs; internally displaced persons) by finding them places to stay which is their most basic and urgent demand next to food and water.

‘The land law was changed in 2012,’ explains Sawadogo. ‘This means that the state can no longer allocate land to build shelters or homes.’ Of course, the enormous problem of internal refugees did not exist then. So the only way to shelter people in this situation is to work as ABF does in its regular programmes: by getting the entire community involved.

Terrorism has had another consequence: more coups, two to be precise. The government of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, seen as weak and ineffective in dealing with the armed threat, was removed in a coup in January 2022. Eight months later the leader of that coup was himself deposed by the current head of state, a very young (34) Captain Ibrahim Traoré. He put the country on a war footing and on the road to authoritarian rule.

He also got people to contribute one percent of their salaries, as mentioned earlier. He expanded the recruitment drive of the so-called Volunteers for the Defense of the Country. Fifty thousand of them are assisting the army in its mission to chase terrorism out of the country. Whether the cure will be worse than the disease is unclear at the moment. But the country’s mood has changed.

One welcome side-effect of the coups is the end of politics as we know it. One local activist in a Ouagadougou suburb told the sad tale of how under the old regime many externally funded projects would only be accepted if the local politician from the constituency got their cut and/or could put their name on the result, for use in the next election campaign. Community-proposed projects that would have improved residents’ lives were killed because they did not meet these conditions.

‘This was how a drinking water project and a community lighting plan were sabotaged,’ the activist recalled. ‘We may be under military rule but I don’t miss these politicians and no, I don’t want them back.’ The same applies to donor dependency. Change the game, indeed.

CHANGE THE GAME

Starting in 2015 and collaboration with partners from Kenya, India and Brazil, Change the Game Academy has taken shape. A learning platform that would focus on two topics: Local Fundraising and Mobilising Support. The collective body of knowledge and experience is now available online at Change the Game Academy (www.changethegameacademy.org). It’s free and offers online courses in six languages you can follow at your own pace. It also offers classroom courses at specific times and locations and in different languages.

Football fans unite for change

Text and images by Emmanuel Mandebo

In a heartwarming display of compassion and community spirit, devoted fans of Arsenal in East Africa came together in Uganda during this year's Easter season for a remarkable cause. It wasn't just about their love of football; it was about making a difference in the lives of those in need.

This year marks the fourth Arsenal Africa Fans Festival. This is a special event organised by a group of health workers who share a passion for Arsenal and giving back to the community. Led by Dr Robert Lubega, an orthopaedic resident at Makerere University College of Health Sciences, these dedicated health professionals aim to provide free healthcare services to underserved communities. Driven by personal experiences and a desire to uplift the vulnerable, Dr Lubega rallied over 25 medical doctors, including specialists like paediatricians and gynaecologists, to participate in this noble initiative.



The impact of their efforts was evident as hundreds of patients received vital medical attention during the event. Esther Nanteza, a fishmonger at the landing site, expressed her astonishment when she received treatment from a group of young medical professionals proudly donning Arsenal jerseys. It was a reminder that even amidst their love of football, these doctors were deeply committed to addressing pressing health concerns in the community.

The medical camp, which lasted for several hours, provided a wide range of services, including HIV screenings offered by The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO) to combat HIV prevalence in areas like the Ggaba landing site. Additionally, screenings for conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes were conducted, ensuring a comprehensive approach to community healthcare. The medical camp's success was further bolstered by partnerships with organisations like Uganda Blood Transfusion Services. This enabled the collection of 54 units of life-saving blood.

However, the event encompassed more than just healthcare. Simultaneously, a thorough cleaning exercise of the entire Ggaba landing site took place, leaving the area remarkably clean. The presence of Erias Lukwago, the Lord Mayor of Kampala City, and a well-known Arsenal fan, added a special touch to the event. Not only did the Lord Mayor donate blood, but he also addressed the concerns of the locals. He highlighted issues affecting traders and residents in the area.

The festival, while celebrating Arsenal fans' fervour, was ultimately about uniting people from diverse backgrounds for the greater good of the community. The Arsenal Supporters Club Kenya played a crucial role in organising previous charity events, including visits to children's homes. It also distributed food, bedding, and clothes. This was all while fostering meaningful interactions with the children.

Martin Wachira, Assistant National Treasurer of the Arsenal Supporters Club Kenya, was thrilled to be part of the festival. As an Arsenal fan since childhood, he found immense joy in contributing to the community beyond his love of the club. Notably, the festival also attracted international volunteers like Paul Naumann, a German



physical education teacher in Kampala. He believes in the power of sport to unify people. Remarkably, the event drew attendees who weren't even Arsenal fans, like Chol, a South Sudanese citizen residing in Kampala.

He recognised football's potential to bring people together, regardless of team affiliation and joined in solidarity for the love of the game. The festival showcased football's universal appeal and ability to forge connections across diverse backgrounds. As a fitting culmination to the event, the first-ever Arsenal Africa Fan Cup was launched, with Team Uganda emerging as the victorious team captained by Dr Lubega. This remarkable achievement highlighted the inclusive nature of the festival, where both male and female participants displayed their talents and contributed to the spirit of unity.

The success of the Arsenal Africa Fans Festival has left an indelible mark on the community. This shows the power of community giving and the profound impact individuals can make when they come together for a shared cause. Dr Lubega and his team of dedicated health professionals aim to continue organising such medical camps regularly. They intend to extend their reach beyond the festival and make a lasting positive impact on communities across Uganda.



AFRICA THROUGH THE EYES OF THE AFRICAN YOUTH

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