



# THE AFRICA FUNDING LANDSCAPE

---

A PROFILE OF FUNDERS FOCUSED  
ON AFRICA AND PERSPECTIVES  
ON THE FIELD



## Contributors

---

### Author/Researcher

**Steven Lawrence**

*Independent Consultant*

### Author/Project Leader

**Niamani Mutima**

*Executive Director*

*Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group*

### Project Staff

**Eden Butler**

*Administrative and Events Coordinator*

*Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group*

## Steering Committee

---

**Nyeleti Honwana**

*H. F. Guggenheim Foundation*

**Andrea Johnson**

*Carnegie Corporation of New York*

**Jessica Jones**

*C. S. Mott Foundation*

**Yvonne Moore**

*Moore Philanthropy*

**William Moses**

*Kresge Foundation*

**Vuyiswa Sidzumo**

*Ford Foundation*

## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
The Africa Funding Landscape	7
Funder Priorities and Goals	10
Issue Focus	12
Population Focus	14
Strategy Focus	16
Geographic Focus	17
Funder Challenges	20
Funder Collaboration	22
Funder Outlook	24
Looking to the Future	25
Methodology	26
Survey Respondents	28



The Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group (AGAG) is a network of funding organizations supporting activities targeting Africa and its people. We offer new and experienced funders opportunities to build strong professional relationships and deepen their understanding of current trends to help make strategic funding decisions.

We believe that a global network of diverse, knowledgeable, and connected funders will help to grow and strengthen the impact of private philanthropy targeting Africa.

Our mission is to promote robust, effective, and responsive philanthropy to benefit African communities. AGAG is a project of Tides Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

For more information about our work and joining our network, please visit our website at [www.africagrantomakers.org](http://www.africagrantomakers.org).

© 2019 Tides Center/Africa Grantmakers Affinity Group

## INTRODUCTION

The Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group (AGAG) will mark its 20th anniversary in 2020. This is an important milestone as we continue the work and expand the legacy of its predecessor, the Southern Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group<sup>1</sup>. AGAG's formation in 2000 was a broader effort to keep the issues challenging communities across Africa on the radar of private philanthropy. For almost two decades AGAG has convened funders and curated information to help build a global network of informed, engaged, and connected funders.

This survey is one of a series of activities we have embarked on leading up to our 20th Anniversary Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa from May 12-14, 2020. Conducted to gain a better understanding of current funding interests, the survey captures a snapshot of trends in the field. Its findings will help to identify issues to explore through in-depth interviews that we will conduct with funders and other stakeholders during the coming months. The survey and interviews will together help us to learn more about the current priorities and perspectives of the field and generate thoughtful conversations among funders inside and outside of Africa.

The founding members of AGAG believed in the power of networks. Their vision was a forum where a diverse community of new and experienced funders would form professional relationships, gain a deeper understanding of context, and work together to leverage funding that contributes to positive change. As we reflect on two decades of building a network, we hope to stimulate more critical consideration about the strategies and approaches of private philanthropy that can ensure the greatest benefit for African communities in the future.

Thank you to those who participated in the survey. We welcome your comments and feedback, as well as the questions and thoughts of all Africa funders. Please send them to [nmutima@agag.org](mailto:nmutima@agag.org). If you would like more information about the Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group, please visit our website at [www.africagrantomakers.org](http://www.africagrantomakers.org).

Niamani Mutima  
Executive Director

<sup>1</sup> Active in the 1990s, the Southern Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group encouraged increased foundation support for communities in southern Africa and their efforts to end apartheid and improve the lives of its citizens.

*The Africa Funding Landscape: A Profile of Funders Focused on Africa and Perspectives on the Field provides a snapshot of the current interests of Africa funders.*

Created by Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group (AGAG), the report examines Africa funders' grantmaking priorities, how their organizations structure their funding focused on Africa, the role of collaboration in their funding, potential

impediments to achieving their goals, and the overall outlook for funding. Findings are based on the responses to a 2018-2019 survey of Africa funders primarily based in North America, as well as in Africa and other regions.

### Funder Priorities and Goals

#### Human rights and economic development represent top focus areas.

The single largest share of respondents (42 percent) identified human rights as an explicit focus area. These funders were also close to twice as likely to indicate a focus on women and girls compared to respondents that did not indicate a human rights focus but notably less likely to focus on children and youth. Economic development followed closely, with 38 percent of respondents indicating an explicit focus on this priority.

#### Funders prioritize specific populations.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (85 percent) identified at least one focus population for their funding targeting Africa, and the median number of population groups identified was two.

#### Funders commit to connecting and strengthening local organizations.

More than four out of five respondents reported providing support for networking and collaboration within and/or among local organizations—from grassroots environmental groups to major universities—or individuals. Just over three-quarters of respondents

indicated that they fund the strengthening of existing organizations.

#### Few funders face significant obstacles in supporting local organizations.

More than seven out of ten respondents to the AGAG survey—excluding respondents based in Africa—indicated that they faced no significant current challenges in directly funding organizations headquartered on the continent. Among the respondents based outside of Africa that reported facing a significant challenge, the most commonly cited impediment was not having an office(s) in Africa, which made oversight difficult. The other two factors most frequently cited were legal restrictions that prohibited providing funding outside of the funder's home country and simply not having the capacity to make direct grants. A few of these respondents explicitly referenced engaging intermediaries to address these challenges.

#### Breadth of Africa support may limit opportunities for collaboration with other funders.

Survey respondents were active in 50 of the 54 African countries. The median

number of countries identified by responding organizations as being a focus of their support was four. The challenge, as suggested by survey responses, comes in identifying peer funders who share a focus on both the same country and grantmaking priorities. In these contexts, there will likely be a greater

### Funder Challenges

Respondents identified several challenges or impediments to achieving the desired impact of their funding, which reflect both the context in which grantmaking is taking place and the priorities and approaches of individual funders:

#### Insufficient Funding.

A majority of the respondents identifying challenges cited inadequate funding in their focus areas as a principle impediment to achieving impact. To address this challenge, a number of respondents highlighted their interest in engaging in collaborative relationships to leverage greater resources for their priorities. Yet, finding collaborative partners may not be a straightforward process as there may be few Africa funders focused on the same issue and/or geographic areas with which to partner. Ensuring ongoing support for established initiatives represented another challenge to achieving impact cited by respondents.

#### Impediments to Local Knowledge and Engagement.

Several funders headquartered outside of Africa identified the challenge of engaging with local organizations as an impediment to achieving their desired impact. Some of these respondents framed this challenge in

imperative to identify funders and NGOs headquartered in Africa who can understand the local context and provide insight, expertise, and partnership. The opportunity presented by this breadth of support is that it can encourage funder collaboration to deepen understanding of local contexts.

terms of physical distance. Other respondents highlighted challenges in communications, and in monitoring progress and evaluating impact.

#### Differing Priorities.

Several survey respondents highlighted the challenge in situations where the priorities of funders and the priorities of beneficiaries do not align. This may reflect limited local knowledge, a challenge in finding local funder partners, and/or funder priorities that have been established independent of direct input from local communities. To address this challenge, respondents suggested seeking out organizations whose interventions align with those of funders and taking a more grantee-centric approach.

#### Restrictions on Civil Society and Philanthropy.

A few funders identified political forces as potentially limiting the desired impact of their funding. Often referred to under the umbrella term of "closing space for civil society," this includes challenges faced by local civil society organizations—e.g., local political opposition to rights-based work—as well as challenges to the involvement of the philanthropic sector, especially for funders from outside the region.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Funder Collaboration

**A majority of funders engage in aligned grantmaking and/or participate in funder collaboratives and pooled funds.**

Overall, almost two out of three respondents reported engaging in at least one of these types of collaboration. Maximizing impact, leveraging funding, and avoiding duplication

of effort were the three most commonly cited reasons given. While respondents were most likely to be collaborating with a funder(s) headquartered in North America, well over half of these respondents reported collaborating with a funder(s) headquartered in Africa.

### Funder Outlook

**Survey suggests potential for growth in Africa funding.**

Respondents were reasonably optimistic about the interest of other funders in supporting grantmaking priorities focused on Africa that are consistent with their own priorities. Overall, 27 percent of respondents anticipate support by other funders for shared priorities to increase, and 44 percent expect support to hold steady.

Funders focused on Africa who work together and engage in true partnership with the communities they fund have the potential to make an impact beyond the scale of their investment. In its work to build an informed, engaged, and connected network, AGAG supports funders to think creatively, expansively, and in ever more nuanced ways about how best to leverage philanthropy that is responsive to the needs of communities across Africa.

### Essential Questions

**Among essential questions for funders to consider and regularly revisit are:**

Have our understandings and perceptions of the communities where we are funding and the challenges they face kept pace with the dynamic changes taking place within those communities?

To what extent do our priorities align with the self-identified priorities and needs of the focus communities/populations?

How do we determine where and what to fund?

What will it take to generate more effective funding collaboration?

What would it mean for the philanthropy sector to embody more engaged and active learning about funding targeting Africa?

How can we gain a better understanding of the impact of our philanthropy?



## THE AFRICA FUNDING LANDSCAPE



## The African Continent Now

The challenge for Africa funders comes when the scale of their resources is considered within the context of the African continent's diverse and geographically expansive population of more than 1.2 billion individuals. Its 54 countries encompass roughly one-quarter of the world's arable land<sup>2</sup>. The continent generates significant economic activity, with a nominal GDP of \$2.3 trillion in 2018 and a GDP reflecting purchasing power parity (PPP) totaling \$6.7 trillion<sup>3</sup>. Its population ranks among the youngest compared to other continents. In 2018, Africa had a median age of just under 24 years, versus a median age of 39 years for North America and 42 years for Europe<sup>4</sup>.

Africa has a rich and diverse cultural landscape with a legacy of the spirit of giving that is embodied in its traditions. The past three decades have witnessed the evolution of formal philanthropy sectors across the continent. The current landscape includes family foundations such as those established by Aliko Dangote of Nigeria in 1994 and Mo Ibrahim in 2006, community foundations such as the Kenya Community Development Foundation, established in 1994, and the African Women's Development Fund, established in 2000. These are just a few examples, among many others, of funding organizations serving their communities and supporting change.

The emergence of philanthropy networks such as the East Africa Philanthropy Network in 1993, the Africa Philanthropy Network in 2009, and most recently the African Venture Philanthropy Alliance in 2018 are all indicative of the dynamic philanthropy landscape that continues to grow across the continent.

<sup>2</sup> See Kuo, Lily, "Africa, home to a quarter of the world's arable land, will soon have to import half of its grains," Yahoo! Finance, Internet accessed 3/26/19; and Ittersum, M.K. et al., "Can sub-Saharan Africa feed itself?," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, Internet accessed 3/26/19.

<sup>3</sup> See International Monetary Fund, IMF DataMapper, Internet accessed 3/26/19.

<sup>4</sup> See Populationof.net, Internet accessed on 3/26/19.

## Key Terms

This report examines the priorities of grantmakers focused on distinct communities reflecting dozens of nationalities, well over a thousand unique languages, and an even wider array of specific cultural traditions. Throughout the report, the authors have used three key terms—"Africa funders," "African communities," and "local organizations"—to discuss the interests, strategies, and insights of funders targeting Africa. To ensure a shared understanding of how these terms are being used, following are brief definitions:

**Africa funders** refers to grantmaking institutions headquartered in Africa and outside of the region that provide funding focused on communities in Africa.

**African communities** refers to any focus area of funders, from residents of a certain neighborhood to farmers in a particular region to human rights activists in a specific country.

**Local organizations** refers to organizations of all sizes and types headquartered in Africa, from grassroots environmental groups to major universities.

When Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group (AGAG) was established in 2000 to serve as a convening and learning hub for U.S. funders active in Africa, a handful of large independent foundations dominated the Africa funding landscape. Nearly two decades later, large private U.S. funders continue to be active in Africa. But they have been joined by numerous other independent, family, community, and public foundations, funder collaboratives, and donor-advised funds. There are also growing philanthropic sectors

the overall outlook for support related to their Africa-focused priorities.

"Africa funders" are a very diverse group, typically prioritizing multiple issue areas and/or populations across several countries or regions. This breadth of focus could make it difficult for funders to identify peers for shared learning about local needs and priorities, much less engage in collaborative funding to maximize the potential for achieving desired outcomes. Yet, nearly two out of three respondents reported

## Africa funders are a very diverse group, typically prioritizing multiple issue areas and/or populations across several countries or regions

in countries across Africa that are harnessing philanthropy to set their own agendas and benefit their communities.

To provide this growing community of funders with an up-to-date snapshot of the philanthropic landscape and current interests of their peers, AGAG surveyed selected funders in Africa, North America, and other regions between late 2018 and early 2019. (See Methodology for details.) Respondents were asked to report on their grantmaking priorities, how their organizations structure their funding focused on Africa, the role of collaboration in their funding, impediments to achieving their goals, and

engaging in some form of collaboration, with many collaborating with funders headquartered in Africa. Coordinating in this way can enable Africa funders to achieve results well beyond the scale of their resources.

*The Africa Funding Landscape* moves beyond grant dollars to capture the what, how, and why of current funding for African communities. The following analysis explores findings that place the work of these funders in context. The report also poses critical questions that funders supporting initiatives across Africa should consider as they map out strategies for future investments.

# FUNDER PRIORITIES AND GOALS

Aligning the interests of donors and trustees, experience of program staff, and recommendations of peer funders with community needs and opportunities to influence change can lead to funder priorities with the greatest potential for achieving impact. The following section examines how funders broadly define their grantmaking priorities now based on issue, population, geographic, and strategy focus. These findings offer considerable consistency but also some surprises when contrasted with earlier research on how Africa funders distribute their grant dollars.

For a majority of funders (60 percent) responding to the AGAG survey, support targeting Africa was provided through issue-focused program areas—e.g., economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, or higher education. Fewer than one-in-five funders (19 percent) reported that their funding was structured geographically with an exclusive focus on specific African countries and/or regions, while the remaining respondents (21 percent) indicated the use of both approaches.

The very largest and very smallest funders showed a greater likelihood of their funding targeting Africa being a part of other programmatic priorities. Among funders with total grantmaking budgets of \$100 million and over, just 8 percent reported African countries and/or regions being a distinct program area. None of the respondents with total grants budgets under \$1 million reported having a distinct program area based on an African country or region. When considering funders that have both a program(s) focused on an African country or region and Africa

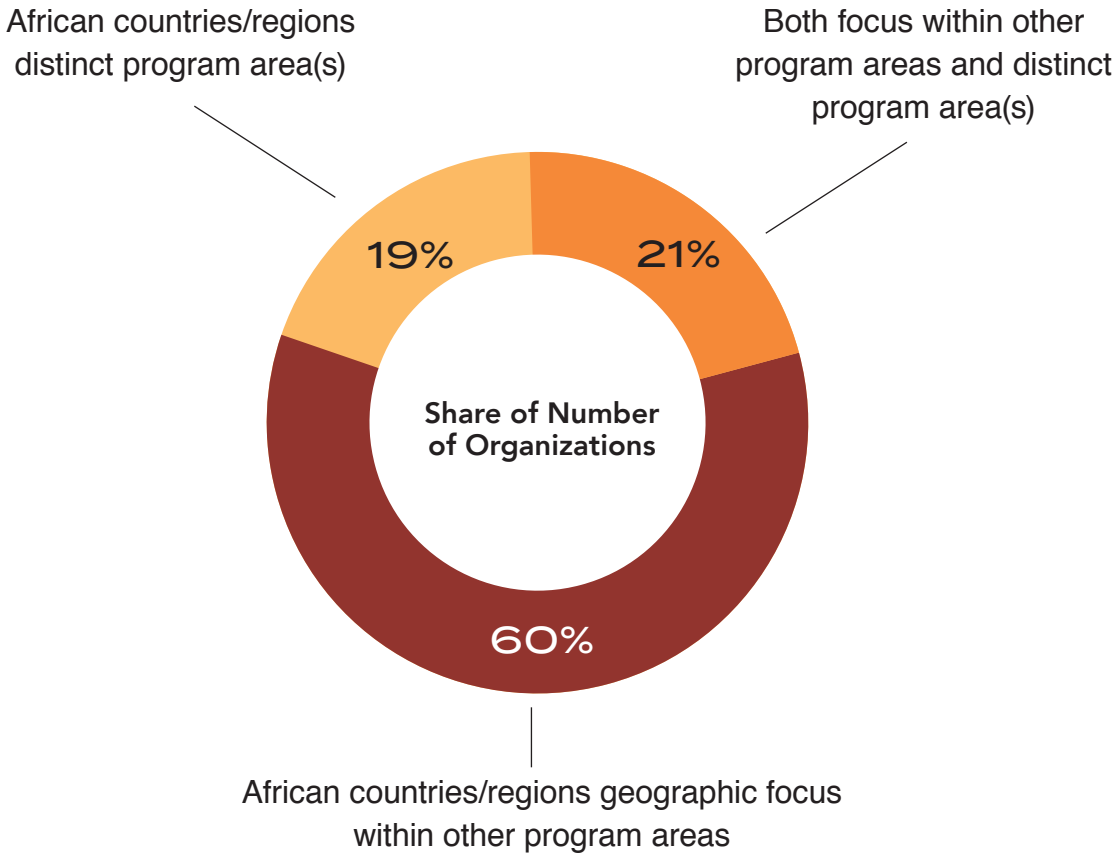
as a geographic focus within other program areas, the shares rise to 33 percent for the largest funders and 20 percent for the smallest funders. However, these shares remain well below the 40 percent combined share reported by respondents overall. By funder type, public

## The structure of funders' programmatic priorities can affect their responsiveness to... needs identified by communities

funders are most likely to have at least one program focused on Africa as a region, while family foundations are least likely.

The structure of funders' programmatic priorities can affect their responsiveness to the most pressing needs identified by communities. Giving based on an issue, population, or strategy-focused lens can limit their awareness of other opportunities that are consistent with their priorities. But are funders that structure their grantmaking based on geography of necessity more responsive to the priorities of and opportunities presented by these communities? Ultimately, how Africa funders structure their grantmaking may be less relevant than the strategies they pursue to implement their funding priorities.

### FUNDING FOR AFRICA BY FUNDER PROGRAM



Note: Based on responses of 52 organizations.

**Issue Focus**

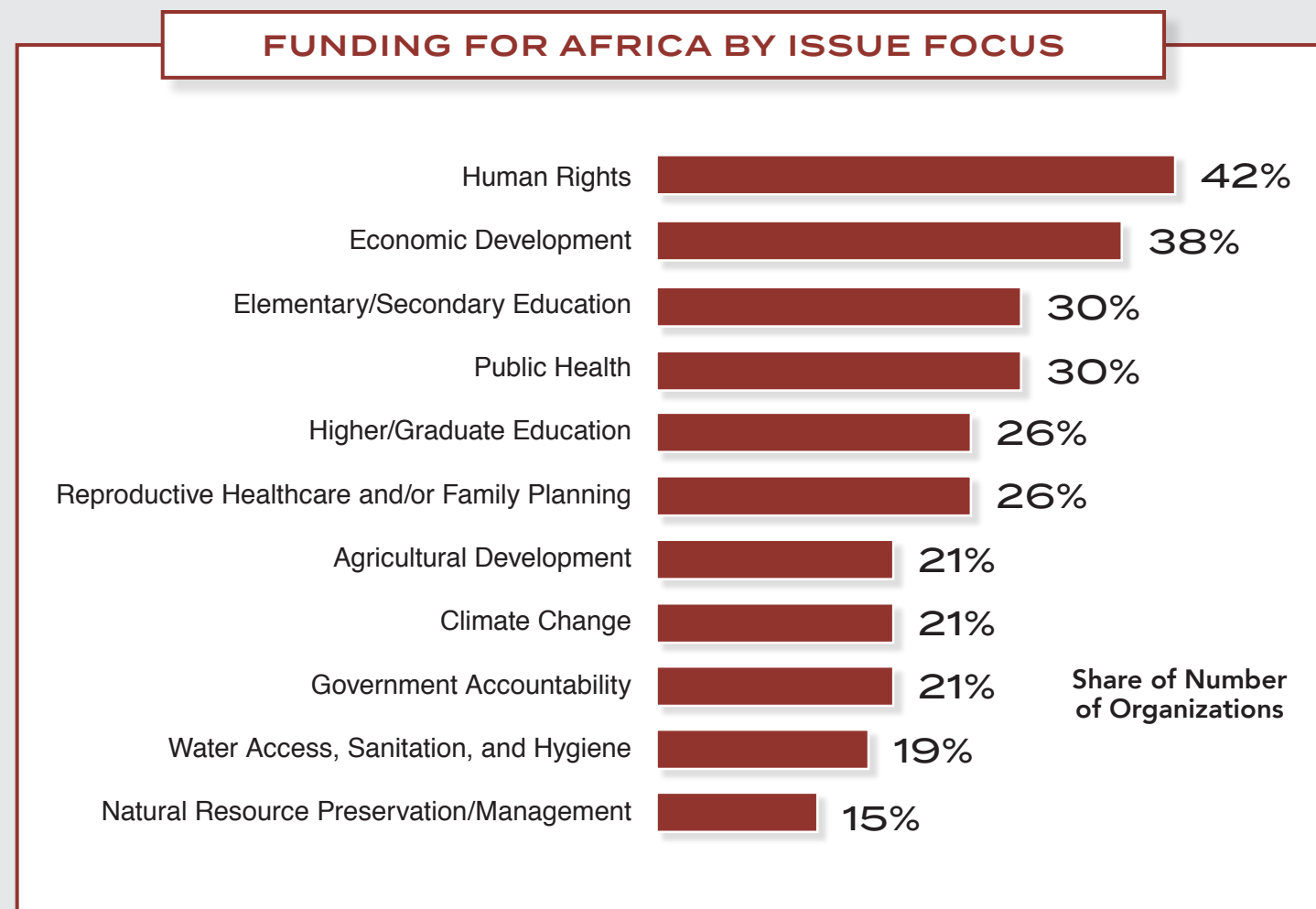
When asked to describe the goals of their current funding, respondents offered objectives ranging from the broadly focused—e.g., “systemic change for a more just country,” “the development of systems and services that serve infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families”—to a specific focus on an issue, population and context—e.g., “increase enrollment and attainment in...universities, particularly among traditionally disadvantaged populations living in cities.” Their responses also captured their broad array of funding priorities, from the environment to LGBTQ rights to entrepreneurship.

A 2015 study<sup>5</sup> conceived and coproduced by AGAG examined the distribution of funding targeting Africa based on the actual grants awarded by many of the largest U.S. foundations. Among the various fields that funders support, the study found that health and economic development held the top two spots based on the share of 2012 grant dollars and number of grants. Findings from the survey indicate that these fields, along

with education, continue to be top priorities for Africa funders. Yet, the single largest share of respondents to the recent survey (42 percent) identified human rights as an explicit focus area, among their other funding priorities. By comparison, human rights accounted for only about 2 percent of total grant dollars in the 2012 study, although close to 9 percent of the number of grants<sup>6</sup>.

At the same time, respondents indicating a human rights focus were about equally likely to indicate a focus on at least one population group as those respondents that did not identify a human rights focus (86 percent versus 84 percent).

What did differ were the population groups they prioritized. For example, human rights funders were close to twice as likely to indicate a focus on women and girls compared to respondents that did not indicate a human rights focus (77 percent versus 42 percent)<sup>7</sup> but notably less likely to focus on children and youth (45 percent versus 74 percent).



Note: Based on responses of 53 organizations. Includes only focus areas identified by at least 10 percent of responding organizations.

<sup>5</sup> See Lawrence, S., A. Koob, and N. Mutima, *U.S. Foundation Funding for Africa*, New York: Foundation Center, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Findings from the 2015 report were based on an analysis of actual grants awarded by approximately 1,000 of the largest U.S. foundations by giving, while the new survey findings are based on the areas of interest identified by a convenience sample of funder respondents. Therefore, some disparities in shares result from the different types of data being analyzed and variations in the funders who may have been included in each data set. In addition, the 2015 report did not examine the share of number of funders that made at least one human rights grant, which would allow for a more direct comparison with the more recent survey data.

<sup>7</sup> This finding is consistent with observations made in Thomas, R., “Funding for Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa,” New York: Human Rights Funders Network, 2018.



**Population Focus**

Grantmaking with a focus on specific populations represents an important priority for funders, regardless of their funding interests. The overwhelming majority of survey respondents (85 percent) identified at least one focus population, and the median number of population groups identified was two. More than half of respondents indicated an explicit focus

a focus on victims of abuse and crimes or ethnic minorities, and none noted an explicit focus on the LGBTQ community.

The fact that most funders include an explicit focus on at least one population may reflect a growing understanding that funding intended to benefit populations generally may in

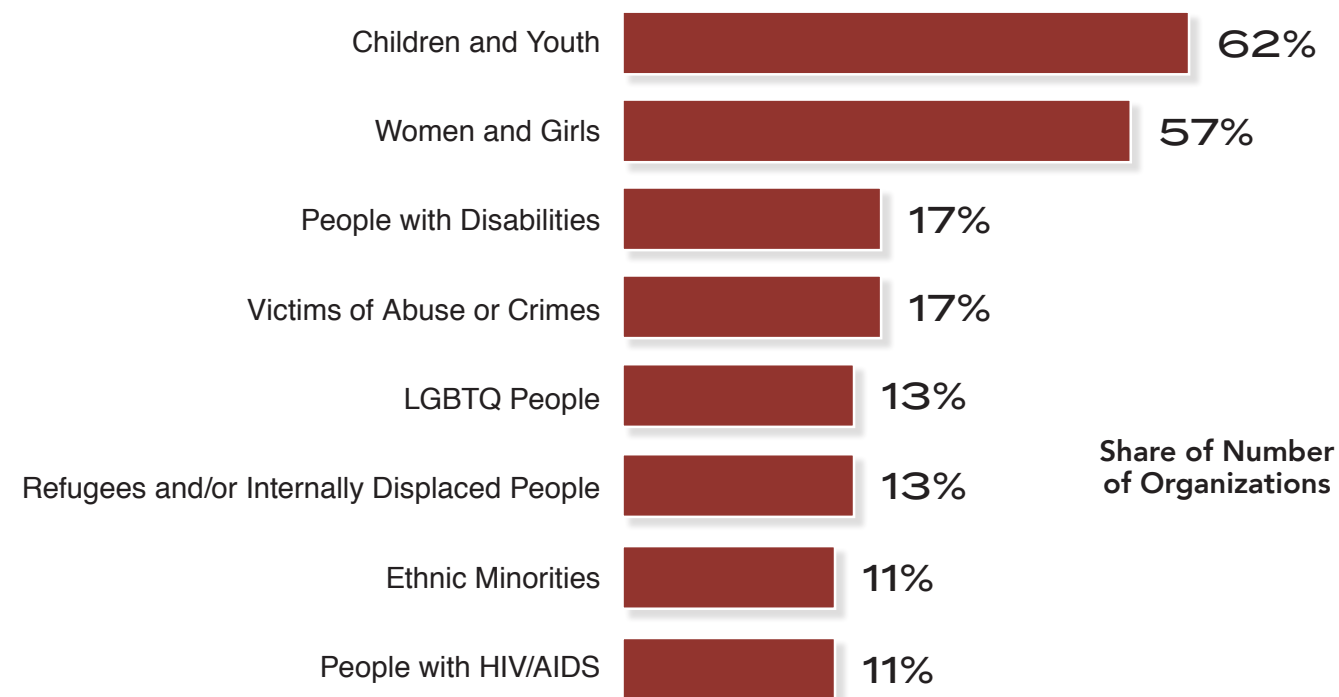
**Grantmaking with a focus on specific populations represents an important priority for funders, regardless of their funding interests**

on children and youth (62 percent), reflecting the relatively high share of youth across the continent, and women and girls (57 percent).

Among respondents that did not identify as having a focus on human rights funding, most identified a population focus on children and youth (74 percent). Women and girls represented a markedly smaller share (42 percent). Moreover, less than 10 percent of these funders indicated

actuality provide disproportionate benefits to some and few or no benefits to others. For example, women account for half of Africa’s population, and the top five countries based on the share of female representation in the workforce are all located in Africa<sup>8</sup>. Supporting the voice and role of women in agriculture can yield greater economic and social benefits for families and communities, as well as improved environmental outcomes<sup>9</sup>.

**FUNDING FOR AFRICA BY POPULATION FOCUS**



Note: Based on responses of 53 organizations.

<sup>8</sup> See Fetterolf, J., “In many countries, at least four-in-ten in the labor force are women,” Facttank: News in the Numbers, 2017 at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/07/in-many-countries-at-least-four-in-ten-in-the-labor-force-are-women/>.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Dobson, C., and S. Lawrence, *Our Voices, Our Environment: The State of Funding for Women’s Environmental Action*, Global Greengrants Fund and Prospera/International Network of Women’s Funds, 2018.

**Strategy Focus**

Funders indicated a strong commitment to building connections and supporting strategies to strengthen local organizations. More than four out of five respondents reported providing support for networking and collaboration within and/or among local organizations. Just over three-quarters of respondents indicated that they fund the strengthening of existing organizations.

A majority of respondents also reported providing support for civic engagement, public policy, and/or advocacy activities. For example, one of the respondents noted their support for

partnerships that engage in policy discussion and action.

Finally, respondents showed a strong interest in encouraging entrepreneurship in the region, in both the for-profit and non-governmental sectors. Among the more than two-fifths of funders supporting this strategy, one respondent describes their goal as developing “young social entrepreneurs...by funding youth-led or youth-engaged organizations that unleash the power of youth to advance the economic and social health of their families and communities.”

**Geographic Focus**

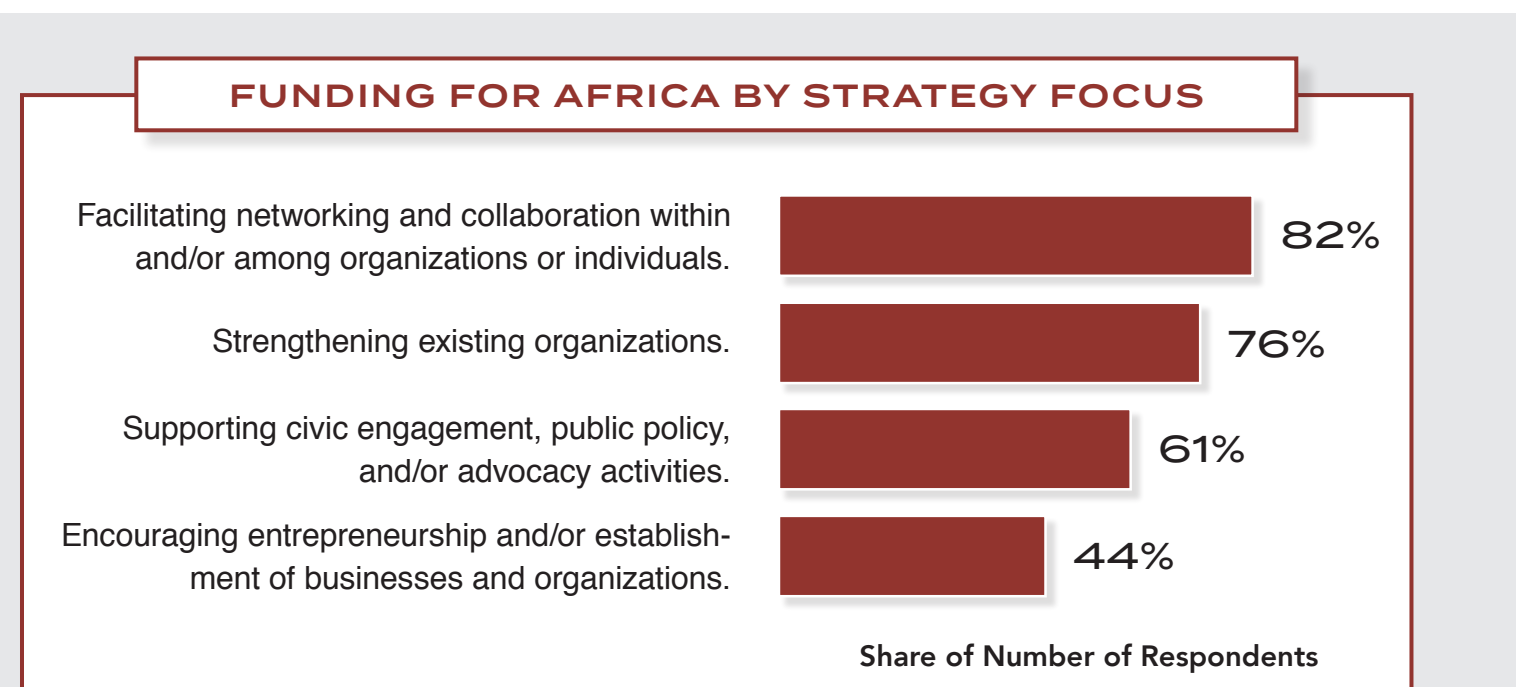
Few funders report facing significant obstacles in directing resources to organizations headquartered in Africa. In fact, more than seven out of ten respondents to the AGAG survey—excluding respondents based in Africa—indicated that they faced no significant current challenges in directly funding local organizations. Nonetheless, the 2015 study of funding patterns<sup>10</sup> found that the vast majority of grant dollars and nearly two out of three grants awarded by the larger U.S. foundations for Africa in 2012 were directed to organizations headquartered outside of the continent.

Among the respondents based outside of Africa that reported facing a significant challenge, the most commonly cited impediment was not having an office(s) in Africa, making oversight difficult. The other two factors most frequently cited were legal restrictions that prohibited providing funding outside of the funder’s home country and simply not having the capacity to make direct grants. A few of these respondents explicitly referenced engaging intermediaries to address these challenges. Consistent with this finding, a 2011 AGAG report found that intermediary

organizations were helpful to funders that could not fund local organizations directly<sup>11</sup>.

Consistent with this finding, family foundations were most likely to report some type of challenge in providing direct funding to local organizations (36 percent), while no public foundations reported facing a significant current challenge. In fact, public foundations, which raise funds to support their grantmaking, often serve as a resource for funders that may face challenges identifying, supporting, and/or monitoring the work of local organizations.

Regardless of whether they fund organizations headquartered within Africa, outside the region, or both, Africa funders typically focus their support on specific countries. Respondents were active in 50 of the 54 African countries, with close to half (47 percent) identifying South Africa as a focus, followed by Kenya (42 percent) and Uganda (40 percent). The median number of countries where respondents focused their support was four. This finding indicates that funders are distributing their resources across diverse communities with differing cultural and political contexts.



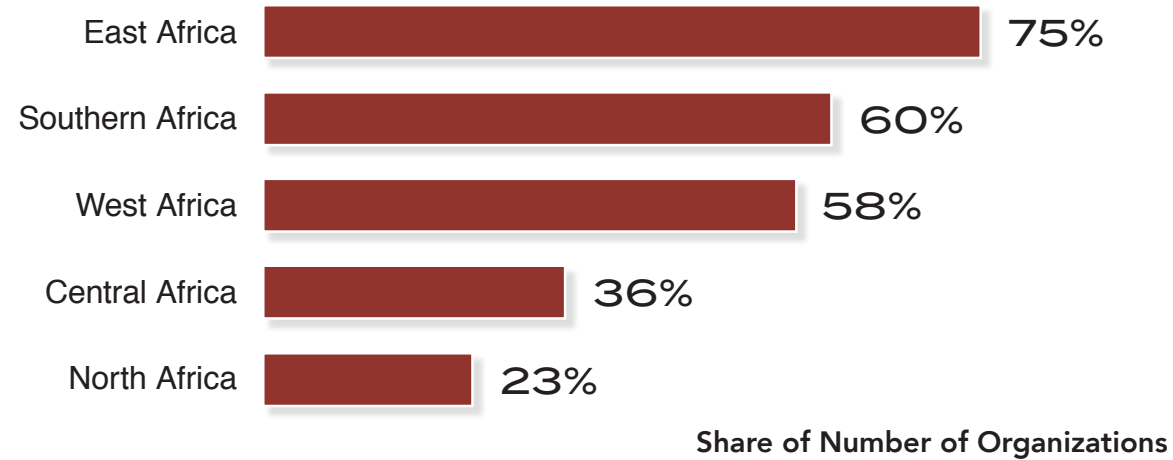
Note: Based on responses of 62 individual respondents.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>11</sup> See *Making the Right Fit: Supporting NGOs in Africa Using Direct and Indirect Funding*, Africa Grantmakers Affinity Group, 2011.

This breadth of support can be an opportunity to encourage funder collaborations that can deepen understanding of local contexts. The challenge, as suggested by survey responses, comes in identifying peer funders who share a focus on both the same country and grantmaking priorities. Overall, the survey identified a median of just three funders focused on any one of these 50 countries. While survey respondents by no means encompass all

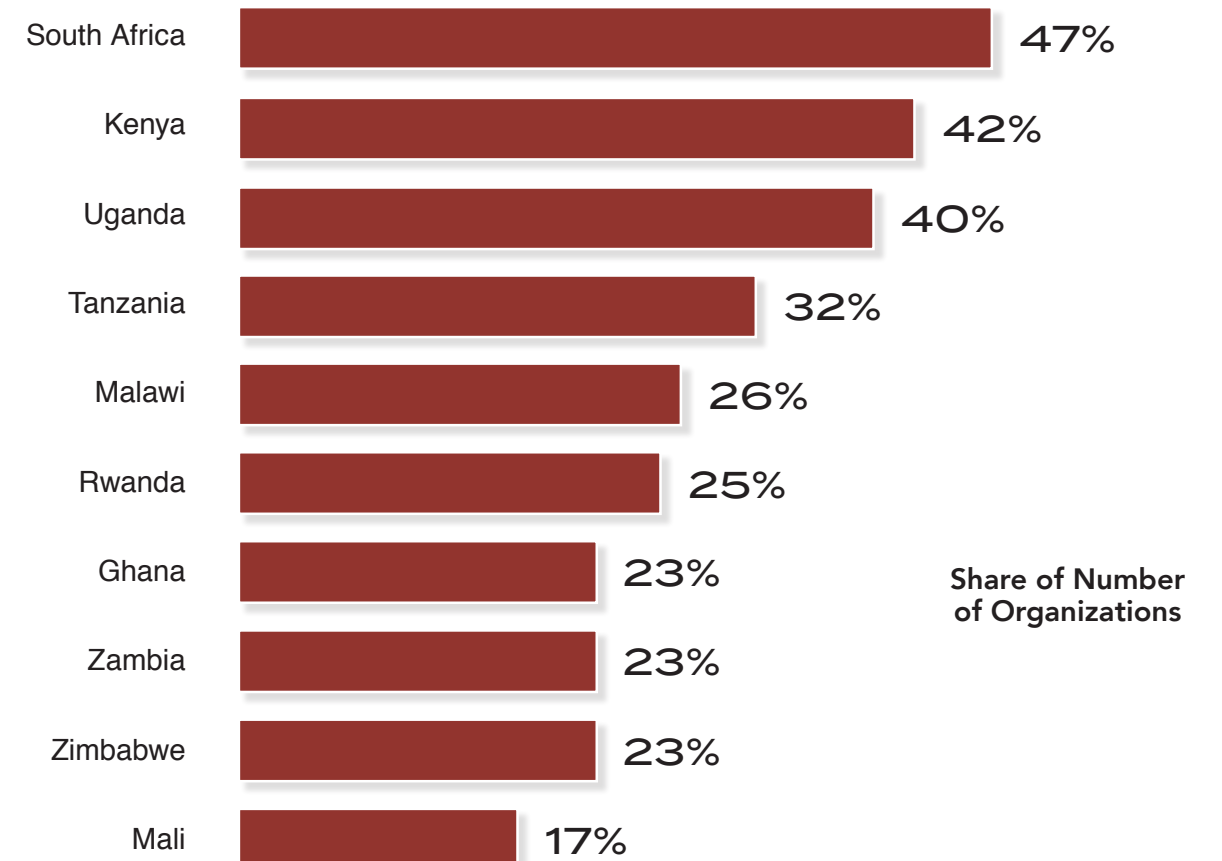
Africa funders, the likelihood that U.S. funders and funders headquartered in other regions will share the same grantmaking interests, as well as country and community focus, appears limited. In these contexts, there will likely be a greater imperative to identify funders and NGOs who understand the local context and can provide insight, expertise, and partnership. This may also suggest an opportunity for increased regional collaboration to leverage impact.

**FUNDING FOR AFRICA BY REGIONAL FOCUS**



Note: Based on responses of 53 organizations.

**FUNDING FOR AFRICA BY TOP 10 FOCUS COUNTRIES**



Note: Based on responses of 53 organizations. List includes top 10 countries based on share of responding organizations indicating a focus on that country.

## FUNDER CHALLENGES

When asked to identify the major challenges or impediments to achieving the desired impact of their funding, respondents cited a broad array of factors. For example, one funder summed up a variety of common challenges in remarking that, “The resources available are too small to make a significant impact.” Another commented on funders establishing

### Insufficient Funding

A majority of funders identifying challenges cited inadequate funding in their focus areas as an impediment to achieving impact. “Our biggest challenge is the small impact we can make due to our limited resources,” observed one funder. Other respondents referenced the “low amount of funds distributed compared to [the] desired scale of impact,” “relatively limited dollars spread too thin across a number of individual organizations,” and under-resourced grantee partners that “struggle to find consistent funding for their work.”

To address this challenge, a number of respondents highlighted their interest in engaging in collaborative relationships to leverage greater resources for their priorities. “We would like to develop partnerships with other funders/donor organizations to increase our capacity,” remarked one funder. Another respondent commented that, “We would like the ability to leverage [our] dollars with other

### Impediments to Local Knowledge and Engagement

Several funders headquartered outside of Africa identified the challenge of engaging with local organizations as an impediment to achieving their desired impact. Some of these respondents framed this challenge in terms

“unrealistic expectations of what organizations are able to achieve within short timeframes and continually changing contexts.” This section highlights a few of the challenges identified by respondents, which reflect both the context in which grantmaking is taking place and the priorities and approaches of individual funders.

funders more often.” Yet, finding collaborative partners may not be a straightforward process. There may be few Africa funders focused on the same issue and/or geographic areas with which to partner.

As one funder observed, “Our biggest challenge is finding similarly-minded funders who are willing to support the work that we and our CBO grantee partners do.” (See Funder Collaboration for additional discussion of collaboration by funders.)

Efforts to ensure ongoing support for established initiatives can also represent a significant challenge to achieving impact. “Our funding supports organizations implementing early-stage innovative ideas,” said one respondent. “For those organizations that have proven their concepts work, I worry that they will not identify follow-on funding to grow their ideas further.”

of physical distance. For example, funder comments included that our “headquarters in the [United States] limits our ability to work closely with current and potential grantees on a consistent basis,” we “do not have a team or

budget to travel to the continent to do better recruitment and/or due diligence,” and “our distance from the continent tends to make our work very intense during visits but less engaged when we are not there.”

Other respondents highlighted challenges in communicating as a major impediment, citing

### Differing Priorities

Several survey respondents highlighted the challenge in situations where the priorities of funders and the priorities of beneficiaries do not align. “Funders are not keen on some of the issues of interest to the communities we know,” observed one respondent. Another remarked that, “Donor focus areas are becoming increasingly narrow [and] donors are becoming increasingly risk averse.” This may reflect in part limited local knowledge on the part of funders headquartered in the Global North, a challenge in finding local funder partners with greater

### Restrictions on Civil Society and Philanthropy

Beyond resource, knowledge, and priority challenges, a few funders identified political forces as potentially limiting the desired impact of their funding. Often referred to under the umbrella term of “closing space for civil society,” the challenges respondents identified in some African countries are consistent with increasing global attacks on civil society protections<sup>12</sup>. This includes challenges faced by local civil society organizations, such as growing “political

factors such as “language challenges, as well as technical limitations.” The lack of a local presence can also lead to being “too reliant on the networks we have,” which can result in not “reaching the most talented and high-potential emerging leaders.” In addition, monitoring progress and evaluating impact can prove difficult, according to respondents.

community knowledge, and/or funder priorities that have been established independent of direct input from local communities.

To address this challenge, one public funder explicitly highlighted the importance of “identifying grassroots organizations whose interventions align with those of our funders.” Another funder emphasized taking a grantee-centric approach through “working to support our Africa partners in the work that they do and the desired outcomes that they are seeking.”

opposition to the rights-based nature” of their work. According to respondents, these forces can also include challenges to the philanthropic sector, with “more African countries... questioning the legitimacy and motive of Global North funders.” Among many constituencies working in recent years to raise awareness about closing space and challenge increasing restrictions, some funders have begun to collaborate on ways to counter these forces.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Carothers, T., and S. Brechenmacher, *Closing Space: Democracy and Human Rights Support Under Fire*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014, available at [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/closing\\_space.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/closing_space.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> For example, see Global Dialogue’s Funders’ Initiative for Civil Society.

# FUNDER COLLABORATION

Collaboration affords funders opportunities for greater learning and impact, which can be especially valuable for those working across broad geographies and diverse cultures. A majority of Africa funders reported taking advantage of these opportunities through the most engaged types of funder collaboration: aligning grantmaking and/or participating in funder collaboratives and pooled funds. Overall, almost two out of three respondents (64 percent) reported engaging in at least one of these types of collaboration through their Africa-focused portfolios. Larger funders were most likely to report being engaged in aligned and/or pooled funding.

Among survey respondents, maximizing impact and leveraging funding were two of the three most commonly cited reasons given for engaging in aligned and/or pooled funding. Interestingly, coordinating funding to avoid supporting similar initiatives by different organizations also ranked among the top reasons given for funder collaboration. As one respondent noted, “We believe that working together will not only leverage and enhance institutional strengthening but...also go a long way in giving partners space to maximize their niche and avoid duplication of efforts.”

Funders that reported engaging in aligned and/or pooled funding were most likely to be collaborating with a funder(s) headquartered in North America (72 percent). Nonetheless,

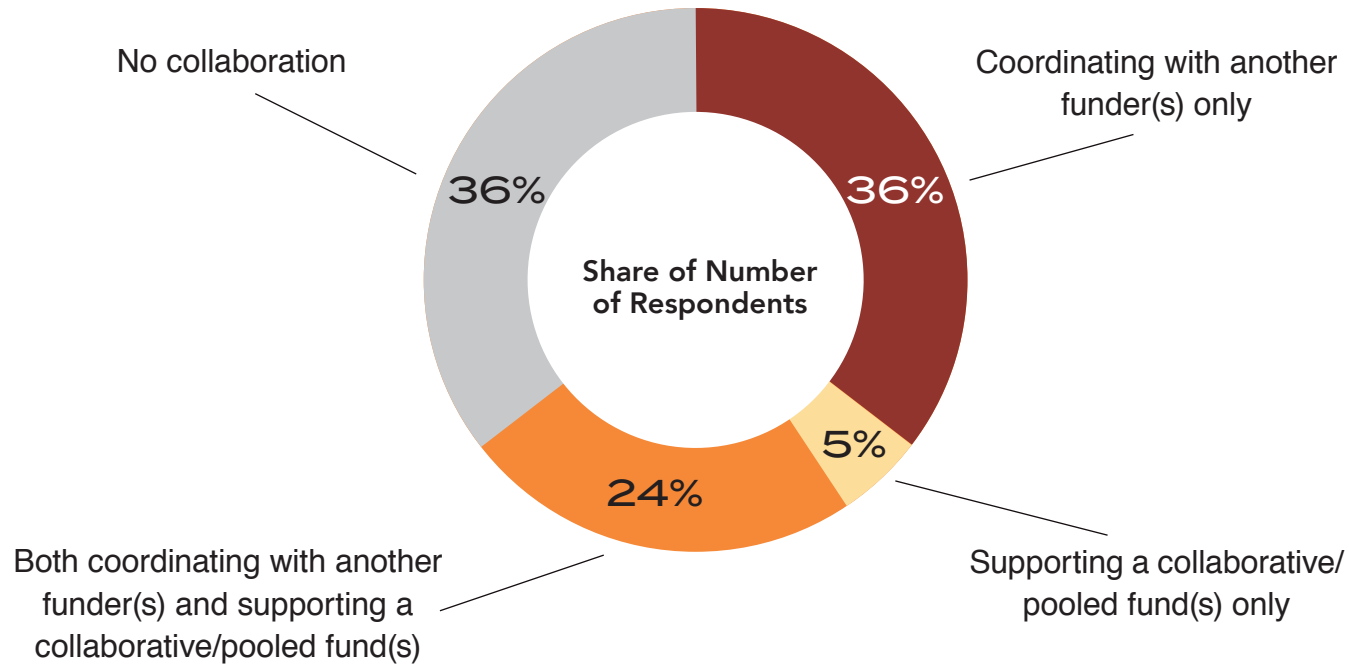
well over half of these respondents (59 percent) reported collaborating with a funder(s) headquartered in Africa.

Finally, a substantial more than one-third of respondents (36 percent) indicated that they are not currently engaging in aligned and/or pooled funding focused on Africa. While these funders

**Collaboration affords funders opportunities for greater learning and impact, which can be especially valuable for those working across broad geographies and diverse cultures**

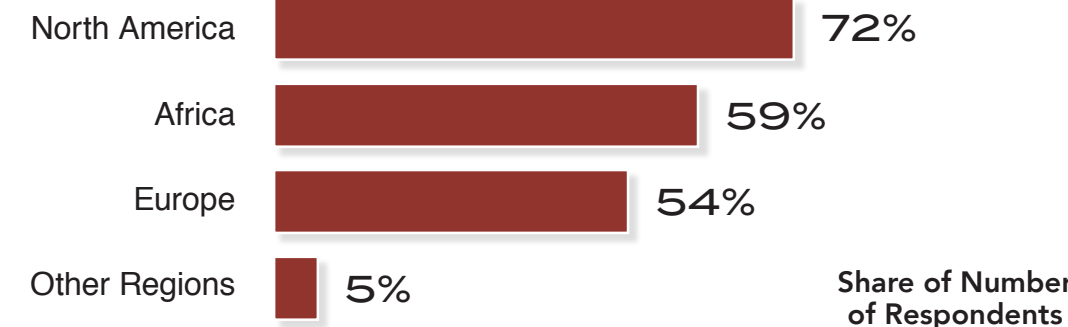
may partake in shared learning or some type of informal collaboration with other grantmakers, it would be helpful to understand how their efforts to maximize impact may differ from funders who view collaborative grantmaking relationships as a key to leveraging resources and advancing their missions.

## FUNDING FOR AFRICA BY TYPE OF FUNDER COLLABORATION



Note: Based on responses of 59 individual respondents. Due to rounding, percentages exceed 100 percent.

## FUNDING FOR AFRICA BY LOCATION OF COLLABORATIVE FUNDER



Note: Based on responses of 39 individual respondents.

# FUNDER OUTLOOK

Philanthropy has demonstrated its potential to provide strategic support in partnership with communities across Africa. The support of private philanthropy from U.S. funders alone undoubtedly exceeds \$2 billion per year<sup>14</sup>. Respondents were also reasonably optimistic

about the interest of other funders in supporting grantmaking priorities focused on Africa that are consistent with their own priorities. Overall, 27 percent of respondents anticipate support by other funders for shared priorities to increase, and 44 percent expect support to hold steady.

<sup>14</sup> See Lawrence, S. *et al.*, 2015. Giving by the largest U.S. foundations focused on Africa in 2012 alone totaled nearly \$1.5 billion.

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The challenge for Africa funders comes when considering the scale of their philanthropic resources relative to the almost limitless funding opportunities in each of the 54 countries located on the African continent. Achieving impact requires avoiding isolation and seeking precision and partnership in establishing and executing their grantmaking agendas.

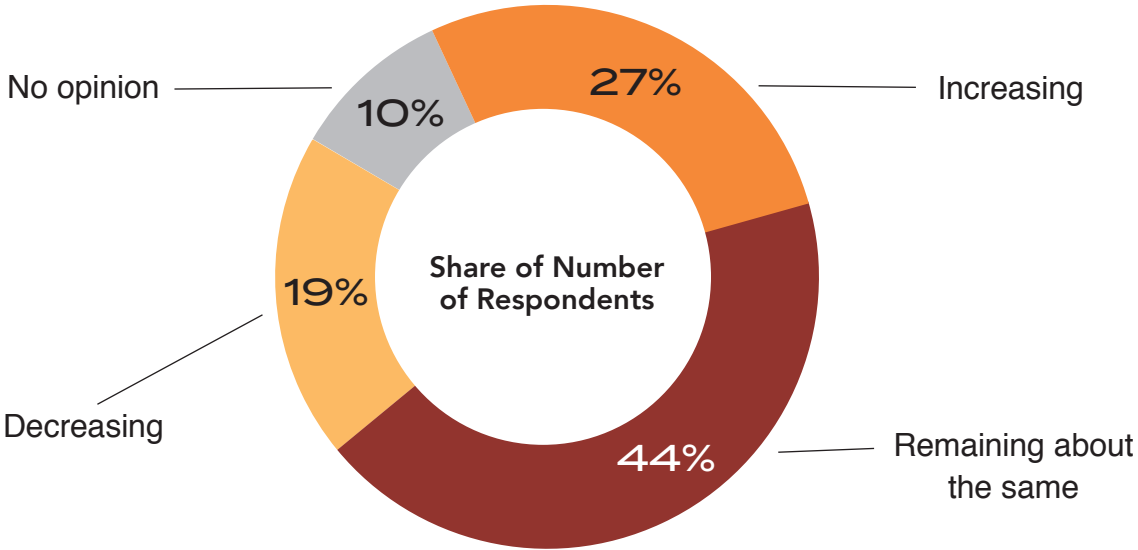
The U.S. funders who created AGAG almost 20 years ago believed in the power of networks. Their vision was a forum where a diverse community of new and experienced funders would form professional relationships, gain a deeper understanding of context, and work together to leverage funding that contributes to positive change. The critical importance of this role has only grown as the global philanthropic community has expanded.

Grantmaking practices centered on funder-led objectives, unrealistic accountability requirements, or limited local knowledge and engagement restrict their opportunities to make a difference. Funders who work together and engage in partnerships with local organizations that are knowledgeable and connected to their communities can make an impact far beyond the scale of their resources.

Looking forward, AGAG seeks to continue its efforts to build a network of informed, engaged, and connected funders and supporting them in thinking creatively, expansively, and in ever more nuanced ways about how best to leverage philanthropy that is responsive to the needs of communities across Africa.

## PROSPECTS FOR FUNDER SUPPORT FOR CURRENT PRIORITIES

“In your opinion, is interest in providing funding targeting Africa for the priorities that your organization/program specifically supports...”



Note: Based on responses of 62 individual respondents.

## Essential Questions

Among essential questions for funders to consider and regularly revisit are:

- Have our understandings and perceptions of the needs and roles of local communities kept pace with the changes taking place across Africa? What are the generalizations we hold and share about “Africa” that may not reflect the realities? How are our resulting narratives about Africa shaping our philanthropic decisions?
- To what extent do our priorities align with the self-identified priorities and needs of the focus communities/populations? In what ways can we adapt our priorities to align better with initiatives led by local organizations?
- Why do many of our Africa funding peers include among their grantmaking priorities a focus on human rights? Does this reflect an increased understanding of the role of equity and social justice within and among communities?
- How do we determine where to invest? Does our funding in so many different countries contribute to a lack of specificity in understanding local contexts? And are our resources sufficient to achieve the outcomes we desire?
- What will it take to generate even greater and deeper funding collaboration?
- What would it mean for the Africa-focused philanthropy sector to embody more engaged and active learning?

The Africa Funding Landscape offers a snapshot of the current strategies, priorities, and perspectives of selected Africa funders headquartered primarily in the United States and Africa, as well as other regions. Funders were able to participate via an online-only survey open from November 2018 to February 2019. The only requirement for respondents was that their primary role within their organization was as a funder.

Potential respondents included Africa funders that provide support for local organizations in Africa, Africa-focused funders headquartered outside of the region, or both.

A total of 107 funding organizations and donor advisors received the survey, and 62 representatives of 53 of these entities provided usable responses (50 percent response rate). Roughly similar shares of respondents had been in a grantmaking role focused on Africa for five years or less (39 percent) and 11 years or more (37 percent). The balance of respondents (24 percent) have engaged in Africa-focused grantmaking for between six and 10 years.

Responding organizations represented a range of funding institutions. A majority of responding organizations (57 percent) identified as private foundations—either family or independent. Public foundations/grantmaking public charities accounted for the next largest share of

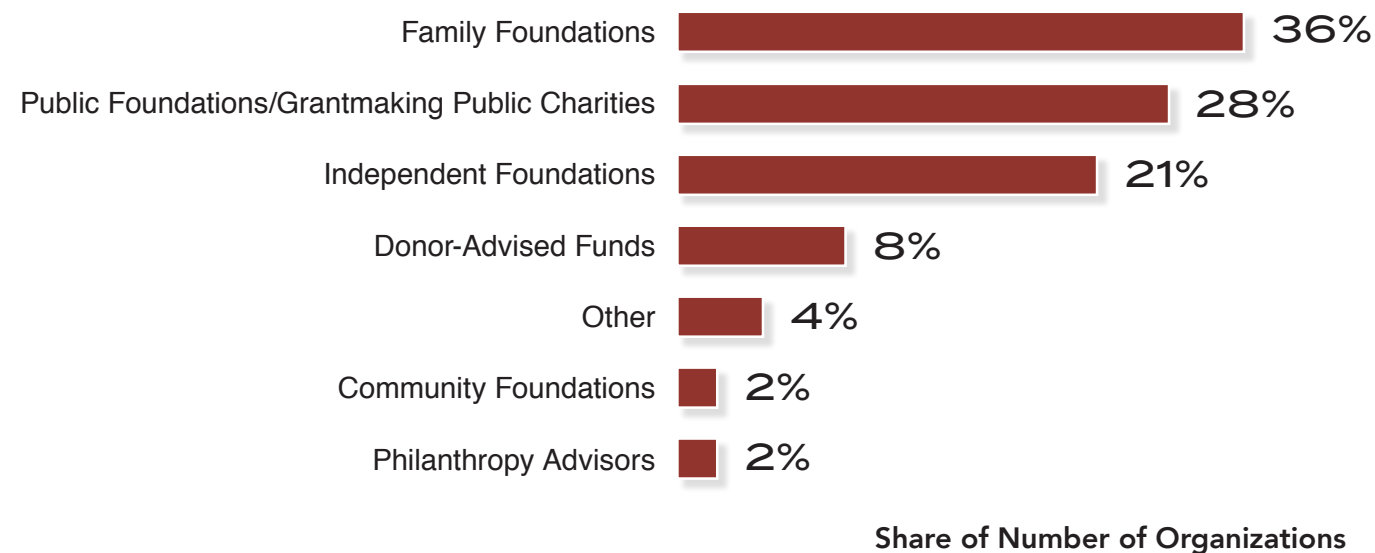
responding organizations (28 percent), followed by donor-advised funds (8 percent).

Responding organizations are also broadly distributed based on grantmaking budget size for all purposes, including Africa-focused support. Funders with total grantmaking budgets of \$100 million USD or more accounted for the largest share of respondents (23 percent), followed closely by those with grantmaking budgets totaling less than \$1 million USD (19 percent).

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to respond on behalf of their entire organization or only the program area in which they work. Most survey respondents answered on behalf of their entire organization. Among the 53 organizations for which AGAG received usable responses, over three-quarters (77 percent) provided responses reflecting all of their organization’s funding for Africa in its current fiscal year. Most of the remainder responded on behalf of their own program area or their Africa-based regional office.

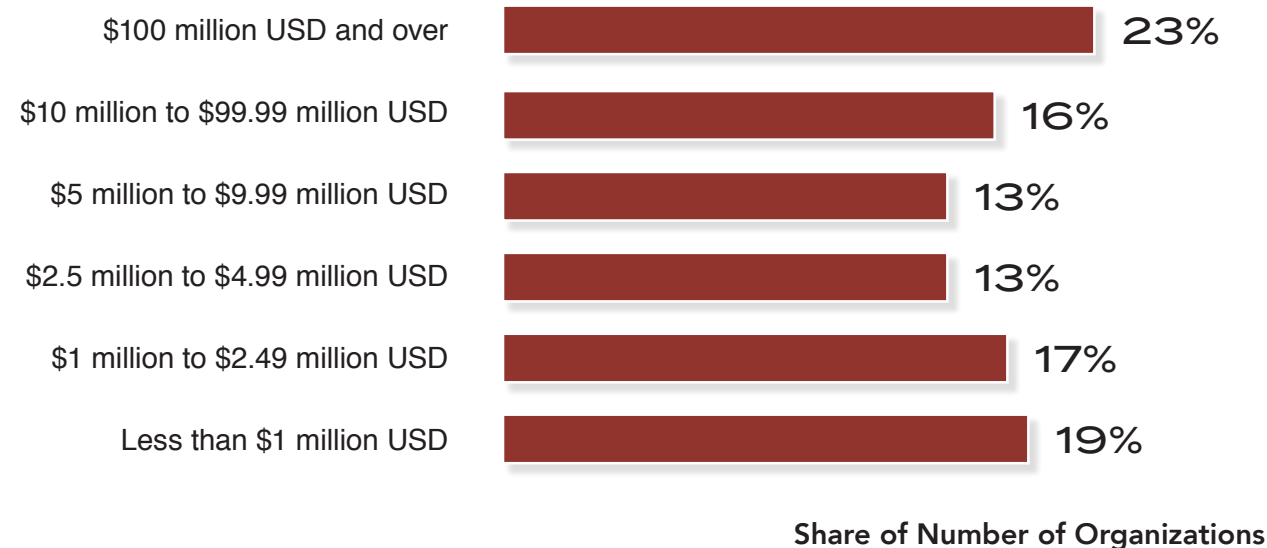
The Africa Funding Landscape generally presents analyses based on the number of responding organizations. For these analyses, the author combined responses for the six organizations where more than one individual responded. The analysis also examines patterns based on the number of individual respondents when appropriate.

FUNDER TYPE OF RESPONDING ORGANIZATIONS



Note: Based on responses of 53 organizations.

TOTAL GRANTMAKING BUDGET OF RESPONDING ORGANIZATIONS



Note: Based on responses of 53 organizations.

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- Arcus Foundation
- Bernard van Leer Foundation
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Crown Family Philanthropies
- C.S. Mott Foundation
- Cyril Ramaphosa Trust
- Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
- Echoing Green Foundation
- EMPower- Emerging Markets Foundation
- Firelight Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Foundation for A Just Society
- Fund for Global Human Rights
- GHR Foundation
- Global Fund for Children
- Global Fund for Women
- Global Philanthropy Alliance
- Grindrod Family Centenary Trust
- Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation
- Helmsley Charitable Trust
- Humanity United
- IDEO.ORG
- Imago Dei Fund
- International Development Research Center
- Issroff Family Foundation
- J.C. Flowers Foundation
- JRS Biodiversity Foundation
- Kenya Community Development Foundation
- Laura and Rich Riedman Foundation
- McKnight Foundation
- Michael and Susan Dell Foundation
- Moore Philanthropy
- Nduna Foundation
- Novo Foundation
- Oppenheimer Memorial Trust
- Social Change Assistance Trust
- Southern Africa Trust
- SRHR Africa Trust
- Tamalpais Trust
- The Kresge Foundation
- The Other Foundation
- The RAITH Foundation
- The TK Foundation
- The Two Lilies Fund
- Thousand Currents
- Trinity Wall Street
- TrustAfrica
- USA for Africa
- VGIF
- Wallace Global Fund
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

## About the Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group



### Our Approach

We believe that when funders are engaged, informed, and connected there are more opportunities to leverage private philanthropy to benefit African communities.

We **convene** new and experienced funders and provide a forum where they can learn about the issues that affect their work and cultivate professional relationships with an informed and diverse network of practitioners.

We **curate** and disseminate information and research to build knowledge about trends in funding targeting Africa.

We **connect** people and ideas by taking a proactive and cross-cutting approach that helps funders to understand how their philanthropy fits within the broader funding landscape.

### Our Values

- **Diversity and Respect:** We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment that reflects the diversity of the field, promotes mutual respect, and advances equality.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** We hold ourselves to the highest standards of ethical and transparent conduct in our work.
- **Knowledge and Learning:** We value knowledge, learning, candor, and critical thinking and believe that gathering, curating, and sharing information is essential to our mission.
- **Collaboration and Partnership:** We believe that collaboration and partnership are critical to leveraging philanthropy for positive change.





[contactus@agag.org](mailto:contactus@agag.org) | [www.africagrantmakers.org](http://www.africagrantmakers.org)