



**AFRICA GRANTMAKERS'  
AFFINITY GROUP**

## OUR LEGACY AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE 2018 -2020



AGAG2020 is not a static plan, but an adaptive strategy to refresh, redefine, and guide our work over the next three years as we mark twenty years of work in 2020.

AGAG's 20th anniversary is more than a milestone; it's an opportunity to reflect on our work to promote philanthropy benefitting African communities that is robust, effective and response and to envision our future role in a rapidly changing environment.

[www.africagrantmakers.org](http://www.africagrantmakers.org)

The Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group (AGAG) believes in the power of networks. Our mission is to promote robust, effective, and responsive philanthropy to benefit African communities through building an inclusive and diverse network of engaged, informed, and knowledgeable funders.

The challenges facing communities across Africa are complex, dynamic, and interconnected. They may be local in their particular context, but they are also global and understanding this intersectionality is vital in identifying solutions that promote positive changes and build the resilience of communities.

Although funders support organizations working in important areas ranging from education, health, and arts to human rights, advocacy, and social justice, the potential to help catalyze positive change is often limited by narrow perspectives, silo approaches, and unilateral actions.

Africa's population includes more than two hundred million young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Harnessing the interest, energy, and skills of this generation is key to realizing a brighter future. Across the continent, civil society organizations are working to increase access to health care, clean water, food security, and education, and to protect rights and hold governments accountable. As these issues intersect, effective solutions call for holistic approaches.

## OUR VALUES

These core values guide our work in pursuing our mission and vision of a world where African communities achieve their full potential with the philanthropy community as a trusted partner:

- **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.

## OUR ASSUMPTIONS

- **Philanthropy is an ecosystem.** We recognize the philanthropic community as a diverse ecosystem of approaches and interests in funding targeting Africa. We understand that our focus on formal philanthropy that uses grants as its primary mechanism for giving is but one of many.
- **Inclusion and collaboration are necessary.** We recognize that there are many entry points in working with civil society at all levels, from informal and grassroots organizations to academic, medical, and research organizations and public policy think tanks. We advocate sustained and increased funding to organizations and individuals working for positive change.

- **Local context matters.** We recognize that organizations that serve their communities and have built a relationship of mutual trust are well-positioned to understand the local context. Investing in local organizations helps to build and strengthen infrastructure and leverage the knowledge and experience within communities to affect changes at all levels.
- **Building bridges between those working inside and outside of Africa is essential.** Tensions between philanthropy actors based inside and outside of Africa whose approaches and interests differ reflect an environment that spans countries, cultures, and regulatory settings. We believe this diversity of information, experiences, and perspectives presents a rare opportunity for the cross fertilization of ideas.
- **Success requires tenacity.** We recognize that building relationships and establishing communications among the various partners inside and outside of Africa is a process with incremental progress that is affected by changes in leadership and in the sector as a whole.

## OUR HISTORY

AGAG has continued the work and expanded the legacy of the Southern Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group, which encouraged foundation support to southern Africa during the 1990s anti-apartheid movement. Established as a project of the Tides Center in 2000, AGAG continues to keep the needs of African communities on the radar of the philanthropic community.

AGAG's activities are geared toward building professional relationships and knowledge on grantmaking practices among a diverse group of new and experienced funders based inside and outside Africa.

Initially a forum dominated by private endowed American foundations, our membership now includes funders based in Canada, England, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa. Having established partnerships with funder networks based in Africa, AGAG has earned a reputation as both a trusted source of information on funding trends and an advocate in advancing the field of philanthropy to benefit African communities.

AGAG's formation in 2000 signaled a more formal and expansive effort to keep the momentum of private philanthropy moving forward in even broader support of communities across the African continent. The release of Nelson Mandela and the first democratic elections in South Africa spurred an increased interest in the continent, mostly in southern Africa. During our first decade, we received most of our support from a group of foundations who both founded and actively participated in the network.

Since the AGAG conference in Johannesburg in 2008, several funders based in Africa have joined the network and more attend the annual conference each year. Our expanded membership has enabled AGAG to serve as a forum where funders inside and outside of Africa can get to know each other. In 2016, in partnership with the Africa and East Africa Philanthropy Networks, we launched the Africa Philanthropy Support Organizations (APSO) Initiative. The APSO Initiative works to build relationships and promote communication and information sharing among a wider spectrum of organizations working to stimulate philanthropy in support of African communities.

## CONTEXT

We believe that a connected and informed network of funders who understand current trends, sound strategies, and key points of leverage can be effective in promoting robust, effective, and responsive philanthropy to benefit African communities.

Despite the general acceptance in philanthropy that closer relationships between funders is beneficial to the communities they serve, it has proven difficult to implement. The 2013 report from the Monitor Institute and Foundation Center, [Harnessing Collaborative Technologies](#), highlights common challenges: managing the process, developing content and structuring ways to share information, devoting the time required to engage with colleagues, and identifying potential partners. For funders working in Africa, building knowledge about the field to promote collaboration can be challenging because of distance, diversity of interests, and scale.

AGAG's potential membership base has always been relatively small because of the small number of funders who consistently give a significant amount of funding targeting Africa. According to the report [U.S. Foundation Funding for Africa](#), in 2012 only 14% of the top 1,000 funders made more than one grant targeting Africa and ten foundations accounted for nearly 50% of the total number of grants. Furthermore, the top ten foundations account for 86% of the total funding, of which five were founding members of AGAG.

In recent years, special grants have sustained AGAG's activities and supported our expanded focus to strengthen partnerships with funder networks, including funders based in Africa. This is, in large part, due to changes in leadership and funding, and a general shift in attitude toward funder networks. All of this together has resulted in a decrease in the number of founding members who are still actively involved in AGAG.

## OUR APPROACH

Our work is organized around three approaches to leveraging philanthropic resources and cultivating a shared commitment across diverse audiences to support positive change for African communities:

- **Convene** colleagues to build a diverse professional forum where they can examine the intersectionality of their work in a regional context;
- **Curate** information to stimulate creative thinking and deepen practical knowledge about current trends and grantmaking practices; and
- **Connect** people and ideas to leverage philanthropic resources and build an informed, connected, and responsive network.



**CONVENE** FUNDERS TO BUILD A DIVERSE PROFESSIONAL FORUM WHERE THEY CAN EXAMINE THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF THEIR WORK IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

Networks are powerful. We believe an informed, knowledgeable, and connected network of funders is better equipped to make an impact. The multi-dimensional and interrelated problems that communities face pose challenges for philanthropy's sector-specific silo approach. AGAG is a forum where funders can explore the intersectionality of their work in a regional context. In convening funders as

practitioners who share what they are learning, we cultivate an understanding of how their work relates to the social and economic barriers that African communities face.

**AGAG provides a forum for practitioners where funders can deepen their knowledge of current approaches in funding targeting Africa.**

The value of professional peer networks is underscored in the 2017 report [\*Peer to Peer: At the Heart of Influencing More Effective Philanthropy\*](#), which maintains that funders prefer communications with peers for much of their knowledge acquisition:

“It is not the knowledge product by itself that leads most people to adopt an idea or practice that is new to them. Rather, it is the peer-to-peer communication about and validation of ideas or practices that leads to the consideration and use of the knowledge” (1-2).

AGAG provides one of the few peer learning opportunities where funders working in different geographic and thematic areas can examine their efforts in relationship to each other and within a broader geographic context.

**AGAG facilitates professional development through exposure to colleagues with different skills and expertise, which helps to foster an understanding of the interplay between the challenging issues affecting communities across Africa.**

Professional development is vital to strengthening leadership and good grantmaking practice. Funders often operate in isolation and can benefit from the knowledge and insights that come from building relationships with their peers. Program staff who focus on Africa may have subject expertise but a limited understanding of related issues facing communities. In engaging with colleagues working in other sectors and countries, AGAG members expand their professional networks, identify valuable expertise, and gain practical knowledge unavailable from other forums. The cross-fertilization of ideas and information can result in new insights on how they approach their work and generate approaches to increasing impact.

**AGAG provides a platform where new funders can draw on the wisdom and know-how of more experienced ones.**

Changes in staff and organizational focus result in the loss of knowledge, insights, and institutional memory retained by those with many years in the field. AGAG is a space where new funders and emerging practitioners can connect with their more experienced colleagues, providing a mechanism for seasoned funders to share valuable information and insights from their work.

**Accomplishments 2015-2017**

- AGAG hosted three national conferences, bringing together representatives from 120+ funding organizations and nine countries in Africa and Europe. More than 90% of the participants gave us a high rating in providing a unique and valuable forum for learning and sharing practical information and building relationships with funders from other countries.
- AGAG hosted regional meetings in Johannesburg, co-sponsored with Ford Foundation, and in New York, co-sponsored with H. F. Guggenheim and King Baudouin (U.S.) Foundations and the

Carnegie Corporation; and we co-sponsored webinars with other affinity groups on funding trends and topics ranging from Sustainable Development Goals to Ebola in West Africa.



**CURATE** INFORMATION TO STIMULATE CREATIVE THINKING AND DEEPEN PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CURRENT TRENDS AND GRANTMAKING PRACTICES.

Information is central to learning but relatively little information is publicly available about trends and grantmaking practices related to international funding. Even less is available about funding specifically targeting Africa. Information on the successes and failures of the strategies funders use isn't typically shared with the broader community. Opportunities to analyze these experiences and distill insights, trends, and lessons are limited. AGAG helps funders to bridge the information gap by curating information on funding trends and disseminating it through in-person meetings, online resources, updates, and podcasts.

**AGAG highlights opportunities for responsive philanthropy and collaboration between funders and other philanthropy stakeholders focusing on Africa.**

AGAG is an information hub for program staff whose responsibility is to identify and work with partner organizations and stay ahead of new developments. We highlight information about funders and philanthropy organizations focusing on Africa. Particularly helpful for those with few or no dedicated staff, such as small foundations and those with modest funding portfolios, AGAG provides a central information source by which funders stay connected with their peers.

**AGAG focuses on practical information and knowledge about current practices, challenges, and solutions.**

AGAG attracts program staff by focusing on current practices; they view AGAG as a forum to learn about new trends and developments, and form relationships that lead to productive collaborations. As a diverse network of practitioners that is guided by its members, AGAG is positioned to recognize sudden developments that require an immediate response, as well as ongoing issues requiring more sustained attention. Exposure to diverse viewpoints helps members to innovate effective strategies.

### **Accomplishments**

- AGAG commissioned [U.S. Foundation Funding for Africa](#), the first-ever examination of American foundation funding targeting Africa from 2002 to 2012. Launched in partnership with Foundation Center, the report documents the decline in funding targeting organizations headquartered in Africa and the increase in funding to organizations headquartered outside of it.
- AGAG disseminated information relevant to grantmaking in Africa via social media, websites, podcasts, newsletters, and a members-only listserv.



**CONNECT PEOPLE AND IDEAS TO LEVERAGE PHILANTHROPIC RESOURCES AND BUILD AN INFORMED, CONNECTED, AND RESPONSIVE NETWORK**

Our history in the field, proactive approach to building partnerships, and cross-cutting focus provides a framework to connect diverse organizations and issues.

**AGAG encourages funders to examine the intersectionality of their work in a regional context, and partners with other philanthropy serving organizations working in closely aligned issue areas.**

We actively represent our membership through regular communications, annual meetings, partnerships and information exchanges, and proactively engage with new philanthropy support networks as they emerge in Africa.

Challenges facing communities across Africa are complex, dynamic, and interconnected. Social, environmental, and political events influence change beyond one sector or geographic border. Being informed about current trends in philanthropy and in Africa that affect the local context can help funders gain valuable insights about how they can make a difference. Using a geographic frame can disrupt the silo approach to addressing problems and help in generating new ideas for increasing philanthropy's impact. As our engagement with organizations and funders based inside and outside of Africa increases, AGAG's value to the sector increases by providing a forum where an even wider spectrum of funders can build relationships and understand how their contributions fit within the broader regional landscape.

### **Accomplishments**

- AGAG launched the [Africa Philanthropy Support Organizations \(APSO\) Initiative](#) in partnership with the Africa Philanthropy Network and East Africa Philanthropy Network to stimulate information exchange among organizations promoting philanthropy to benefit African communities.
- AGAG established our Conference Fellows Program to provide junior program staff and graduate students with opportunities to meet philanthropy professionals, and to attend and leverage the AGAG Annual Conference.

### AGAG2020: OUR LEGACY AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

AGAG2020 is both a reflective and forward-looking process that outlines our goals over the next three years as we approach our 20th anniversary. It is an adaptive strategy to define our niche, guide our work, leverage resources, and respond to our rapidly changing environment.

AGAG's 20th anniversary is more than a milestone; it's an opportunity to reflect on our work to promote philanthropy in Africa and envision our future role in light of recent changes. Understanding how changes in both philanthropy and Africa have evolved our role will help to guide the next phase of our work, specifically post-2020.

The theme of "Disrupting Silos, Connecting Conversations, and Creating Impact" will connect the annual conferences over the next three years with a single concept that reflects our efforts to build a more connective space for funders to explore the intersectionality of their work.

Our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa in tribute to AGAG's roots. During this milestone event, we will share the results of our retrospective on philanthropy's contributions to positive change for African communities.

Drawing from our institutional memory, the process will include historical documentation, a review of literature on funding, and interviews with former and current members. What we produce will be integrated into conferences, podcasts, and articles. This material will help to fill the information gap and help to inform recommendations for the sector.

Leadership succession represents a critical process for any organization, and as such can affect its stability and sustainability. Capturing our institutional memory and developing a succession plan will go hand-in-hand. Charting the next phase of our work will include identifying new leadership.

### **AGAG2020 GOALS AND STRATEGIES: 2018-2020**

**GOAL 1: ENGAGE A DIVERSE COHORT OF PRACTITIONERS AND BUILD A STRONG NETWORK OF INFORMED, KNOWLEDGEABLE, AND CONNECTED FUNDERS**

#### **Strategies**

- Organize two conferences in the United States in 2018 and 2019 and one in South Africa in 2020 that convene funders from diverse countries.
- Organize in-person and virtual discussions to capture information and insights on the effectiveness of various approaches to addressing the challenges facing African communities.
- Encourage creative and forward-thinking strategies to stimulate partnerships between funders based inside and outside of Africa.
- Continue to support and promote the work of the Africa Philanthropy Support Organizations (APSO) Initiative.

**GOAL 2: INCREASE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT TRENDS AND STRATEGIES TO LEVERAGE PHILANTHROPY FOR POSITIVE CHANGE**

#### **Strategies**

- Distill lessons on various strategies and approaches from our institutional memory, from experiences within the Africa grantmaking community, and from other stakeholders.
- Commission a field scan of funders and other stakeholders engaged in philanthropy targeting Africa.
- Disseminate information on trends and stakeholders via podcasts, websites, social media, and print.

**GOAL 3: ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVE OUR MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS.**



## **Strategies**

- Analyze information gathered in the field scan to update membership criteria and a revenue strategy.
- Identify sponsorship opportunities during AGAG20 activities.
- Develop a succession plan for the steering committee and staff.

## **OUR IMPACT**

As we end two decades of work in 2020 by carrying out the activities described above, we hope to achieve the following:

- Increase the flow of information, raise awareness, and build knowledge about the people and organizations working to promote philanthropy targeting Africa.
- Strengthen professional relationships between organizations and individuals working inside and outside of Africa.
- Capture and disseminate insights and lessons from AGAG's history that reflect philanthropy's contribution to positive change.
- Influence the narrative about philanthropy's impact by highlighting important issues affecting its engagement in Africa.
- Stimulate creative and forward thinking about the role philanthropy can play, both now and in the future.

*Website version*