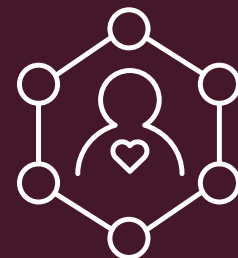


5 INVEST IN STRENGTHENING GIVING ECOSYSTEMS, AND GROW PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETIES



To achieve overall transformation in our field, this principle may have an outsized impact in realising the PTI agenda and fostering action, particularly when it comes to strategically investing in the ecosystems of field-builders and changemakers that unlock the potential of philanthropy.

Philanthropy has enormous potential for growth and improvement at all levels of society, from individual donations from the middle class, small acts of generosity and mutual aid, to institutional giving from high net worth individuals, communities or corporations. With the right incentives, strong support organisations and a conducive environment, it is possible to generate more and better private resources for the common good. Beyond this, if we dream bigger, we can strengthen and grow philanthropic societies where generosity, solidarity and a sense of community are expressed at all levels, and giving becomes the leading value behind which citizens, markets and governments align.

The impact of any one philanthropic organisation, however big it may be, will always be limited if it focuses solely on its own direct interventions. To realise our full potential, we must also invest collectively in wider ecosystems and cultures of giving. This support ecosystem¹⁶, or infrastructure, includes diverse organisations such as giving platforms and campaigns, philanthropy networks, advisories, academic institutions, citizen engagement organisations, and funding intermediaries. Beyond this, we must include ‘enabler’ organisations whose primary interests may not be in philanthropy, but who play an important role in the support ecosystem, including financial institutions, lawyers, consultants, social media platforms and public relations firms.

16 WINGS (2021). [Acting Together to Lift up Philanthropy: WINGS Guidance on How to Build a Supportive Ecosystem.](#)

Many of the challenges identified by the PTI movement have found a worthwhile solution in strong philanthropy support ecosystems (PSEs). Building trust between philanthropic actors and those they support currently involves intermediary organisations (such as socio-environmental funds, women’s funds or community philanthropy organisations), as well as thought leaders that can advise, document and push for more trust-based approaches (see Principle 3). Engaging in collaboration with each other, and with other sectors, involves platforms, joint funds, and coordination mechanisms. Growing levels of giving and creating better regulations for the sector must include coalitions, campaigns, networks and donor associations that can advocate to governments on behalf of the philanthropy sector. Beyond this, leveraging the power of data (see Principle 10) requires smart investments in individual and collective data infrastructure.

Well-resourced and collaborative PSEs play a crucial role in unlocking and growing local resources for civil society; they build upon, celebrate and strengthen local cultures of giving. Investing in PSEs is a critical and strategic way to grow local resources for bottom-up, sustainable development, contributing to the aid localisation agenda. Indeed, a large volume and diverse mix of private resources form a more democratic, resilient, locally-responsive and sustainable path for philanthropic impact, whilst also engaging wider society.

Growing pressure and momentum in the field encourages funders to invest in networks and ecosystems as a strategy to multiply impact, with some prominent philanthropists such as MacKenzie Scott already starting to invest significantly in this space. However, this field is still structurally and dramatically underfunded, especially in emerging economies, where the need is greatest. For too long,



foundations have seen investments in field-building through an individual and contractual lens – ‘what’s in it for me?’ – rather than one focused on both strategy and collective impact. This approach has inhibited strategic and synergistic development of the field due to its piecemeal investments, duplications and lack of sustainability.

Thinking as an ‘enabler’ – one of the three key ideas underpinning philanthropy’s transformation – should first manifest in enabling our own field and peers to create a multiplier effect for their work. Applying an ecosystem mindset and fieldwide thinking requires adopting a longer-term, systems-level view of what it means to achieve lasting social change. This can be done in many different ways, at the community, local, national, regional or global levels, as well as around specific themes and issues. For instance a mid-size funder supporting education in India can support its local partners in setting up community funds, increase their fundraising skills and stimulate local giving for education. They can do this while contributing to establishing or reinforcing existing education donor collaboratives and, in parallel, providing general support to a national philanthropy association that is able to create dialogue and negotiations with the local and national governments. This method does not take away resources from a foundation’s causes but rather helps multiply its impact and sustainability. Happily, it can be easily embedded into any foundation’s strategy.

Even with very limited resources, PSOs are already making a big difference, with the global #GivingTuesday¹⁷ movement as a strong example. With a limited operating budget, their campaigns have helped generate billions of dollars in donations for civil society organisations. Funders looking to leverage their impact through models like matching and other funding sources should look closely at the incredible influence field-builders and giving movements can have in exponentially multiplying giving.

Another good example is the Effective Philanthropy Multiplier (EPM)¹⁸, spearheaded by the Narada Foundation in China, a network of 38 hub

organisations at urban and provincial levels which connects and scales solutions for social services to over 13,000 local organisations. See Resources at the end of this section for a link to our recent case study on the Narada Foundation and the EPM.

Beyond this, the 4C framework developed by WINGS and Dafne¹⁹ identifies four key components of a healthy philanthropy support ecosystem:

- 1 **Capacity:** Building resources,
- 2 **Capability:** Building skills, knowledge and expertise,
- 3 **Connection:** Building relationships, and
- 4 **Credibility:** Building reputation, recognition and influence.

Based on this framework, the WINGS community has developed methodologies, such as ecosystem mapping, and has strengthened initiatives that help organisations define how to support the growth and development of philanthropy in their specific context.

17 Giving Tuesday (2023). [A Distributed Leadership Network](#).

18 Ang, W., Peng, Yanni (2020). Narada Foundation and WINGS.

[Why we need to invest in the infrastructure for scaling, not just the product or organisation being scaled.](#)

19 WINGS and Dafne. [Using the 4Cs: Evaluating professional support to philanthropy.](#)



Recommended practices for implementation:

How to get started:

- ✓ Engage with your Board and staff to reflect on how your organisation can contribute towards developing the local or national PSO (see suggestions in Chapter 3).
 - Review your organisation’s internal strategy, reflect on how philanthropy ecosystem development could be embedded into your theory of change and as part of a sustainable exit strategy.
- ✓ Support your stakeholder communities in becoming more financially autonomous and sustainable in the long term.
 - Examples include investing in mechanisms like giving platforms, improving fundraising conditions and helping to grow local resources.
- ✓ Join existing philanthropy networks, collaboratives and support organisations.
- ✓ Advocate for unrestricted funding for relevant networks, collaboratives, and pooling funds with other donors.
- ✓ Strengthen your own fundraising capacity and offer relevant technical support to reinforce local civil society organisations and build community autonomy.
- ✓ Encourage community philanthropy mechanisms – local funds, community foundations, women’s funds, indigenous funds – to tap into local resources and channel other resources, like diaspora giving.
- ✓ Adopt an approach that recognises the interconnected nature of your ecosystem.
 - Invest in improving the accessibility of philanthropy for all actors in the ecosystem by collaborating with other sectors.
 - Learn from and regularly share learnings with peers.
 - Avoid inadvertently encouraging duplications and ineffective ecosystems by aligning your investments with other funders, facilitate coordination and embrace synergies (including mergers where relevant, or coalition/movement building within the field). The WINGS ecosystem mapping methodology can guide your investment approach (see the ‘To go beyond’ section that follows).



To go beyond:

- ✓ Map the philanthropic support ecosystem connected to your work and consider what gaps exist and where further support or investment can help build capacity to create a stronger enabling environment.
 - Join forces to increase impact and reduce cost, while also avoiding duplicating work.
 - WINGS' four-stage approach to ecosystem mapping (see Resources at the end of this section) can serve as a guide. This exercise can be conducted at different levels – community, regional, national, international, or thematic levels (e.g. climate change or gender).
- ✓ Create specific programmes or pooled funds to strengthen philanthropy and civil society ecosystems. Encourage, support and sustain community philanthropy mechanisms such as local funds, community foundations and other local and/or diaspora resource mobilisation mechanisms.
- ✓ Use your organisation's voice to support campaigns and research that promote the growth of giving culture and an enabling environment for philanthropy.
- ✓ For international donors, build infrastructure that can continue to generate funds for civil society even after aid ends.
- ✓ Support initiatives to create a favourable international environment for philanthropy, including cross-border giving.
- ✓ Invest in networks and ecosystems around thematic causes like the climate crisis or at a national, regional and global level.
 - Regardless of size, a foundation should aim to dedicate as little as one to three percent of its budget to ecosystem building. If widely adopted, this could radically improve the field's impact and help unlock local resources for partners/grantees.



Potential obstacles



Suggested solutions



Ecosystem-building may feel like a daunting, resource intensive or inaccessible exercise for many small or low-resource organisations, particularly considering that there is already limited funding available for this process.



Building up and supporting philanthropic ecosystems is something many organisations do on a regular basis without even realising that these efforts contribute to a much larger cause. Start small by simply engaging your staff, advisers, volunteers and Board in discussions around the local philanthropic operating environment and improvements you would like to see. To best secure stakeholder buy-in, build the case around what immediate and long-term benefits your organisation will see.



In many parts of the world, local or national governments inhibit the development of a strong social sector, adversely affecting any efforts a philanthropic organisation might make.



Governments in many countries can impede the development of the philanthropy sector. Depending on your organisation's resources, start at the local level to see where you can make the largest inroads. Map out your current partnerships, collaborations or even informal discussions your organisation has had with government, including any local or national stakeholders on your Board or among your partners. Leverage these existing relationships with the intent to broaden dialogues. In such cases, prioritise investing in a network or association that could engage in dialogue with the government without exposing individual organisations directly.



Getting too deeply involved in ecosystem-building work may cause the organisation to lose sight of its original mission and vision.



It is crucial to recognise that all philanthropic organisations will benefit from a stronger, healthier operating ecosystem, so efforts spent on supporting its development are never wasted. If your organisation has limited resources, start by dedicating small pockets of time to these efforts, beginning with the suggestions in the previous 'How to get started' section. Moreover, joining local, regional, global or thematic philanthropy networks can connect your organisation to many others navigating similar internal debates while building out the philanthropy ecosystem.



Resources

Alliance Magazine (2018). [Philanthropy's developers.](#)

Alliance Magazine (2020). [Fit for the future: Can we emerge stronger from the COVID-19 crisis?](#)

Alliance Magazine (2023). [New giving vehicles and tools.](#)

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Ang, W., Peng, Yanni (2020). Narada Foundation and WINGS. [Why we need to invest in the infrastructure for scaling, not just the product or organisation being scaled.](#)

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2021). [The vital importance of everyday giving.](#)

Bridgespan (2023). [Equitable Systems Change: Funding Field Catalysts from Origins to Revolutionizing the World.](#)

Bridgespan (2023). [Field Building for Equitable Systems Change: Insights for Field Catalysts.](#)

Cemefi and Comunalía (2023). [7 Tendencias de la Filantropía y de la Sociedad Civil Organizada en México.](#)

Charities Aid Foundation (2017). [Laying The Groundwork For Growing Giving.](#)

[Giving Tuesday.](#)

Hernandez, N. and Knight, B. for Philea (2021). [How to Build a Supportive Ecosystem for Philanthropy.](#)

Hoare, B. for Philanthropy Impact (2021). [Building A Thriving Philanthropic and Social Impact Ecosystem.](#)

Knight, B for WINGS (2018). [What Makes a Strong Ecosystem of Support to Philanthropy?](#)

Philanthropy Transformation Initiative (2023). WINGS. [Case study Narada Foundation.](#)

[Propel Philanthropy.](#)

WINGS, Trust Africa, and East African Philanthropy Network. [Strengthening the East and West African Philanthropy Support Ecosystem.](#)

WINGS (2018). [Unlocking philanthropy's potential: What funders can do to build strong philanthropy support ecosystems.](#)

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