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EDITORIAL

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Bridging Theory and Practice in Philanthropy for a Changing World

As the field of philanthropy evolves to meet the complexities of a rapidly changing world, the need for rigorous inquiry and actionable insights has never been greater. This issue of the International Review of Philanthropy and Social Investment marks another step forward in fulfilling our mission to explore the multidimensional nature of philanthropy and social investment, bridging gaps between academic research and practical application.

Philanthropy today operates at the intersection of tradition and innovation. In regions like Africa and Asia, the communal giving practices deeply rooted in cultural heritage coexist with cutting-edge technological tools like mobile money platforms and blockchain-enabled transparency initiatives. Meanwhile, global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and humanitarian crises call for more strategic, collaborative, and evidence-driven philanthropic efforts. These dynamics underline the need for a robust knowledge infrastructure to guide philanthropy's growth and impact.

This journal serves as a platform for addressing critical questions: How can philanthropy balance local values with global demands? What theoretical frameworks best capture its diverse manifestations across cultures? How can practitioners leverage research to inform more effective and equitable practices? By publishing contributions from academics and practitioners alike, we aim to create a dialogue that enriches both theory and practice.

In this issue, we present groundbreaking research that reflect the diversity of philanthropic experiences in Africa. From analyses of indigenous giving traditions to studies on digital tools reshaping philanthropy, these contributions highlight the field's richness and complexity. We also feature perspectives on the macroeconomics of excess liquidity in West and Central Africa, underscoring the need for proper fund management.

The article by Tom Mboya Were and his colleagues examines how Kenya's philanthropic tradition of *Harambee*—collective community action—has evolved due to technological advancements, migration, and changing distances over four historical periods. The paper provides a detailed historical review of *Harambee* across four epochs, demonstrating how physical and psychological distances, along with migration patterns, have shaped the practice. More tellingly, the study highlights how technological innovations like mobile money, such as M-PESA, and social media have redefined giving practices, expanded participation, and facilitated resource mobilization despite geographical distances. The authors introduce a

framework illustrating the interplay between distance, migration, and technology in reshaping philanthropy, linking these factors to participation rates, transparency, and accountability in giving. Among others, the research addresses challenges such as reduced physical interaction and potential transparency issues due to privatized donations, emphasizing the need for policies to harness technology's benefits while preserving *Harambee's* communal ethos. The study provides a nuanced understanding of how traditional practices adapt to modern socio-economic and technological contexts, underscoring *Harambee's* resilience and transformative potential.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional classroom education, driving the need for innovative teaching methods. Simbarashe Show Mazongonda and Raymond Chipfakacha's article explores the Growing Tree Model (GTM), an initiative by Zimbabwe's Higherlife Foundation, to address foundational learning challenges during lockdowns. The GTM targeted Early Grade Learners (EGL) in children's homes, focusing on English reading, writing, and mathematics through live Zoom classes, pre-recorded lessons, and the Growing Tree Book (GTB). The study, using pre-and-post-test scores of 145 learners, revealed mixed outcomes: while English reading recorded a significant improvement with a 7% increase in mean scores and better performance distribution, English writing registered a slight 2% decline, potentially due to gaps in teaching methods. The greatest progress occurred in mathematics, with an 8% increase, attributed to enhanced number recognition skills. The authors argued that caregivers played a vital role in facilitating digital learning despite minimal training and challenges like limited resources, power, and internet access. This highlighted capacity gaps and the need for caregiver training in Early Childhood Development (ECD) and digital platforms. The study recommends supporting digital learning through policies and partnerships with education and social welfare ministries; refining teaching approaches for writing within the GTM; scaling digital platforms for use in both crisis and normal periods. The findings contribute valuable insights into effective digital learning interventions, identifying successes and areas for improvement, and offering guidance for future educational initiatives.

Chengete Chakamera’s research explored the role and challenges of indigenous philanthropic organizations in Malawi, Namibia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It highlights how these organizations address critical societal issues such as education, health, child protection, gender promotion, and humanitarian aid, focusing on vulnerable groups like children, women, youth, and orphans. This exploratory study revealed that education and health received the most support across all three countries, while the DRC also emphasized gender promotion and entrepreneurship. Challenges such as lack of funding, absence of philanthropic infrastructure support organizations (PISO), and underutilization of technology like websites to enhance visibility and operations hampered the operations of indigenous philanthropic organisations. The author articulated several options for reform including fostering government support, increasing corporate foundations, promoting collaborations, leveraging income-generating activities, and ensuring reserve funds for emergencies. Overall, this study underscores the importance of self-sustainability in philanthropic efforts and advocates for reforms to enhance the effectiveness and impact of indigenous philanthropic organizations in Africa.

The concluding article of this volume by Mbogeni Shongwe and Imhotep Alagidede examines liquidity surpluses in Central and West Africa, attributing their emergence to fiscal mismanagement, external shocks, and inefficiencies in financial systems. Using time series modeling to analyze country-specific dynamics, the study highlights key factors driving excess liquidity, including dependence on commodity exports and underdeveloped financial sectors. For instance, the authors opine that while Ghana leverages borrowing and investments to fuel growth, Equatorial Guinea relies heavily on oil which limits effective liquidity utilization. Structural inefficiencies, such as high reserve requirements and restricted credit access in banking systems, further intensify liquidity challenges. The study offers valuable insights into regional liquidity management and proposes actionable strategies for fostering economic stability and growth. These include enhancing monetary policies, promoting financial inclusion, reducing bureaucratic barriers to investment, optimizing government expenditure, and implementing targeted subsidies. Additionally, the authors advocate for the development of pension funds and economic diversification as critical measures to mitigate the impact of external shocks on West and Central African economies.

As we look to the future, the role of interdisciplinary research becomes paramount. The integration of insights from sociology, economics, technology, and environmental science will help philanthropy address systemic issues while remaining responsive to local contexts. Our journal commits to fostering such cross-sectoral conversations, recognizing that the challenges ahead demand collaborative solutions.

We extend our gratitude to the authors , reviewers , and readers who make this endeavour possible. Together, we are building a repository of knowledge that not only documents the transformative potential of philanthropy but also equips it to meet the needs of an interconnected world.

We invite you to delve into this issue, engage with the ideas presented, and join us in shaping the future of African philanthropy as a force for sustainable and inclusive progress.

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Chief