



Africa Philanthropy Network (APN)

Social Justice Grantmaking Charter

June 2023

FOREWORD

This Social Justice Grantmaking Charter was developed as a co-creation between Africa Philanthropy Network (APN) Members, Secretariat and Consultants. The process of developing this Charter kicked off with a detailed study that was conducted by APN in 2021 to look at various grantmaking models and processes within the African content.

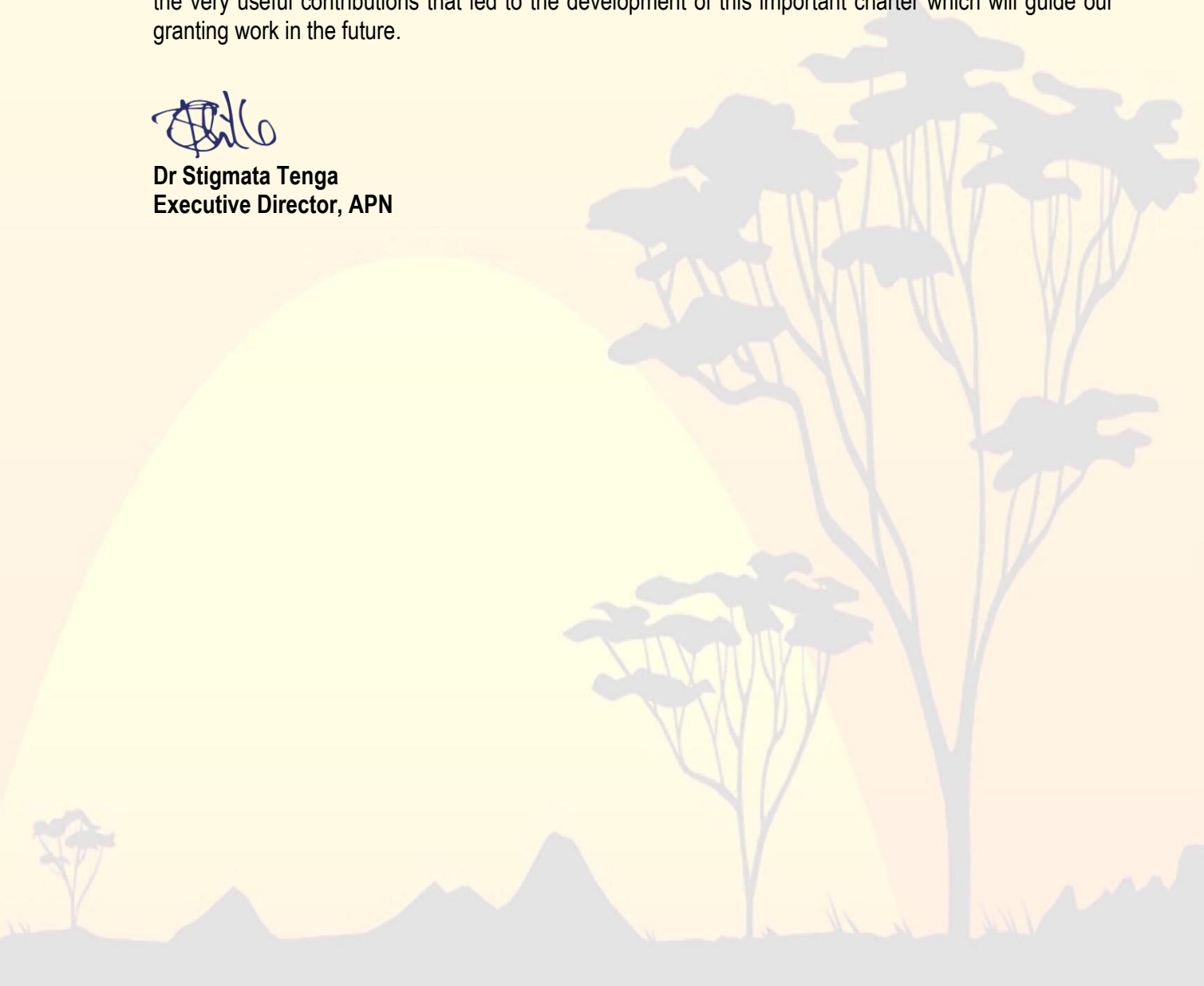
The research yielded answers about how grants are being made to African organizations, what works well and what could be improved in the philanthropy and grantmaking processes. The research concluded with various stakeholders suggesting the processes, principles and approaches that should ideally be guiding grantmaking in Africa and for local African organizations.

The following year in 2022 and through to 2023, APN Secretariat convened a series of consultations and meetings with the APN Members, Grant Makers, Grantees and Consultants. We all agreed on how APN members could manage grantee partnerships when aligned to the principles, values and approaches which are outlined in this Charter. Therefore, what is contained in this charter is a direct reflection of the recommendations that were made by us all.

We hereby wish to thank all who participated in the studies, consultations, and meetings; for having made the very useful contributions that led to the development of this important charter which will guide our granting work in the future.



Dr Stigmata Tenga
Executive Director, APN



PREAMBLE

We, the members of APN, have committed ourselves to be Social Justice Grant Makers; and have resolved to apply the practices and ethos of Social Justice Grantmaking in all our processes and activities.

Recognizing that there is a need for home grown African philanthropic activity that drives long term and sustainable social change; we are committed to the vision of APN which is to see a sustainable, relevant, and responsive philanthropic community that contributes towards African societies that are equitable, just and reflect well-being.

We are committed to our mission as a continent-wide network of organizations and individuals in Africa and its diaspora, that promotes the practice and culture philanthropy as a driver for social change, and advocate for the recognition of philanthropic giving models that serve humanity by driving social change and a policy environment with equitable and efficient delivery systems that enable widespread access to resources and scalable impact.

Given that our resources are insignificant in comparison to public resources; our mission is to enhance the solidarity, connection, and influence of the work of our members to reclaim the power of and elevate philanthropy in all its forms. We therefore work for the benefit of African communities, feminist and women's, persons with disabilities and all marginalized population groups including sexual minorities.

Grassroots movements need increased flexible and agile funding. We are therefore guided by past consultations and surveys which demonstrate the need for a more supportive and collaborative funding environment. This resonates with the fact that APN was formed to share evidence of what works, builds the collective power of civil society actors to influence Government policies and, be able to negotiate better granting arrangements with international funders.

Now hereby adopt this charter, affirm our shared values as Social Justice Grant Makers; and will use this charter to guide our interactions, partnerships, ways of working and activities at all times.



Dr Stigmata Tenga
Executive Director, APN

CHAPTER I: HOW WE DEFINE SOCIAL JUSTICE GRANT MAKING

To us, as APN Members, Social Justice Grantmaking is all about:

- I. Making grants and philanthropic contributions that work for structural change to increase opportunities for the most underserved and marginalized communities in society. This includes attempts to make the philanthropy field more collaborative and inclusive than it has historically been.
- II. Providing funding that focuses on the root causes, not only symptoms, of social, economic, and environmental injustices.
- III. Mobilizing funding whose explicit goal is long-term systemic change, or that attempts to rectify or erase the social, economic and/or political inequalities caused by historical injustices.
- IV. Availing funding that welcomes new practices and innovations that will accelerate and scale up the impacts of our work.
- V. Making grants that incorporate flexibility and that encourages organizations to be brave and take responsible risks to effectively solve problems alongside the communities they serve.
- VI. Providing funding that is intentional in its recognition that the justice, power shifts and societal transformation we seek will only come about if gender equality is at the center of the actions that we take.

We therefore ensure that the grants that we make create opportunities to:

- Build innovative partnerships for development and to achieve universal social protection for marginalized populations.
- Enhance domestic capital formations through asset building.
- Recognize creative means of citizen participation.
- Reduce dependence on external aid and expand progressive private and public sector contribution to social justice concerns.

We, as APN members, are committed to upholding Social Justice Grantmaking models that directly support the most unseen or unheard, those left behind and disadvantaged individuals and communities in Africa. We do this by identifying and unblocking barriers that deter communities from thriving or delays their potential to thrive. We also promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and transparency in grantmaking and implementation processes.

As Social Justice Grant Makers, we are effective because we recognize and use all the tools and privileges at our disposal. These tools include: our power to convene; our ability to speak with the voice of an institution; our access to reach decision-makers; our ability to influence and advocate; and finally, our ability to marshal significant resources.

As Social Justice Grant makers, we are committed to always:

- 1) Share and leverage our individual and joint power for the good of the communities we serve.
- 2) Be more impactful, even if it means embracing disruption in our traditional grantmaking practices.
- 3) Establish dynamic and mutually beneficial networked systems of African philanthropists and other philanthropy stakeholders.
- 4) Tackle the root causes of systemic problems within our African communities and countries.
- 5) Integrate a gender lens in our practices to ensure that we recognize, respect, and protect women and sexual minorities as part and parcel of our approach to achieve positive systemic change.
- 6) Focus on strengthening or improving ecosystems and not issue areas.
- 7) Prioritize funding to and strengthen capacities and learning of frontline grassroots groups.
- 8) Balance power dynamics, work in solidarity and in an equitable, respectful, and meaningful manner with our Grantee Partners, Collaborating Partners, Institutions, and the Communities we serve.
- 9) Prioritize, actively embrace, and enable community participation, ownership and decision making in all our projects.
- 10) Understand how the activities of our grantee partners are part of a larger picture, which includes many other players.
- 11) Recognize that social change is a journey rather than a destination.
- 12) Actively track, learn from, and assess our progress towards the social change we seek.
- 13) Offer supportive grants, by including therein: general support; multi-year grants; organizational effectiveness; capacity strengthening; individual fellowships; and/or endowment support.
- 14) Conduct appropriate impact assessments to our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies and consciously respond to their findings through tangible action.

CHAPTER 3: OUR CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles, as APN Members, should be read in line with our identity as Social Justice Grant Makers. Our core principles therefore include a sound analysis and examination of our operating context, effective choice of the strategies and tactics that we apply, enhancing the perspectives of marginalized and vulnerable groups, with solidarity, equity, and respect.

1. Sound Analysis and Examination

We recognize that social justice is not easily achieved, nor does it come quickly. Therefore, we always undertake a sound analysis and examination of the following:

- a) Historical forces that contributed to shaping the current reality we wish to change, the status quo forces that maintain said reality, and the future evolution of these forces. This includes looking critically at old and current mechanisms of oppression, and the institutional and cultural structures and norms that influence the realities of communities.
- b) The context on the ground, behavior of institutions and community welfare, through the lenses of gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, country of origin and affiliations to other social categories that are subjected to unjust treatment.
- c) Institutional structures and mechanisms of oppression that contribute to injustice. The structures and policies that govern institutions, their practices, their cultures, and their relationships with one another and with the communities they are meant to serve need to be scrutinized. We work with institutions at all levels, to find opportunities for practical and transformative responses which eliminate ways in which they reinforce or exacerbate unjust treatment.
- d) We analyze and balance the distribution of power and privilege in various forms including but not limited to addressing inequalities related to wealth, politics, and influence.

2. Effective Choices of Strategies and Tactics

We realize that because the lives and wellbeing of people often are at risk; good intentions are not good enough. Our work as Grant Maker therefore work should have a significant chance of succeeding. Hence, we find it critical to carefully select and apply tactics and strategies that:

- a) Translate our analysis and examination into effective strategies, tactics, goals, and objectives that lead to the desired positive change.
- b) Apply our tools and privileges as Grant Makers to critique, boldly advocate for and invest in actions that practically demonstrate impact towards accelerated equity and social justice.
- c) Support sustainable practices, capacities, movements, alliances, data, communication, resources, and learning.

- d) Enhance the chances of success by supporting adequate project scale, flexibility, coverage, and timeframe.
- e) Prioritize scalable work that can accelerate transformation through incremental and measurable change. Including establishing clear targets and measures that enable us to see this change and that reflect mutual accountability for this change, amongst ourselves as peers, with our Grantees and Grant makers.
- f) Establish and adhere to mechanisms that enable us to show credible stewardship and progress towards positive transformative changes for social justice.

3. Enhancing the perspectives of Feminists, Individuals, Persons with Disabilities and Sexual Minorities

Through our activities, we endeavor to recognize, consult, and enhance the voices, experiences and perspectives of feminists, sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities. These groups have a need for increased support and funding to further advance their goals. Given the burden of injustice carried by African women in particular, our approach is a collective reflection and a commitment to gender equality and feminist principles. This commitment is explicit as reflected through our gender equity framework, that provides a guide to all areas of our work.

We therefore ensure that our current funding is strengthening and supporting our members to improve, assess and measure our approaches to promoting gender equality and intersectionality.

4. Solidarity, Equity and Respect

We know that without community buy-in, equity, solidarity, and respect, our efforts will not find success or long-term sustainability. We therefore commit to upholding solidarity, equity and respect as follows:

Solidarity:

- a) All our work must create, enable, and enhance understanding, meaningful participation, and collaboration with the communities we aim to serve.
- b) As Grant Makers, we are also accountable to these communities and hold their ownership and acceptance of our Grantee Partners work to be of the utmost importance.
- c) In practice, this means that we learn from communities and, whenever possible, take direction from them. We aim to make the voices of communities heard, and there will always be a strong presumption against contravening the desires of these communities, to the extent that going against their wishes requires special justification.

Equity and Respect:

- a) Respect for the dignity of our Grantee Partners, Collaborating Partners, and the Communities we serve must always guide all our processes and work. This means treating Grantee Partners, Collaborating Partners, Institutions and Communities with respect, equity, kindness and understanding.
- b) Equity and respect also promote collaboration and drive out the idea that Grant Makers are above our Grantee Partners, Collaborating Partners, Institutions, and Communities. It allows us to seek wisdom and strength from these very important groups.
- c) Further, as Social Justice Grant Makers, we hold ourselves to the same rules and standards that we ask our Grantee Partners and Communities to meet.

CHAPTER 4: OUR GRANTMAKING MODELS

We, as APN members, are committed to working with our values, approaches and ethos to:

1. **Focus on power structures:** Our goals include building capacity and empowering underserved or marginalized communities. We will achieve this goal and empower them to change their systems and policies by helping them acquire and leverage political, economic, and socio-cultural power.
2. **Fund nonprofit “ecosystems” rather than issue areas:** We argue that funders need to adopt more holistic, multi-issue strategies, on multiple fronts to successfully address complex problems. We, therefore, support a web of nonprofits, community groups and individuals operating in social change “ecosystems.” This will encourage us to recognize and strengthen existing nonprofits rather than create new ones.
3. **Prioritize frontline groups:** We are focused on building the capacity of frontline groups working in communities to solve problems as a more equitable and effective approach, rather than supporting larger brand-name individuals and organizations. This forms our place-based approach to addressing the long-standing complaint of underserved communities, that funding overlooks organizations despite their deep and indigenous roots.
4. **Prioritize feminist, sexual minorities and disability groups:** These groups need to be supported to increase their capacity, visibility, effectiveness, and funding. We, as social justice workers, provide a unique and rich perspective on how to conduct outreach and support, especially groups at the levels.
5. **Breaking language barriers to enable equity:** Current grantmaking activities and initiatives appear to generally target English speaking populations, neglecting a large group of people in Africa. We will endeavor to address the language barrier between Grant Makers and social justice workers in Anglophone and Francophone regions.
6. **Let Grantee Partners run the show:** Grantee Partners should tell us what they need and why they need it to bring about the desired change. We strive to give general operating support which allows our Grantee Partners to shift funds from one area to another as they learn what works and adapt their approaches accordingly.
7. **Responsible Flexibility:** We recognize that social movement building can take a long time and requires flexibility. Ideally, we will provide general support grant cycles that should run as long as 8 to 10 years; thereby creating a reliable stream of flexible funding that reduces the need for special rapid response grants in the face of new developments.
8. **Align all our practices with our mission and values:** Every aspect of our operations is consistent with our stated mission, values, and beliefs.

9. **Conduct advocacy and civic engagement work:** We endeavor to conduct more advocacy and engage our larger communities in embracing, practicing, and promoting African philanthropic solutions to local problems.
10. **Reassess impact measurements:** We, as Grant Makers, will allow and empower Grantee Partners to help decide what measurement metrics to use and what constitutes progress and success.
11. **Build relationships and feedback loops:** We focus on building trusting, equitable and respectful relationships with our Grantee Partners, Collaborating Partners, Institutions, and Communities. These relationships create a venue for us to learn more and engage with the communities we serve. It also helps us to devise joint strategies that effectively respond to local dynamics and support local needs.



COMMITMENT

In adoption of this charter we, as Members of APN, commit ourselves to the ethos, values and ways of working pronounced by this charter.

We recognize our strength in numbers, and together we endeavor to achieve the goal of building and strengthening Social Justice Philanthropy in Africa as envisioned herein.