



African Philanthropy Network
THE VOICE AND ACTION FOR AFRICAN PHILANTHROPY

Summary Findings from the on Social Justice Funding Landscape Survey in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Executive Summary

The Africa Philanthropy Network (APN), a pan-African membership platform of over 200 African-led organizations, conducted a survey in 2025 to better understand the social justice funding landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rooted in the belief that African philanthropy is central to advancing systemic and transformative change, APN sought to generate evidence that strengthens advocacy and inspires funders to commit to long-term, flexible support for social justice.

The survey was administered via Google Forms and distributed through APN's communication channels between April and June 2025. A total of 56 organizations responded, representing diverse actors across the continent. Data was analyzed to assess funding sources, grant structures, duration, and target populations. No notable limitations were identified.

While 33% of resources still come from foreign funders, 67% derive from domestic sources such as income-generating activities (30%), individual contributions (9%), government grants (8%), membership fees (7%), Cooperates/Businesses (4%), and African HNWIs/private foundations (3%). This reflects a gradual shift toward alternative domestic funding though dependence on external funders support remains significant. The landscape is dominated by short-term, project-based funding (42%), followed by activity-based support (21%). Multi-year project funding accounts for only 17%, while flexible/core funding (4%) and endowments (4%) remain minimal.

The majority (57%) of grants made were for last less than one year, 14% run 1–2 years, and 29% extend 2–5 years, reflecting persistent short funding. It was encouraging to learn that 25% of social justice funding is targeted to community organizations, women, youth, and children. Other groups including human rights defenders, African CSOs, feminist movements, and persons with disabilities each receive 13%, respectively.

The survey underscores that while African philanthropy is gaining traction through domestic resource mobilization, the ecosystem remains highly dependent on short-term, donor-driven funding. This undermines sustainability and the ability to address deep-rooted social justice issues., thus recommends to

1. Introduction

The Africa Philanthropy Network (APN) is a pan-African membership platform of African-owned and African-led organizations, dedicated to advancing the power of African philanthropy across the continent and its diaspora. Today, APN brings together over 200 African grown and Africa-led organizations (CSOs, networks, social movements) across the continent. What sets this campaign apart is its commitment to a multi-stakeholder participation, using a common platform, to ensure poor people and marginalized communities are centered in the community-led and national development transition strategies and given the tools to hold those in decision making structures accountable. Rooted in the belief that African philanthropy is a vital strategy for systemic and transformative social change, APN promotes community and domestic philanthropy as key building equitable and just societies.

During the year, APN found necessary to understand the funding landscape among its members that are operating across the continent for the purpose of generating new insights and evidence that can bolster advocacy and inspire funders to commit to multi-year, flexible, general support for advancing social justice.

2. Survey Objective

The objective of the survey was to generate insights and evidence on social justice grantmaking in influencing and advocacy for funders commitment to provide multi-year, flexible, and general support to social justice causes.

3. Methodology

The survey was developed using Google Forms and distributed to members and other like-minded institutions through our communication platform, supported by Mailchimp. At least 56 organizations completed the questionnaires and submitted their responses online between April to June 2025. The collected data was then analyzed, and the findings are presented in the following Section 4 of this report.

There was no notable limitation identified that might have affected the findings of this Survey.

4. Key Survey Findings

The survey explored key areas such as the type of organization, primary sources of funding, the largest share of funding received, whether the organization engages in grantmaking, for Grantmakers what is the grants duration, and the primary target population groups.

4.1 Sources of Funding

Organizations were asked, “*what are your organization’s major sources of funding for the past 3 years?*” The assessment of responses suggests a revised situation. Social Justice work is increasingly funded by domestic sources of funding. Cumulatively, out of the 56 respondents, 33 percent reported to receive funding from the foreign funders (bilateral and private foundations); while, 67 percent had mention domestic sources such income-generating activities/social enterprises (30%), endowment/trust funds (6%), cooperates social responsibility (4%), private foundations /HNWIs (3), governments grants (8%), ordinary people (9%), membership subscriptions (7%).

The analysis of frequency of all individual sources on funding mentioned, foreign funding seem to be high (33%) as compared to all other sources; which tells us that most of African Grantmakers are still dependent to the foreign sources of funds,

4.2 Funding Categories

Organizations were asked the following questions: “*What is the percentage of mobilized funding under project/short-term, core/flexible, core/multi-year, mixed funding (controlled with flexibility)?*” The analysis of responses reveals a strong dominance of short-term, project-based funding in the social justice funding landscape.

- a. Multi-year project funding (17%) offers more predictability and stability, but it is still less than half the level of short-term funding.
- b. Short-term project funding (42%) is the most common form of support, highlighting a dependency on time-bound, often restrictive grants. This type of funding, while useful, can create uncertainty and limit long-term planning.
- c. Activity-based funding (21%) also makes up a sizable share, reinforcing the trend that most resources are tied to specific deliverables rather than organizational sustainability.
- d. A smaller portion of organizations benefit from more flexible funding structures, to include:
 - Mixed funding (13%) indicates some diversification, though it is not widespread.
 - Core flexible funding (4%), and
 - Endowments (4%)

The above analysis indicated that many African institutions are working on short-term project-based resources. There is a need for stronger institutions that have a broader and more holistic approach; which engage in deep collaboration with each other to create strategic partnerships with national governments, private businesses, institutional and individual donors.

4.3 Grants/Funding Duration

Organizations were asked the following questions: “*What is the duration of grants offered?*” According to the Survey, the funding landscape is still characterized by short-term funding. The survey findings reveal that the majority of grants/funding provided to organizations are short-term in nature:

The majority (57%) of grants last for not more than one year, reflecting a heavy reliance on short-lived funding cycles; followed by 29% of grants which are extended beyond two years but less than five years, and 14% of grants that run between one and two years.

The overall assessment shows that the actors in the landscape continued to rely on short funding circles – which is limited in its ability to fully address social justice causes which are rooted and remain systemic.

4.4 Targeted Population

Grantmaking organizations were asked the following questions: “*What is the targeted population for grants made by your organization?*” The funding landscape favors broad inclusivity but not deeply addressing their social and economic justice needs.

The analysis of survey responses indicates that 25% are targeting community foundations and community-based organizations (25%) as key target audience, the other (25%) target women, youth, and children. On the hand, 13% reported to target human rights defenders, African CSOs, women’s rights organizations (WROs), feminist activist, and Persons with disabilities, respectively. These findings, indicates a strong commitment to supporting both communities and the most vulnerable or often marginalized demographic groups.

5.0 Conclusion

The study reveals that while African philanthropy is slowly expanding through domestic resource mobilization, the social justice funding landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa remains heavily shaped by short-term, donor-driven support. Most organizations continue to rely on foreign foundations, and only a small proportion of funding provides the flexible, multi-year backing necessary for resilience and systemic impact. Encouragingly, income-generating activities and local contributions are emerging as important complementary sources, signaling a gradual shift toward sustainability. However, the persistent underfunding of grassroots actors, feminist movements, and disability inclusion highlights the need for more deliberate and equitable investment. To advance social justice meaningfully, funders and African Grantmakers have to reimagine philanthropy by prioritizing long-term and flexible funding support that can strengthen local institutions and African philanthropy infrastructure.