

# Point of View

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## Introduction

SGS Consulting, through its Technical Support and Dialogue Platform (TSDP), supported the CS Mott Foundation grantees over the years and some of these grantees included community foundations (CFs). The support to the CFs was mainly with respect to organisation development, development of new strategies, programme design and resource mobilisation. A key national programme that helped to keep together the network of CFs was the Asset Based Community-led Development (ABCD) paradigm and approach that was done in concert with the Coasts International Institute, based in Nova Scotia, Canada. Another key programme was the YouthBanks programme that connected CFs in the country, localised and leveraged their support activities through grantmaking. SGS had undertaken a number of international exposure visits to the USA, United Kingdom and Eastern Europe to learn about CF development in the said countries. During this time, we worked with five organisations that self-identified as community foundations including West Coast Community Foundation (WCCF), Community Development Foundation Western Cape (CDF WC), Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation, Uthungulu Community Foundation, and Ikhela Trust.



### Some of the challenges we faced included the lack of:

- Lack of organisations with the skills, profiles and levels of influence to build the field of community philanthropy.
- Lack of research and empirical data on community foundations in the continent.
- Lack of funding support to infrastructure organisations.
- Lack of connection between established and emerging infrastructure organisations.

The community foundations support organisation (CFSO) development programme began in 2018, after we were approached by the CS Mott Foundation to become an infrastructure organisation in Southern Africa to establish a community foundations movement in the region. Infrastructure organisations are dedicated to building the field of community philanthropy and the sector of community foundations, and support philanthropy by advising, convening, fostering collaboration, representing the interests of philanthropy and promoting its value in society. While this was certainly a compelling invitation, after some quick research, we realised that we would face significant challenges. The issues we did demonstrate that although anecdotal evidence suggested the presence of existing organisations across the continent that we may have used as infrastructure, or support organisations, there is in fact, limited empirical data as to the number of these organisations, the extent of their funding sources and support of both community philanthropy and community foundations. In fact, the evidence at hand suggests that the infrastructure level support in the continent is sporadic and weak at best.

We also noted that Community Foundations can form a bridge between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and local development priorities and imperatives. The SDGs are expansive by virtue of their 17 goals and 247 indicator statements and their country specific targets. The SDGs will rely on partnerships, infrastructure organisations and an ecosystem of multi-sectoral support to achieve locally relevant programming, planning and evaluation. What is key is unfolding different streams of funding that will benefit development at the community level and it is this challenge that perhaps sets the community foundation apart from the more classic NGO and CSO. SDGs require financial innovation – whether through impact investing, blending public and private financial instruments, or developing new types of public-private partnerships. Community Foundations and the financial capital they have the potential to unlock and leverage, can also help meet these financial targets.

However, there are not many community foundations that exist today across Africa. The challenge of realising the SDGs in Africa so that 'no one is left behind' and the reality of a tiny sector of community foundations that exists in our continent, necessitate urgent action to build a movement of community foundations. However, in order to achieve this, we need to have in place infrastructure organisations or community foundation support organisations (CFSOs) able to support and build the field of community philanthropy and community foundations.

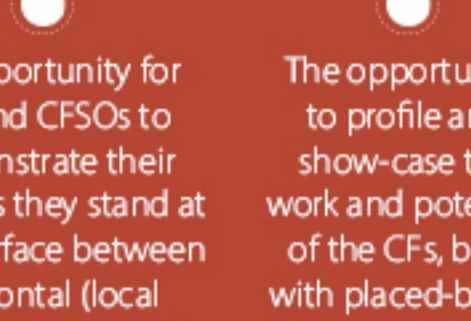
From the research we had gathered, we were able to understand that beyond the classic notion of a community foundation, which is one based on fund management, endowment growth, the redistribution of revenues to the community through grants and fundraising, community foundations go far deeper than this. They are placed based, grassroots level organisations that are multi-issued with the transactional capacity to hold assets and make grants. Their ability to build trust at the community level, build local leadership and capacity to solve local challenges, make them indispensable to the growth and development of their geographically defined local communities. They are key sources of intelligence regarding contextual developments within communities.

We noted that Community Foundations are best positioned to leverage donor funds and may well represent a new frontier of funding for NGOs in the near future as well. We say this because the closing space for civil society and especially NGOs that confront power and deal with controversial issues, especially as it relates to social injustice, is a reality across the continent. This often prevents NGOs from attracting local funds and creates dependency on foreign funding, creating unprecedented pressure and the need to redefine 'faith'. Large donors, whose funding was once almost a certainty, have a decreasing appetite to new entrants to our sector, and do sometimes bypass the NGO sector opting for direct implementation. NGOs are seen as channels of external funders that should leverage the donor's funds rather than being the majority beneficiaries of those funds. Community foundations are best positioned to leverage donor funds and may well represent a new frontier of funding for NGOs in the near future as well.

## SDGs and Community Foundations

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The purpose was to produce a set of universal goals that would help combat the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world. Unlike their predecessors the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs explicitly call on businesses to solve development challenges.

The beauty of the goals is that everyone can contribute, and every contribution, small or big, will make an impact on our world. Community foundations are well-placed institutions to make this critical contribution and to be key collaborators in pursuit of the goals. The compelling argument is that without grassroots movements to achieve the SDGs, other endeavours to solve global issues will be impossible to achieve. Community foundations are rooted in the communities and focus on locally-led institutions. They act as critical leaders and drivers of change in their communities and provide a unique and donors with insights into the contexts in which they operate.



### The value of the SDGs for the Southern African context of CFs and CFSOs include the following:

- A rallying call for action to communities to unlock their assets for community-led development.
- A useful planning framework with commonly accepted statements but with targets that are specific to country contexts.
- A feasible engagement and advocacy tool with government and the business sector to partner with communities for local and national development.
- An opportunity for CFs and CFSOs to demonstrate their worth as they stand at the interface between horizontal (local and national) and vertical (giving institutional sources) – to connect these dots in the context of realising the SDGs.
- The opportunity to profile and showcase the work and potential of the CFs, both with policy-based communities and with communities of interest.

The realisation of the SDGs is indelibly linked to the capacity and potential of the CFs to activate and inspire community agency and resolve to help meet the goals. This implies a dedicated focus on deconstructing and understanding the SDGs, helping communities and organisations of civil society own and adopt them, along with their associated indicator statements and targets. Making known to governments, business and investors, that without grassroots involvement, the SDGs will not be realised. However, technical capacity and funding resources will be needed to make the aforementioned, a reality.

## Our Approach

By building the strength of these organisations and networks, channeling their resources and energies and encouraging them to work towards common purpose, will significantly strengthen the field of community philanthropy and community foundations in the continent.

Our plan and approach in the first 3 years of our grant was the following:

<b>Stage 1</b>	Conduct a study that maps the existing landscape of Southern Africa to understand economic, political, social and developmental landscape to gauge feasibility of established CFs.
<b>Stage 2</b>	Select countries through a scoring system for deeper exploration and the search for organisations interested in engaging into CFSOs.
<b>Stage 3</b>	Start the process of engaging incumbent support organisations – understanding their value and a functional partnership.
<b>Stage 4</b>	Meet with partners in their respective countries, conscious not to impose any agenda.
<b>Stage 5</b>	Engage in the support and development process.

The emphasis is to give effect to the "the power of networks" and invest in building them where they don't exist and strengthening them where they do. Philanthropy is no longer just a collection of singularly-focused organisations and individuals pursuing their own missions irrespective of each other. Tough social problems laugh in the face of such disorganised efforts. Rather, philanthropy is both philanthropic and about support organisations working together to more fully understand and bring appropriate capacity and better solutions to the complex social challenges we face.

During stage 3, we identified organisations from the countries listed on the map as potential CFSOs and finalised partnership agreements.



We decided that SGS would play a hybrid role of becoming a regional infrastructure development specialist in CFSOs across Africa since we are based in the country.

We soon realised that things rarely go according to our very precise plans and anyone working in development will certainly agree. One needs to understand that as you learn through experience, you begin to adjust the original plans to align with what is happening on the ground or risk being irrelevant.

## Our Partners

We have been privileged to work with organisations that share our values and ethos in their approach to philanthropy and community development. In the 4 years of the CF programme, we have partnered with organisations in Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. Partnerships that demonstrate (albeit limited), the variety of organisations existing in the philanthropy landscape in our region that possess one or more of the characteristics of either community foundation support organisations or community foundations. While the Covid-19 pandemic certainly made a significant impact in shaking the very foundations of our region, these organisations, they have demonstrated incredible resilience and innovation, and provided much needed aid to their communities that were facing life-threatening challenges. We are proud to be partnering with them all!



**ICA**  
The Initiative for Community Advancement (ICA) has been walking the journey with us since 2016. Before it became a community foundation, ICA was the South African Youth Leaders' Network, a national membership-based organisation focused on building the capacity of youth-led organisations, contributing towards youth philanthropy in South Africa. In 2018, the organisation decided to change its name to become more targeted in its approach and focus of community philanthropy as its core business. This led to reestablishing the organisation as a community foundation with the new name of ICA.

**NAMKO**  
Namakwa Ontwikkeling (NAMKO) has been operating since the early 1990s and has been an anchor organisation in Namaqualand, known for its very strong feminist approach and community-led and community-owned development model. NAMKO has been targeting poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and financial exploitation among many other localised challenges. Since 2019, we have been working together with NAMKO to support their transition to becoming a community foundation as an institution that will aid their sustainability, effectiveness and relevance in the region, particularly in helping them to secure more funding towards their programmes.

**DOCKDA**  
Development of Community Knowledge and Direct Access (DOCKDA) was established in 1994 and has been supporting the efforts of community-based organisations in extremely rural villages of South Africa's Northern Cape province which faces multiple challenges such as poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, and a lack of education. DOCKDA aims to empower rural women leaders of community-based organisations with the necessary skills and resources to better serve their beneficiaries with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of people living in the Northern Cape.

**CFWRZ**  
The Community Foundation for the Western Region of Zimbabwe (CFWRZ), operating in Bulawayo has been in existence since 1998, through its Ogehele Fund (A Ndebele word meaning to collect with the aim of saving or preserving for future use). We have also been walking the journey with CFWRZ, exploring ways in which we can maintain effectiveness and impact within their geographical scope while operating in a very challenging national context.

**ZGF**  
The Zambian Governance Foundation for civil society operates in Lusaka, Zambia and was registered in 2009. In 2017, community philanthropy began emerging as a new pillar of work for them, beginning with their robust uptake of the #ItStartsAtHome campaign. While ZGF's original purpose was to support and capacitate civil society in Zambia, this role has evolved into working directly with communities and gradually making the transition towards becoming a community foundation with support from SGS.

**TCFN**  
The Tanzania Community Foundation Network is the umbrella body for all the community foundations of Tanzania. The role of this body is to establish and hold the network of community foundations in Tanzania, establish new community foundations in the different regions of the country and capacitate them to work effectively in localised community development.

## Reflections from the field

There is always much excitement when a community foundation is launched at a public event with the promise of cohering local community assets, drawing on institutionalised sources of giving such as CSI, high net worth giving, established foundations and others. There is promise of building community funds, growing capacity for community-led development and having a facility in place for targeted, small grantmaking.



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Managing Director, SGS Consulting

Community foundations are far more established in the USA and European than in the Global South, and have the benefit of access to endowment funding and an established middle class with disposable income. In some countries, government funding is available to help kick-start the emerging community foundation. Important considerations emerge when trying to build the sector of community foundations in countries in the Global South, most of which struggle with post-colonialism trying to reclaim and rethink history and agency of people subjugated under various forms of imperialism. Inequality and oppressions embedded in race, class and gender have allowed for the stripping away of natural, cultural and other forms of assets, and left communities in states of dependency, marginalisation and vulnerability. This is particularly true for Africa where the extractive nature of colonial rule still leaves African countries with the task of reconstitute identities, economic and cultural health, in short, needing to address the depth of the ineluctable legacy of colonial disruption.

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The story of Namakwato, Zambia came together and asked donors to buy their own batteries (and donate to house it up). (The nearest one they used before was over 100km away) They managed their own project and also bought a communal refrigerator and solar panels for electricity. The community pays a fee to make use of these things on a renewable basis.

Now, situate the development and growth of community foundations in the context painted above. The material conditions in growing community philanthropy and community foundations offer substantial lessons from the developed countries. Fundraising for example, is key to the success of the community foundation that has to navigate growing inequality, deepening of poverty and the vulnerability of the household, with compromised abilities to survive natural and other forms of disaster. COVID-19 has served to exacerbate the aforesaid, impacted economies across the globe, more so in Africa, whose economies were already in a state of vulnerability.

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Lessons learned in institutional development and support processes regarding community foundations, small grant makers and others, speak to development perspectives, frameworks and tools needing to emerge out of an innate and localised sense. The understanding of how grassroots organisations grow and mature in the African context is needed. Technical tools and guidelines for effective governance for example, may have universal application, but cannot however, substitute for how we manage tribal, cultural divides and local nuances in getting people to work together to achieve common goals.

Income poverty, marginalisation and vulnerability. The realities faced in Africa are a far cry from the situation of resources, endowments and significant grant funding available to Western and Northern community foundations. Having a community foundation's overseas paid for into perpetuity is but a dream. Living from grant to grant, in the context of income poverty and vulnerability, means that African community foundations have to forge a different path in getting communities to give when they can least afford it and rekindling tradition, when they are able to secure each other's survival. As a result, community foundations need to work so much harder to be trusted, to unlock financial resources from institutionalised sources such as CSI, trusts and others.

It is important to realise that institution building, capacity development and technical support cannot be viewed from only a first world perspective, that the often expressed impatience of needing to have community foundations grow and expand at the same pace as in Europe, is wholly misplaced and reflects the lack of appreciation of post-colonial struggles. We cannot, to support each other, materialise as essential enablers for community foundations but fall fundamentally short in helping to walk the journey

“ It is important to consider how we inspire and mobilise communities to support each other, drive their own development and unlock their local assets in the context of growing community foundations in Africa will take time.”

As SGS Consulting, we have journeyed with organisations, realising that capacity development, mentorship support, change management processes, institution building coupled with the technical elements that account for success, form part of the journey towards becoming a community foundation.

“ The process of growing community foundations in Africa will take time, since in addition to existing challenge, we are also contending with climate change. We need to assess how we make the Sustainable Development Goals real in the lives of communities. The challenges add to the complexities of an emerging and growing community foundation. The important part is to move at the pace of communities, build voice and agency for communities to realise they have assets and power, and can lead their own development.”

“ Lastly, Embo places self-determination, and the voice of the community as being central to development. Africa does not need to be rescued by anyone as it is rich in the resources and insights of its unique developmental complexities and solutions. Therefore, Embo is a call to return to self because a future about us, without us, is no future at all.”



## Back to the Future

Embo is an isiXhosa word meaning 'back to our roots or origins'. It came about from the understanding that the notion of community foundations is the vehicle through which we go back to our identity and character as a people. The question we all need to answer is: how do we use history, but timeless principles and values to approach and solve the development priorities Africa faces today?

This is not to say that we should abandon all our modernity and turn back the hands of time to go back to the past. Embo is a code, a value, a principle that we have adapted as the vessel of the community foundations development programme. Embo recognises that while urbanisation is an unavoidable trend which is practically unfeasible to go back to traditional settings, where the notion of 'it takes a village' is still firmly intact and supported by integrated family and community structures, Embo calls us to carefully think and re-imagine what is meant by a community, in the context of community foundations this means going beyond place-based communities and focusing on interest-based communities with a common social goal of growth and development.

One of the legacies of post-colonialism and capitalism is fragmented family and communal structures. Embo represents coming together again to share shared value

and, Embo Whirl land reform and its execution may be slow, Prosperity cannot us to have courageous conversations and ask, "If you have no land that you own or can work, then what do you have?" Likewise, "If you have no money, then what can you give?" This is where innovative forms of collaboration and reciprocity must be interrogated. Giving from what we have forces us to reconsider how and what we define as an asset. This is why we believe that interdependent ecosystems are essential for the SDGs to be realised.