

The Bellagio Initiative

Global Dialogue Summary

November 2011

New Emerging Markets: Accra

The Resource Alliance

The consultation analysed the trends, opportunities and challenges for the future of philanthropy in Africa. The consultation stressed from the outset that Africans should not feel constrained by existing (northern) definitions of philanthropy, but should stress their own traditions of mutuality, and communal, collective responsibility. This requires understandings of philanthropy which embrace not only giving money, but commitment of time, resources and support.

Types of philanthropic engagement in Africa vary very widely, with many attendant opportunities and challenges. For example, in many parts of Africa, the cash economy predominates – could the banks help to establish supportive systems to encourage regular giving? Much philanthropy is highly personal – can strategic giving be developed more effectively? While the major international donors (Gates, Buffett, Barclays) look for larger-scale projects or INGOs to support, does this change the dynamic so that the drive to support larger organisations (which can absorb grants of £/\$1 million or more) reduces smaller organisations to a service delivery role? Similarly, does the scale of external resources and the emergence of hugely wealthy philanthropists undermine broader-based and more traditional forms of African philanthropy? Are high net worth individuals, who often support traditional areas such as health, education and children targeting their giving in the most effective way and is their support done in a sustainable manner?

Technology is seen as an opportunity for philanthropy in Africa, but there are national differences, between the effective use of giving by SMS in Kenya, which has proved less effective in South Africa.

Africa has resources and wealth – it is often stressed that it is a rich continent, but with many poor people. In many countries, the middle class is expanding rapidly. It has an increasing number of high net worth individuals. The human potential of a young continent – with 70 percent of the population between 15 and 35 – requires opportunities, education, training and capacity-building.

There needs to be carefully balancing between the drive for effectiveness in giving and recognition that development is a social process. Market-driven solutions are in danger of reducing the social world to the quantifiable. Private sector models cannot be replicated directly to address development issues.

In conclusion, the consultation agreed on an agenda of work for further reflection and action. Points included: further development of African understandings of philanthropy, taking up the communal, cultural and social traditions of Africa ('Ubuntu' and corresponding understandings); further consolidation of information on the diversity of philanthropy in Africa – e.g. through the African Grantmakers Network; further coordinated work on regulatory frameworks which incentivise and facilitate giving; strengthening mechanism for accountability and transparency among development actors and philanthropic organisations; dialogue with corporates, civil society and academics; and support for leaders of good causes.

Bellagio Initiative

The Future of
Philanthropy and
Development in the
Pursuit of Human
Wellbeing

Credits
The Resource Alliance,
'New Emerging Markets:
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The Bellagio Initiative is a series of global consultations to produce a new framework for philanthropic and international development collaboration in pursuit of human wellbeing in the 21st century. The project is led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), the Resource Alliance and the Rockefeller Foundation.

