



"INVESTING IN PHILANTHROPY DEVELOPMENT"
WINGS INTERNATIONAL MEETING FOR FUNDERS
CAIXAFORUM, BARCELONA, SPAIN
MARCH 26 & 27

Background

The stakes over the development of a sound and strong ecosystem of support to philanthropy have never been higher: the rapid growth of emerging markets has deepened social ills and inequalities while bringing new potential philanthropic actors to the field. In too many parts of the globe, attacks and delegitimization campaigns have impaired the work of civil society organizations while making their existence that much more essential.

In order to grow philanthropy and its ecosystem, and engage its funders in a critical debate over the impact and sustainability of their work, WINGS organized a meeting for funders of philanthropy in Barcelona in late March, co-hosted by "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, entitled "Investing in Philanthropy & Giving Development."

Drawing on a diverse range of experiences from historic and new players in this field, participants were invited to work on strategies on how to build a more diverse, effective, interconnected and sustainable ecosystem of support to philanthropy.

Participants

A group of more than 70 senior leaders from foundations, development banks, bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies, and other donor institutions from across the globe, as well as presenters from infrastructure organizations.

Meeting Highlights

Below are some of the meeting highlights. The full report of the meeting is available [here](#).

- The diagnosis is stark and the numbers speak for themselves: 80% of the funding for philanthropy infrastructure go to North America while only 4% go to the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting a major gap in regions where infrastructure is most needed - and yet most underfunded;
- The reasons for this discrepancy are many:

- In various regions of the globe, the conversations over the critical importance of philanthropy infrastructure is not yet happening;
 - More often than not, funders do not consider the issue to be strategic enough: for foundations, the support to infrastructure is seen as a good citizen's gesture, rather than as a more strategic initiative, one that can help leverage the impact of their investment, increase the sustainability of the projects, and help mitigate risks.
 - Infrastructure organizations themselves need to rethink their role, improve their capacity to show their impact and to build a more inspiring and enticing narrative; they also need to increase their level of collaboration and interconnection with each other in order to avoid duplication and work more effectively with each other.
- However, adverse circumstances, namely the shrinking of civic space, are making the need for a strong and enabling environment for philanthropy that much more essential: philanthropy support organizations are playing a critical role in advocating and promoting for a more enabling environment at all levels – and in the current context they should continue to do so, increasingly, and in a more effective way.
 - Another important driver for investment in infrastructure, particularly in the Global South, is the research for increased impact through collaboration. This is the main motivation behind the growth of infrastructure in emerging market economies. Field representation and advocacy seem to be secondary motivations.
 - Philanthropy support organizations positively impact the field and investing in them provides a return on investment. The Olga Alexeeva Prize and impact cases displayed at the Barcelona meeting illustrate the important achievements of the field; research undertaken by WINGS shows that 1 dedicated infrastructure organization leads to the creation of 9 community foundations compared to less than one without it.
 - It is needed to look at philanthropy's development as a cause, as a part of democracy fabric, as a proper output of development vs. a financial input.
 - All funders, whatever their focus is, can invest in strengthening philanthropy. This can be done at different levels - community, national, international or thematic. This should be part of funders' transversal strategies.
 - This lens and way to frame the conversation on infrastructure is new and can speak to a wider number of funders.
 - Beyond individual strategies, there is a need for collective / sectoral conversations among foundations at the country-level to strengthen their own philanthropy support ecosystem.

- Lessons learned from infrastructure leaders show that national infrastructure needs a strong domestic donors' buy-in and cannot be developed solely from the outside.
- A collaborative mindset is needed both on the supply and the demand-side of philanthropy infrastructure if we are aiming for a well-functioning ecosystem of support to philanthropy. Funders of infrastructure need to provide incentives for collaboration within the field.
- The field of support to philanthropy is increasingly complex and changing quickly.
 - o Technology has drastically changed giving habits, and the ecosystem of support to philanthropy should reflect these changes while ensuring technology is used to improve philanthropic practices and impact social good positively;

Meeting Outcomes:

Participants worked on concrete recommendations for the philanthropic community to strengthen and develop the ecosystem of support to philanthropy. Proposed initiatives included:

- Create a new narrative for philanthropy infrastructure: Move from a transactional to an aspirational narrative: identify themes that transcend different contexts and broaden the terminology of philanthropy to be conceived as a political act, a connector between people, organizations and social issues and civic space. The new narrative should use active language that's compelling and emotive, but also backed up by hard evidence and data;
- Rely on tangible examples to illustrate the impact of the field: make the impact visible through prizes, case studies from successful initiatives, showing what philanthropy organizations are actually doing and how they add value, using concrete stories, data, numbers, profiles, ...;
- Organize in-country convening to bridge the gap and create synergies and collaboration between the different types of funders and different initiatives;
- Identify champions among funders who can lead these initiatives and gather their peers for similar conversations;
- Infrastructure leaders should also engage their donors in these strategic conversations;
- Create a central fund to support infrastructure where it is most needed and underfunded or towards infrastructure support in their own country.

- Create partnerships with academics who train funders and leaders of foundations through different sorts of capacity building workshops, and see how they could include philanthropy development in their curriculum.
- Involve non-philanthropic funders such as development aid agencies in the debate and bring the topic on the international development's agenda discussions.

WINGS will be leading and coordinating this movement. Some funders present at the meeting have already committed to playing a leading role in fostering this conversation, and some infrastructure organizations have enrolled in the effort as well.

A toolkit will be made available that will contain resources for funders and infrastructure organizations interested in participating.

If you would like to get involved, please get in touch with [WINGS](#).

Related links:

Benjamin Bellegy's presentation about Philanthropy Ecosystem is available [here](#).

Barry Gaberman's closing remarks are available [here](#).

The meeting's full report is available [here](#).
