

# Catalytic philanthropy in Africa

## Harnessing foundations' potential to achieve the SDGs

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### SUMMARY RECORD

#### Opening remarks

**Douglas Frantz**, Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD, welcomed netFWD members and guests, including government delegates from Kenya, Japan, Mexico and representatives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency (AFD) and German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ). He stressed that the global philanthropic sector and Africa have two things in common: they are both steadily growing and hold great potential. The OECD, and its [Network of Foundations Working for Development](#) (netFWD), could help unlock this potential thanks to its policy advice and analysis, peer-learning and data collection work. Three short-term vehicles are: (1) the global philanthropy survey that was launched on the same day, to collect primary data from over 150 foundations worldwide; (2) the [African Economic Outlook](#) 2017, which will focus on entrepreneurship; (3) [the Second High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#), to be held in Nairobi on 29 November-1 December.

#### Session 1: African philanthropy in support of the 2030 Agenda: trends and opportunities

The **Sawiris Foundation for Social Development** focuses on youth unemployment and co-operates with many Arab foundations, notably through the Arab Foundations Forum (AFF). The Foundation favours working with governments to ensure greater sustainability and scale up efforts. Yet, engaging with the public administration comes with some downsides too, such as bureaucratic burden and high staff turn-over within ministries, in particular since the Arab Spring. The Foundation has tried to overcome these challenges by running pilots, evaluating success and then going back to the government to scale up these initiatives.

The **Ford Foundation** launched a new global and regional strategy, putting inequality at the centre. The Foundation highlighted several trends in the philanthropic sector in East Africa: (1) the growth of family philanthropy; (2) the growth of social investment, mixing corporate philanthropy and CSR, with for example the 'Army of one million artisans' developed by the Housing Finance Foundation; (3) foundations' increasing presence at the county level since 2010; (4) the changing legal and policy landscape in the region, with the space for civil society to operate narrowing down, in the name of security concerns.

The **SDG Philanthropy Platform (SDGPP)** in Ghana emphasised that philanthropy in the country has traditionally been very local and informal, which comes with opportunities and challenges. There are still few foundations operating and their efforts are often uncoordinated, with limited interaction with local governments and international donors. These challenges are also a source of strength: they offer the philanthropic scene in Ghana the opportunity to 'do it right', by applying lessons from other countries and by promoting indigenous resources to shape its own landscape.

During the following open discussion, it was emphasised that there is often a significant disconnect between foundations' global strategies and field reality. The SDGs are increasingly shaping foundations' actions at the Headquarters, but remain unknown to most local actors. Large international foundations have a role to play to connect the dots, and build a more effective communication channel between global and local actors.

## Session 2: How can foundations foster innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa?

**Total Foundation**, which chose not to work in sectors related to their core corporate business, supports medical innovation against malnutrition through a partnership with the Pasteur Institute and Nobel Prize Françoise Barré-Sinoussi. The partnership focuses on child malnutrition in Central African Republic and Madagascar, and notably led to the development of rapid diagnostic tests for severe diarrhea. The foundation has gained efficiency and legitimacy in the development arena, by building long term relations and partnerships with actors such as Novartis and the Red Cross.

Innovation is a topic close to **FHI 360** and is even in the DNA of the FHI Foundation that supports them: the FHI Foundation had several times big structural shifts and its integrative and global vision is currently captured by this '360' degrees perspective. FHI 360 set up a "Catalyst Fund" that provides patient capital and seed funding to projects under USD 100 000 over a period of 18 months. However, FHI 360 is re-thinking its funding model to allow more time to nurture projects. Moreover, being an independent organisation guarantees FHI 360's independence from electoral cycles, to be more creative and risk-taking, and to invest in projects such as drones delivering medicines to undeserved places in Africa.

The **Siemens Foundation** strongly advocates for the use of technology as a tool for sustainable development. Simple technologies can emerge directly from local initiatives and be leveraged thanks to foundations. For example, the Siemens Foundation recently supported a low-tech project in Africa to filter water without electricity – 'water kiosques'. Another project developed in the region is the Solar Fountain Community Hub, where not-for-profit kiosques are built to deliver solar energy at the local level, while also serving as a hub for community gathering and empowerment. The limit to this approach is that projects cannot be easily scaled-up, as they emerge locally. One way to overcome this barrier is to partner with like-minded foundations to pool efforts.

## Closing remarks

**Bathylle Missika**, Senior Counsellor to the Director (Acting) and Head of the Partnerships and Networks Unit at the Development Centre, closed the session by highlighting that although African philanthropy is embedded in the culture, it still needs to get more formalised, and shift from charity to catalytic philanthropy. netFWD is engaged in leveraging such efforts, and will do so through the Philanthropy Forum it will coordinate in the margins of the Second High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership, to be held in Nairobi, on 29 November.