



The power of collaborative philanthropy: Giving together to accelerate impact in the Global South

Global geopolitics have shifted dramatically, significantly impacting the Global South. In particular, dramatic cuts to the US Agency for International Development budget, the US withdrawal from the World Health Organization, and further cuts to bilateral aid from major donor countries have dramatically impacted progress on health, education, economic development, climate work, gender justice, and much more. While private philanthropy is unable to fully replace the lost funding, there are many opportunities for funders to consider giving to shore up urgent gaps, sustain hard-fought progress, and work together with changemakers on the ground to build something new. Collaborative funds and other such vehicles offer opportunities for philanthropists seeking to give to the Global South in this moment, and are particularly well suited for getting resources quickly to leaders and organizations on the ground. They can also offer opportunities for funders to learn as they give as well as to inform their future efforts. The following overview shares more about the value of collaborative giving in the Global South and features a number of examples of funds driving critical work forward.

In 2015, 193 member countries of the United Nations agreed to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to be achieved by 2030. Intended to serve as a blueprint for a just, peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world, the ambitious goals range from eliminating hunger and poverty to correcting inequities in health and stopping climate change. Since their adoption, they have served as a galvanizing force for government, civil society, and the private sector to coalesce around.

Early efforts after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals showed promising trends. The global mortality rate of children under 5-years-old fell by 12 percent between 2015 and 2021. Extreme poverty and many disease rates fell steadily. Targets for gender equality saw progress. “But it is clear now that too much of that progress was fragile and most of it was too slow,” wrote the authors of the 2023 SDG report. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, political instability and conflict, and the worsening impacts of climate change have slowed or even reversed progress on some goals. Currently, not a single one of the goals is on target to be met.

If progress against these goals doesn’t accelerate, the risks to people and planet are dire. If current trends continue, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty and only one-third of countries will have halved their national poverty levels by 2030. At the current rate, the UN estimates that it will take an estimated 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to close gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws, and 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace.

Significantly more resources will be required to move the needle on these goals. There is a particular need to channel resources to the Global South,¹ which bears the brunt of these challenges yet often receives the least funding. The UN estimates the cost of achieving the SDG targets at between \$5.4 and \$6.4 trillion per year, and the annual financing gap for the Global South to achieve the SDGs has grown to over US \$4 trillion, up from \$2.5 trillion in 2014. While government and the private sector will continue to shoulder the largest financial burden in funding towards the SDGs, philanthropy has a critical role to play to move much needed dollars, while also supporting big thinking, innovation, risk-taking, and collaboration.

Given the size, scope, and geographic diversity of the issues facing the Global South, it can feel daunting to identify where and how one’s funding can make a sustained difference. Funds working in the Global South—whose impact are often rooted in their proximity to and relationships with communities they serve—can offer a compelling option for philanthropists. Funds working in the Global South actively partner with communities that participate in, often lead, and own the identification, design, and execution of solutions for the challenges they face. There is growing global recognition that this kind of community-driven change is more sustainable, inclusive, and shifts the balance of power.

The value of collaborative giving in the Global South

Donors have long worked together, from informal giving circles to local fundraising campaigns. Collaborative giving vehicles—like funds, platforms, and other intermediaries—take these efforts to the next level, formalizing collective giving to amplify impact. They are philanthropic organizations and initiatives designed to unite donors, provide deep subject matter expertise, and channel resources to the people and groups (e.g., nonprofits/NGOs) best positioned to accelerate progress on complex issues.

For donors looking to move resources to the Global South, these vehicles can be particularly high impact. Recent research conducted by The Bridgespan Group found three prominent and intertwined advantages that collaborative giving platforms in the Global South offer: efficiency, effectiveness, and donor engagement.

Giving via collaborative funds working in the Global South offers an *efficient* way of addressing due diligence, logistics, and risk. Given the findings that much of the progress against the SDGs has not been sustained, it is important to engage local actors, who are day-in and day-out focused on their communities. High impact funds working in the Global South have deep relationships with local actors and have vetted the relevant networks. Logistically, these funds enable donors to navigate disparate country regulations and give across borders throughout the Global South with less friction. They are well placed to be nimble—they can move money quickly and step into a rapid response role to close gaps even when that is not their operating model. Collaborative funds also take on the liability of complying with funders’ accountability requirements.

Collaborative funds working in the Global South *effectively* channel resources to local communities and leaders and build capacity. There’s growing awareness in philanthropy of the power of proximity and trusting those closest to the problem to design and implement the solutions that maximize impact. Many funds working in the Global South anchor their approach, from sourcing to diligence and decision-making, in principles of trust-based philanthropy. For nearly 40 funds Bridgespan surveyed, over 80 percent reported that more than three-fourths of their grantee organizations’ leadership are representative of the communities they serve. The vast majority also offer critical support aimed at building stronger, more resilient organizations, and strengthening the larger ecosystem.



“Collaborative funds with local teams unlock that ability for me to connect to organizations closest to the work. Funds give me a pulse of what’s happening on the ground level. They give me a level of granularity I just don’t have individually from my desk in the US.”

Natasha Desterro Dolby, philanthropist who supports funds working in the Global South

Collaborative funds working in the Global South *engage* donors in a learning journey. These funds give donors access to specialized issue area knowledge and locally rooted expertise. A donor who engages a fund can get up to speed quickly on a range of solutions and build issue knowledge in unfamiliar geographies. Global Greengrants and Prospera, for example, have established a Funder Learning and Action Co-Laboratory that aims to break down siloed thinking in funding and illuminate the intersections between gender justice and climate justice.

Giving collaboratively to the Global South

There are more funds working in the Global South than many donors realize—Bridgespan research found that the number of collaborative funds working in the Global South has grown to at least 175 in the past two decades. Yet they have remained relatively small—66 percent of the funds surveyed directed less than \$5 million in 2021—and report that they deploy approximately 2 to 5 times their current funding.

There are collaborative funds working in every region within the Global South across a wide range of issue areas. While the overwhelming majority focus on multiple intersecting issues, gender equality is the most prevalent area of focus, followed by environmental justice and climate change.

Donors often look for organizations and funds to invest in based on their particular geographic or thematic priorities and interests. With this in mind, we've organized the below list of example funds by geographic focus, issue area, or population focus, while also recognizing that the organizations typically span multiple designations. The ability to recognize and respond to the complex, interwoven nature of social challenges is, in fact, one of the strengths of these giving vehicles.

Climate change and gender justice is one such example where funds often take an intersectional approach. Recognizing the disproportionate impact climate change has on women, girls, and nonbinary people—especially those from Black, Indigenous, or other communities of color—many funds seek to invest in climate solutions led by these communities. “When you invest in gender justice, you are actually advancing climate justice,” one fund leader told Bridgespan. “When you invest in climate justice, you are advancing women’s rights.”

Geographic-focused funds



Global funds: There are many funds that support organizations in a wide range of countries in the Global South. Equality Fund, for example, moves flexible, abundant, and unrestricted funding to feminist movements in 71 countries, and connects feminist leaders with a global community of philanthropists committed to the collective power of women, girls, and trans people across the Global South. The CLIMA Fund is a collaboration between Global Greengrants Fund, Grassroots International, Thousand Currents, and Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism—a like-minded community funding grassroots movements to cool the planet and build resilience around the globe.

Regional or national funds: Other funds operate within a specific region or country in the Global South. One such example is African Women's Development Fund, which supports local, national, and regional women's organizations working towards the empowerment of African women and the promotion and realization of their rights. Masana wa Afrika, newly launched in 2024, supports community-based organizations focused on improving the lives of children in Africa. Casa Socio-Environmental Fund in Brazil promotes environmental conservation and sustainability, democracy, environmental rights and social justice through financial support and capacity building for civil society initiatives in South America.

Hyper-local funds: Many communities across the Global South have community foundations—relatively small, multi-issue focused organizations that serve as an essential part of the architecture of locally owned development. Also known as “community philanthropy organizations”, these entities differ from the image of a community foundation familiar to funders in the United States and western Europe, which are often large, multibillion-dollar organizations that host significant donor-advised funds alongside community programs.

Instead, community foundations in the Global South often surface and consolidate assets that already exist within communities—not just money, but also skills, knowledge, and networks—in addition to deploying outside funding sources. Interested funders can look to the Global Fund for Community Foundations, which supports many of these foundations through grantmaking and other supports.

Issue- or population-focused funds



Donors who focus on specific issues or populations can seek out funds advancing impact in those same areas:

Climate and environmental justice: Many funds in the Global South work on a wide range of issues within the climate and environmental justice space, ranging from reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to empowering Indigenous peoples to advocate for land protection.

For example, [Global Greengrants Fund](#) mobilizes resources for communities worldwide to protect the planet and work toward a more equitable world. It partners with local people to advance solutions and strategies that will best fit their needs, providing them the resources to make their ideas a reality. [ClimateWorks](#) is a global platform for philanthropy to innovate and scale high-impact climate solutions that benefit people and the planet. It delivers global programs and services that equip philanthropy with the knowledge, networks, and solutions to drive climate progress for a more sustainable and equitable future.

[Forest, People, Climate](#) is a collaborative of philanthropic donors, civil society, and community-based organizations seeking to halt and reverse tropical deforestation while supporting just, sustainable development. [Micronesia Conservation Trust](#) makes grants and strengthens organization and leadership capability to help Micronesian communities and decisions makers conserve the health of the oceans and islands. [Amazon Conservation Team](#) partners with Indigenous and other local communities to protect tropical forests and strengthen traditional culture.

Gender equality: A Bridgespan survey found that, of funds working in the Global South, over 80 percent have some focus on gender equality, with one third primarily focusing on gender equality. The research also showed growth of focus on this issue area. For example, [Prospera](#), the International Network of Women's Funds, currently has 44 funds in its global network and expects to grow to 55 or 60 in the coming years.

These funds are highly efficient and effective vehicles for moving resources to local leaders and communities on the frontlines of movements. Most gender equality-focused funds could absorb significantly more capital—a prominent opportunity for funders. [Bridgespan research](#) with Shake the Table found that collaborative funds focused on gender equity could deploy approximately 10 times their current funding.

Examples include Women's Fund Asia, a regional women's fund that provides technical and fiscal support to women, girls, trans, and intersex people-led interventions that enhance and strengthen access to their human rights. Mama Cash also supports women, girls, and trans and intersex people in their fight for their rights. It champions feminists demanding their political, economic, cultural, social and civil rights, and insisting on bodily autonomy. Black Feminist Fund supports movements that fight against systems of oppression and build a world that is affirming of Black women and gender expansive people. Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism provides fast, flexible support to women, trans and non-binary activists so that they can respond to unexpected risks and opportunities, protect and care for themselves and one another, and nurture and sustain thriving frontline feminist movements for a just and equitable world.

Health: As the COVID-19 pandemic made clear, the healthcare access disparities between the Global North and the Global South are stark. Collaborative funds working in the Global South are well-placed to move resources where these disparities are the worst, particularly at the last mile.

The END Fund, for example, mobilizes resources for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and focuses on delivering NTD treatments to those in need by growing and engaging a community of activist-philanthropists, managing high-impact strategic investments, and working in collaboration with government, NGO, pharmaceutical, and academic partners. It takes a systems approach to understanding, engaging with, and influencing the broad ecosystem of stakeholders working on ending NTDs. Another example, the Shefa Fund, partners with the Gates Foundation to identify programs in need of urgent funding and support programs that improve the health of children and families across the Middle East and beyond. The WHO Foundation mobilizes private funding to further the efforts of the World Health Organization and its partners around the world.

Human rights: With their proximity to communities most impacted, collaborative funds working in the Global South can be especially powerful vehicles for channeling resources to organizations and activists on the frontlines of human rights crises.

For example, The Fund for Global Human Rights identifies and invests in the world's most innovative and effective human rights activists, organizations, and movements. It connects grassroots human rights defenders to flexible funding, long-term strategic support, and a global network of allies. The Freedom Fund is a global fund that works to end modern slavery. By partnering with survivors and those at risk of slavery as well as visionary investors, governments, and anti-slavery organizations, Freedom Fund brings together the knowledge and capital to dismantle the systems that allow slavery to exist and thrive. The International Civil Society Action Network's Innovative Peace Fund provides financial support and technical assistance to women-led peacebuilding organizations in countries affected by violent conflict, extremism, and militarism.

Indigenous-led funds: Indigenous-led funds are becoming an increasingly critical avenue for addressing the climate crisis as well as strengthening livelihoods and rights of marginalized Indigenous peoples. The Global Alliance of Indigenous Led Funds, launched by International Funders for Indigenous Peoples in 2023, seeks to serve as a collaborative, learning, and advocacy space for a diverse range of these Indigenous-led funds.

For example, Pawanka Fund responds to the needs of Indigenous peoples by building relationships of trust, networking, and promoting articulation between local and global processes. It provides direct support to community led organizations for the recovery and revitalization of Indigenous knowledge and

learning systems in seven sociocultural regions of the world including North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa, Arctic, Pacific, and Russia. The AYNÍ Indigenous Women's Fund mobilizes and exchanges human, financial and material resources to support Indigenous women's organizations from all over the world (Asia, Africa, the Pacific, the Arctic and the Americas) in strengthening their capacities and in the implementation of economic, environmental, and social development projects.

Racial and ethnic justice: Many funds working in the Global South target the root causes of structural racial and ethnic injustice by taking a systems change approach, while remaining deeply engaged with local movement leaders.

For example, The Baobá Fund for Racial Equity is the first and only fund dedicated exclusively to the promotion of racial equity for the Black population in Brazil. Created in 2011, the Baobá Fund is a non-profit organization that aims to mobilize people and resources, in Brazil and abroad, to support pro-racial equity projects and actions. Another example, Echoing Green's Racial Equity Philanthropic Fund, is working to launch and scale 500 social enterprises seeking to refine and scale their work toward racial justice in the U.S. and globally by the end of 2024. And the African Visionary Fund, founded in 2020, is focused on tackling inequities and power imbalances in philanthropy by offering unrestricted, multi-year funding to African visionaries.

Illustrative list of funds working in the Global South

As part of its ongoing research into collaborative giving vehicles, The Bridgespan Group surveys such organizations annually. To develop the list below of collaborative funds and vehicles working in the Global South, Bridgespan reviewed its survey list of 500+ such vehicles. The list is not exhaustive nor have the funds included been independently vetted by the authors; if you know of a fund that should be added, please contact Jennifer Stout (jennifer.stout@gatesfoundation.org).

Africa and the Middle East

- Africa Partners Collective
- African Visionary Fund
- African Women's Development Fund
- Amplify Girls
- Blood:Water
- Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)
- Ebola Fund
- Firelight
- Fonds Pananetugri
- Initiative Sankofa D'Afrique De L'ouest (ISDAO)
- Karama
- Land is Life
- Luminos Fund
- Maliasili
- Masana wa Afrika
- Mediterranean Women's Fund
- One Acre Fund
- Pananetugri Fund
- Purposeful: With and For Girls Fund
- Resolve to Save Lives
- Shefa Fund
- Southern Africa Trust
- The African Climate Foundation
- The Jumuiya Women Fund (JWF)
- The Other Foundation
- The Power of Nutrition
- Trust Africa
- Urgent Action Fund-Africa

Country-specific

Kenya

- Community Development Foundation
- Kenya Community Development Foundation
- Samburu Women Trust
- We World Kenya Foundation

South Africa

- Initiative for Community Advancement
- South Africa Development Fund

Other countries

- Congo: Fund for Congolese Women
- Kenya and Tanzania: Maasai Landscape Conservation Fund
- Lebanon: Walk Free
- Nigeria: Nigeria Solidarity Support Fund
- Tanzania: Women Fund Tanzania

Asia and Pacific

- Asia Philanthropy Circle
- AVPN Pooled Philanthropic Fund
- Dasra
- Give2Asia
- Manushya Foundation
- Tara Fund
- The Samdhana Institute
- The Women's Fund Asia
- Urgent Action Fund Asia & Pacific
- Women's Fund Asia

Country-specific

India

- ACT Grants
- Anamaya Tribal Health Collaborative
- Foundation for Social Transformation — Enabling North East India
- GiveIndia
- India Climate Collaborative
- SAWF India
- The Collaborators for Transforming Education at EdelGive
- The GROW Fund at EdelGive

Other countries

- China: Energy Foundation China
- Fiji: Women's Fund Fiji
- Hong Kong: Her Fund
- Indonesia: Indonesia for Humanity
- Korea: Korea Foundation for Women
- Micronesia Conservation Trust: Micronesia
- Mongolia: Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES)
- Nepal: Tewa
- Thailand: XOESE

Latin America and the Caribbean

- Andes Amazon Fund
- Amazon Conservation Team
- Amazon Defenders Fund
- Anti-Impunity Fund
- Black Latina Girls and Women Fund
- Central America and Mexico Youth Fund (CAMY)
- Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres
- Fondo de Mujeres del Sur
- Fundo Casa Socioambiental
- Pulsante
- Urgent Action Fund of Latin America
- Vida AfroLatina

Country-specific

Brazil

- Baoba Fund
- Brazil Foundation
- Brazil Human Rights Fund
- Fundacao Lemann
- Fundo Brasil de Direitos Humanos
- Fundo Social ELAS+
- Instituto Clima e Sociedade (ICS)
- Taboia Fortalecimento Comunitario

Colombia

- Emerger Fondo Socioambiental Colombia
- Fondo Lunaria Mujer

Mexico

- Fondo Accion Solidaria
- Fondo Semillas
- Iniciativa Climatica de Mexico (ICM)

Other countries

- Bolivia: Fondo de Mujeres Bolivia Apathapi Jopueti
- Chile: Fondo Alquima
- Spain: Calala Fondo de Mujeres

Global by primary issue area/theme²

Climate/Environment

- AgroEcology Fund
- Blue Nature Alliance
- Clean Air Fund
- CLIMA Fund
- Climate Action Fund
- Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA)
- Climate Breakthrough
- Climate Justice Resilience Fund
- ClimateWorks Foundation
- Environmental Defenders Collaborative
- Environmental Funders Collaborative
- Environmental Justice Fund
- Forests, People, Climate
- Founders Pledge Climate Change Fund
- Frontline Funds Accelerator
- Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)
- Global Greengrants Fund
- Legacy Landscapes Fund
- Nia Tero
- Planet Impact Fund
- Rainforest Foundation
- Rights and Resources Initiative (including Community Land Rights and Conservation Finance Initiative)
- Samdhana Institute
- Shark Conservation Fund
- Tenure Facility
- Youth Climate Justice Fund

Gender

- Advancing Girls Fund at Tides Foundation
- AmplifyChange
- Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
- Black Feminist Fund
- Calala Women's Fund
- Children's Rights Innovation Fund (CRIF)
- Co-Impact
- Collective Future Fund
- Daughters for Earth
- Disability Rights Fund
- Doria Feminist Fund
- EMpower—The Emerging Markets Foundation
- Equality Fund
- Fenomenal Funds: Feminist Funder Collaborative
- FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund
- Girls First Fund

- Global Fund for Children
- Global Fund for Women
- Grassroots International
- International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI)
- Ayni Fund
- International Trans Fund (ITF)
- MADRE
- Malala Fund
- Mama Cash
- Maverick Collective by PSI
- Mediterranean Women's Fund
- Numun Fund
- Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights (PAWHR)
- Prospera International Network of Women's Funds
- Rockflower Partners Inc.
- Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
- Women First
- Women Moving Millions
- Women Win

Health

- Elton John AIDS Foundation
- Gates Philanthropy Partners
- GiveWell's Top Charities Fund
- Global Polio Eradication Fund
- The END Fund
- The Global Fund
- Water.org + WaterEquity
- WHO Foundation
- WhyHunger

Human rights

- Global Statelessness Fund
- Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN)
- Innovative Peace Fund (ICAN)
- Red Umbrella Fund
- SafeOnline Fund as part of End Violence Fund
- The Freedom Fund
- The Fund for Global Human Rights

Specific population

- Black Global Trust
- Global Fund for Children
- Hispanics in Philanthropy
- Pawanka Fund
- Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples

Multiple issues or other issues

- +1 Global Fund
- Acumen
- American Jewish World Service
- Ashoka
- Center for Disaster Philanthropy
- Co-Develop Fund
- Doc Society
- Draper Richards Kaplan
- Echoing Green's Signal Fund
- Echoing Green's Racial Equity Philanthropic Fund
- Epic Foundation
- GiveDirectly
- Global Fund for Community Foundations
- Global Partnership for Education
- Global Whole Being Fund
- GlobalGiving
- International Fund for Public Interest Media
- Myriad Alliance
- PlusOne Global Fund
- Thousand Currents
- Trust, Accountability, and Inclusion Collaborative
- Wildlife Conservation Network Wildlife Funds

Notes

¹ In this report, we use the phrase "Global South" not only to refer to nations' current socioeconomic positions, but also to represent how their histories of colonialism have left a legacy of inequalities. While we rely on the United Nations definition of Global South, we also acknowledge the limitations and imprecision of the descriptor.

² Primary issue area was inferred through Bridgespan survey responses and/or website and other public information searches



To learn more

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the **Gates Foundation** works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. The foundation's Philanthropic Partnerships team seeds and supports collaborative giving platforms that make it easier for donors to channel large philanthropic investments to advance equity.

Jennifer Stout: jennifer.stout@gatesfoundation.org

The Bridgespan Group is a leading social impact consultant and advisor to nonprofits and NGOs, philanthropists, collaborative giving platforms, and investors.

Sonali Patel: sonali.patel@bridgespan.org
Gayle Martin: gayle.martin@bridgespan.org

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