

COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY TOOLKIT

**A Guide Towards Strengthening Community
Philanthropy Initiatives in East Africa**



**Practical tools for locally led, locally
resourced philanthropy**

A Practitioner's Toolkit



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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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This publication was co-produced by the East Africa Philanthropy Network (EAPN) and Lusoma Advisory Services. The team utilised regional expertise from philanthropy infrastructure organisations, referenced published scholarship, and incorporated insights from legal practitioners whose analyses helped describe the registration frameworks for each country. This toolkit has been made available with financial support from the Firelight Foundation, a longstanding advocate for community philanthropy. The foundation has contributed not only financial resources but also invaluable knowledge on sustaining these community practices over time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit was made possible by communities across Africa whose everyday generosity affirms a simple truth: the mutual support exchanged within and between community members is still giving, even when it goes unnamed and unrecorded. Their indigenous systems of self-help, reciprocity, and mutuality are, for the most part, overlooked, yet they remain the continent's oldest and most enduring form of philanthropy.

Although formal development frameworks are still catching up to recognising their power, and mainstream accounts often bypass everyday givers, community philanthropy is the bedrock of sustainable local development. This toolkit sets out to reclaim that narrative.

We are grateful to the practitioners who completed our survey and sat for interviews, offering candid accounts of how their initiatives are led, funded, and governed. Their experience is the backbone of every section that follows.

We thank the Lusoma Advisory Services team, Nyakairu Ngovi and Susan Njambi, who provided technical guidance *and carried much of the writing, interviewing, and review. They drew on the regional expertise of philanthropic infrastructure bodies, the published scholarship referenced here, and the legal practitioners whose public analyses helped us accurately describe each country's registration framework.*

We also thank the East Africa Philanthropy Network for opening its membership and resources, which played a crucial role in bringing this project together, and the Firelight Foundation, a dedicated advocate of community philanthropy. Its contribution went beyond financial support; it shared invaluable knowledge on sustaining community-led practices over time.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Meaning
ACT	Assets, Capacity, and Trust
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
GFCF	Global Fund for Community Foundations
KCDF	Kenya Community Development Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PBO	Public Benefit Organisation
ROSCA	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
SMS	Short Message Service
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

INTRODUCTION

About the Toolkit

Across East Africa, there is growing appreciation for the role community philanthropy plays in bringing people together and reshaping how local development happens. This is not a new idea. It draws on a rich history of traditional mutual support, such as Harambee in Kenya, Iddir in Ethiopia, Umoja in Tanzania, and Bulungi Bwansi in Uganda, alongside the everyday ways communities rally together in emergencies. Community philanthropy remains a vital heartbeat of social good, building resilience where it matters most.

At its core, community philanthropy is simply people pooling their own resources to meet a shared need. In East Africa this takes many vibrant forms: community members coming together to build a local school or clinic, or interest groups joining through giving circles to support one another's livelihoods. Given that this giving includes both money and countless hours of in-kind time and care, it often happens informally, woven into the fabric of daily life and faith. It is frequently seen not as a formal 'development strategy' but simply as a way of living.

Due to its organic growth, the practice has often remained unstructured and uncoordinated, leaving its potential to drive long-term, systemic change largely untapped. Even so, this organic giving is a powerful, quiet force for community cohesion and local ownership.

This raises a healthy debate among practitioners. Some worry that structuring or formalising community philanthropy could erode the spontaneous, cultural spirit that makes it special. Others argue that keeping it entirely ad hoc limits its power to lift communities out of persistent hardship.

This toolkit is born out of that tension, but it does not take sides. We believe you do not have to choose between cultural authenticity and structural impact. Instead, it offers a flexible, practical roadmap that changemakers can adapt to their own contexts, honouring local traditions while making collective efforts more sustainable.

For those already practising community philanthropy, the toolkit offers a space to see your work recognised as a critical driver of local development. For those still finding their way into these ideas, it offers the clarity, frameworks, and confidence to shape initiatives that respond to realities on the ground. It also serves as a bridge within the wider philanthropy ecosystem, helping external supporters and global partners appreciate the scale, depth, and contribution of community giving.

Intended Users of the Toolkit

Whether you are an experienced practitioner looking to deepen your impact, a changemaker searching for the right entry point, or simply curious about how local resources can spark lasting change, there is a place for you here. Community philanthropy belongs to all of us.

The toolkit is offered in a spirit of partnership, grounded in a simple conviction: across East Africa, and Africa at large, communities have never waited for permission or outside funding to care for one another.

Long before the language of 'philanthropy' arrived, people were pooling harvests, burying the dead with dignity, educating one another's children, and rebuilding after disasters. The work ahead is not to introduce giving where none exists. It is to strengthen, connect, and protect what communities already own.

As a reliable starter pack, the toolkit offers practical design frameworks to help you establish, structure, and refine your day-to-day systems, so that your community philanthropy is both sustainable and effective. It also helps practitioners see their work as a critical driver of local development and gives supporters frameworks for understanding the regional landscape of giving.

To the broader philanthropy ecosystem, we invite you to recognise community philanthropy as a vital part of sustainable development. By engaging with this toolkit, sharing what you learn, and collaborating with others, you can join a movement that empowers communities, fosters collaboration, and drives meaningful change.

DEVELOPING THE TOOLKIT

The research and design of this toolkit were not built in a vacuum. The work is grounded in a clear set of beliefs about how local giving operates, while weighing the real risks of trying to structure it. It is designed as a practitioner's resource, anchored in evidence-based practice.

Streams of Evidence

Three streams of evidence informed the toolkit.

1. A practitioner survey

The survey gathered insights into the profiles of participating organisations, their experiences in community philanthropy, and the models they use. A total of 48 respondents contributed from five countries: Kenya (16), Ethiopia (15), Tanzania (10), Uganda (6), and Rwanda (1). The initial goal was 50 projects; the final count reached 48.

With only one response from Rwanda and six from Uganda, any comparison involving these two countries should be treated as illustrative rather than conclusive. The figures in the toolkit are straightforward counts and percentages from the surveyed projects. They reflect respondents' experiences and should not be generalised to all community philanthropy initiatives in the region.

2. Key-informant interviews and expert input

Key-informant interviews and expert input enhanced the survey findings by highlighting problems such as unstable funding and its effects on practitioners' views of risk. This feedback influenced the design of the toolkit to tackle real issues practitioners face.

The case studies include interviews with various practitioners, such as leaders from community organisations and funders in East Africa. To protect privacy, names and specific details have been changed or made more general, and quotations have been adjusted for clarity while maintaining their meaning. Some insights show personal views, so the toolkit may contain some subjectivity.

3. Peer-reviewed and institutional literature

This toolkit is based on research from published scholars and practitioners, and includes reports from regional philanthropy networks. It focuses on peer-reviewed work from 2019 onwards. This approach combines established research with practical knowledge from the field.

These three streams give the toolkit a solid but partial foundation. The boundaries and limitations below explain how to read it.

Key Assumptions and Risk Considerations

This toolkit is an introduction, not a complete solution. It is a first-generation resource that openly acknowledges its limits and risks. By understanding these basics, you can better assess the methods, safely manage your own initiative, and adjust the tools to fit local needs.

Key assumptions

The toolkit assumes that the user:

- ✓ **Understands the value of community giving:** you are already convinced that community-led giving matters, so the toolkit skips the pitch and focuses on how to organise, govern, resource, and sustain that giving without losing its local roots.
- ✓ **Recognises African traditions:** if you as a user are of African origin, you likely see mutual aid, labour-sharing, giving circles, and diaspora support as everyday social life and legitimate philanthropy, not only formal charity.
- ✓ **Respects local knowledge:** if you as the user is not of African origin, you seek to support African community philanthropy by elevating local knowledge, avoiding imported models, and shifting power to communities.
- ✓ **Works within existing structures:** you have some experience of how community giving is structured, informally or formally, and work within or alongside those systems.
- ✓ **Navigates institutional growth:** you may be grappling with how to make your initiative more durable, accountable, and effective without losing its community-led identity.

If you are entirely new to community philanthropy, the toolkit is still useful, but it is best read alongside the resources it references.

Risk Considerations

This toolkit is based on our insights while acknowledging its gaps

- **Limited evidence base:** It relies on a survey of 48 practitioners, as well as insights from interviews and expert discussions. Due to the limited research on East African community giving, these findings represent a small sample, primarily from Kenya and Ethiopia, focusing on already-registered organisations. We encourage updates as the sector evolves.
- **Risk of hidden exclusion:** Many grassroots groups don't recognise terms like "community philanthropy." They prefer local, religious, or traditional names. This toolkit emphasises how communities give, rather than using technical jargon, to include these groups.
- **Avoiding imitation of foreign models:** This toolkit may unintentionally push unique local traditions into rigid frameworks from other cultures. The goal is to help groups be more stable and transparent while maintaining the authentic spirit of African philanthropy.
- **Varied regulations across countries:** Laws, taxes, and cultural norms differ from one country to another. What works in Ethiopia might be complicated in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, or Uganda. The country summaries here are basic guides; always check current regulations with a local lawyer or network before proceeding.

THE TOOLKIT STRUCTURE

This toolkit offers a step-by-step framework to help development practitioners define, reflect on, and commit to sustainable practices anchored in community philanthropy.

It is built for immediate, practical use in the field and is divided into two core strategic segments:

- **Part 1: The Foundations (Chapters 1 and 2):** Focuses on the vital conceptual, structural, and governance frameworks required to anchor an organisation's mission and secure deep-rooted community philanthropy. To ensure you are thoroughly grounded, this conceptual framework is presented in its entirety in Chapter One to establish a shared vocabulary and fundamental principles before moving into implementation.
- **Part 2: Advancing Practice (Chapters 3 and 4):** Explores the critical operational areas community philanthropy entities and initiatives should embrace to enhance their long-term impact, resilience, and sustainability. These chapters shift directly into an action-oriented setup, starting with a brief overview before diving straight into practical tools.

The toolkit has moved through four stages. It helps to see them as one continuous path rather than four separate subjects.

- **Chapter 1** began with a simple but radical idea: that no community is too poor to give. Every community already holds assets, capacity, and trust to build on. Community philanthropy starts from this abundance, not from scarcity, and treats the people closest to the issue as holders of part of the solution.
- **Chapter 2** turned that idea into something you can build. It provided practical tools that show an entity can take many forms, from an informal giving circle to a registered foundation. The right form is the one that best fits your purpose, stage, and capacity. The call is to move along that spectrum as a deliberate choice, not an accidental drift.
- **Chapter 3** asks the question that decides whether an entity survives: Sustainable resourcing in the region is hybrid, rooted in local giving and community trust, and strengthened rather than replaced by external support. The practical tools shared here are anchored on this premise.
- **Chapter 4** focuses on what keeps an entity trustworthy and alive: governance, accountability, and continuity. Good governance is not a bureaucratic burden but protection for your community, your team, and your mission, and it is what enables an initiative to survive the loss of any single leader, funder, or moment.

To improve how community philanthropy initiatives operate and help practitioners get into action. The toolkit chapters are divided into two main points:

1. **The Chapter Overview:** A concise orientation establishing the strategic context and core principles of the topic.
2. **Practical Tools for Action:** Direct access to actionable components designed for immediate field deployment, including:
 - Guidelines & Usage Instructions: Step-by-step strategies to strengthen daily practice.
 - In Practice: Real-world examples, case studies, and practitioner quotes.
 - Practitioner Tips & Checklists: High-yield, actionable advice to immediately optimise community-led efforts.

PART 1: THE FOUNDATIONS

Establishing Community Philanthropy Initiatives

CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION

This chapter lays the foundation for understanding community philanthropy in East Africa. It defines key terms, introduces the Assets, Capacity, and Trust (ACT) framework that guides community philanthropy, and sets out the evidence for why the approach matters. It also highlights existing initiatives across the region and offers two diagnostic checklists to help you assess where your initiative stands.

How to use this chapter: *This chapter is a foundational resource, not a barrier. Read it to orient yourself and your team. The definitions table gives you a shared vocabulary you can return to whenever a term comes up later in the toolkit. Use the ACT reflection exercise and the two checklists together with your community rather than alone. Practitioner tips and reflection prompts throughout will help you connect the concepts to your own context*

1.1. Defining Community Philanthropy and Related Concepts

At its heart, community philanthropy is both a way of living and a powerful force for change. It is about local people taking the lead to shape their own future. Instead of waiting for external help, communities trust in themselves, speak up for what they need, and bring their own resources together to make life better for everyone.

This approach changes the game. It honors the active role community members already play in their own lives, moving beyond the traditional idea of aid to recognise everyone as equal partners and co-investors in their communities.

Across East Africa, communities come together daily, pooling resources, whether money, time, or skills, to celebrate cultural festivals, build local schools, or set up health clinics. This local giving takes many forms, often called mutual aid, solidarity among communities, traditional giving, or simply a community addressing its own challenges.

In practice: A women's savings group in rural Kenya that pools monthly contributions to pay school fees, cover medical emergencies, and fund small business start-ups is practising community philanthropy, even if no member has ever used that phrase. The practice precedes the terminology.

Practitioner tip: When introducing these terms to your community, always ask, 'What word do we already use for this?' Local language carries a legitimacy that imported terminology cannot.

Below are some working terms used in this toolkit. You do not need to adopt this exact vocabulary; the table is a shared reference, not a rulebook.

Term	Working definition
Community	A group of people connected by place, identity, interest, livelihood, culture, faith, or shared experience, who recognise some degree of mutual responsibility and collective interest.
Philanthropy	Voluntary giving of money, goods, time, skills, networks, or influence for public benefit, motivated by care, solidarity, responsibility, or justice rather than direct personal return.
Community giving	Giving that originates from within a community and is directed towards shared needs or aspirations. It can be informal or organised, recurring or occasional, and may include money, labour, food, services, social capital, or in-kind support. There are two distinctions: giving within the community is giving through relationships of belonging, reciprocity, and obligation; giving to the community is giving by outsiders, institutions, or donors to support the community. Both matter, but they differ in power, ownership, and decision-making.
Community philanthropy	A locally rooted form of philanthropy in which community members and institutions identify needs, contribute resources, make decisions, and shape solutions together. It emphasises local ownership, local control, and the mobilisation of local assets, not only cash. Recognising the variety of community philanthropy models, we use the term 'community philanthropy initiatives' to encompass the entire range..
Giving circles	A way to encourage giving as a form of participation and collective action. They give people space to come together, pool money, and contribute to a common cause. They often take the form of a member-based savings, lending, and support group, usually informal or semi-formal, where people pool money and sometimes non-financial support for mutual benefit, emergency response, investment, or social solidarity.
Charity	One-way assistance provided to meet immediate needs or relieve hardship, usually without shared decision-making or long-term community ownership. While this practice is experienced in African contexts, it should be recognised as distinct from reciprocal or community-led giving due to its dependency nature
Community foundations	Independent, place-based or community-rooted organisations created to mobilise local resources, pool contributions, make grants for local needs, and often strengthen civic voice and long-term community assets. They may use different names but share the same core functions.
Participatory grantmaking	A grantmaking approach in which the people affected by funding decisions hold meaningful power over priorities, criteria, selection, or governance, shifting decision-making from donors alone to communities.
Resource mobilisation	The process of securing financial and non-financial resources for a cause or community, including local contributions, membership dues, in-kind support, volunteer labour, partnerships, diaspora support, grants, and income generation. Domestic resource mobilisation focuses on generating and using local resources to support initiatives and promote sustainable development.
Diaspora giving	Contributions by people living outside their country or region of origin, including money, goods, skills, knowledge, and networks, for the benefit of communities, families, or causes linked to their origin or ancestry.
Endowment	A permanent or long-term pooled asset fund in which the principal is invested and a portion of returns is used to support a stated purpose over time, often to create sustainability and intergenerational support.

Digital fundraising	Fundraising that is undertaken through digital channels such as websites, donation pages, social media, mobile money, online campaigns, email, livestreams, SMS, crowdfunding platforms, and peer-to-peer tools. In Africa, this often includes mobile-first giving and platform-based community appeals, such as M-Changa in Kenya and M-Koba in Tanzania
Donor resources	Any contribution offered by a donor to advance a cause, including cash, grants, in-kind goods, expertise, introductions, volunteer time, equipment, facilities, data, or advocacy support. The donor may be local, national, diaspora-based, corporate, or institutional.
Governance	The structures, roles, rules, and processes used to set direction, make decisions, manage accountability, and resolve conflicts. In community philanthropy, good governance usually means transparency, participation, accountability, representation of community interests, and participatory grantmaking.
Donor	A person, group, institution, or network that contributes resources to support community priorities or strengthen community-led action. Those resources can include money, time, skills, goods, contacts, data, or influence, and the donor may be local, national, or diaspora-based.
Diaspora assets	Individuals or groups originally from the community who live elsewhere but maintain strong connections and can contribute money, skills, networks, or technical support.

Practitioner tip: This definitions table is a living reference. Revisit it whenever a term feels contested or unclear. The most important vocabulary is the one your own community uses and trusts.

1.2. The Framework that Informs Community Philanthropy

Community philanthropy is the financial and operational engine that makes community-led development possible. While community-led development establishes a community's right to drive its own development goals, community philanthropy provides the local funding architecture to sustain that vision without relying solely on external aid.

Defined by the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) as an approach that builds on existing local assets, skills, money, and networks, community philanthropy shifts power from external donors to local people. When a community invests its own resources, it moves from a deficit mindset to a position of strength, correcting the traditional donor-beneficiary imbalance.

The practice bridges two forms of giving: 'philanthropy for community', the vertical, organised external aid, and 'philanthropy of community', the horizontal, everyday mutual aid such as harambee or informal savings groups. Effective community philanthropy does not replace external aid. Instead, it taps into indigenous generosity so that organised development is sustainable, locally owned, and driven by community priorities.

Every successful community-led initiative rests on a shared foundation. Whether you are new to this work or have practised it for years without a formal name, community giving is driven by three simple, interconnected pillars: Assets, Capacity, and Trust.

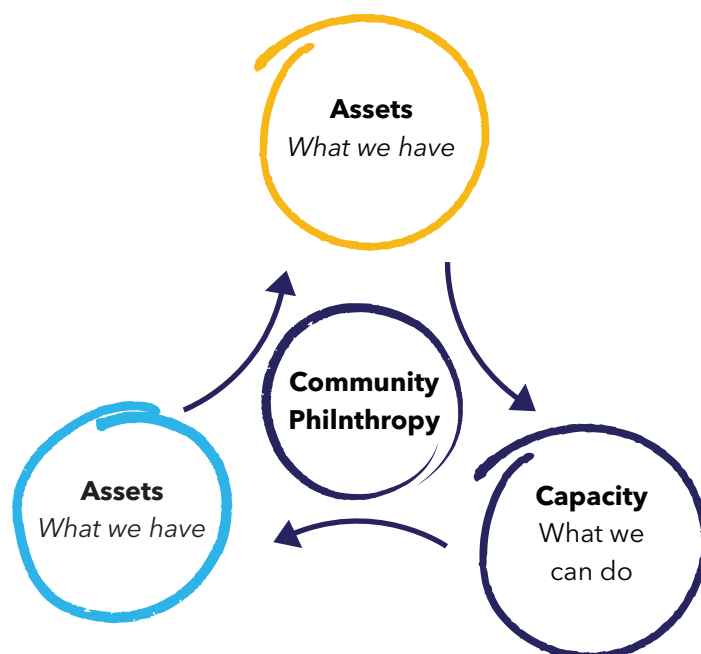


Figure 1. The ACT framework: Assets, Capacity, and Trust.

The three pillars are interdependent rather than sequential. Trust lets a community pool its assets, managing those assets builds capacity, and visible results deepen trust again, keeping community philanthropy at the centre.

i. Assets: What We Have

Assets are the collective resources that already belong to a group of people. They take many forms, not just money, but also land, buildings, shared skills, time, local networks, and cultural knowledge. Gathering and managing these local resources as a community ensures that local initiatives are not entirely reliant on outside funding. This self-reliance keeps initiatives independent and sustainable for the long haul.

In community philanthropy, growing and deploying these assets relies on three core strengths:

- **Building and using local wealth:** intentionally identifying, growing, and putting to work a community's own resources, both financial and non-financial. It proves that no community is so poor that it has nothing to give.
- **Creating a reliable path to sustainability:** relying on short-term outside grants leaves projects vulnerable. Community philanthropy builds a permanent, growing resource base at home, ensuring a steady pool of support for ongoing community needs.
- **Growing long-term public strength:** by activating local assets and encouraging everyday citizens to become local donors, community philanthropy builds a stronger, more resilient society from the ground up.

In practice: A local organisation in Kampala has identified three important community assets for its next project: a retired accountant, a church hall, and a women's savings group. By leveraging these resources, the group is practising asset-based community development even before seeking external support.

Practitioner tip: Before your next planning session, list five non-cash assets your community already has. You may be surprised how much is available without a grant.

ii. Capacity: What We Can Do

Capacity is simply a community's power and confidence to take action. It is the deep-seated belief that local people have both the right and the ability to solve their own problems and pursue what matters most to them. This transforms community members from passive observers into the active drivers of their own change.

Building this power relies on two connected strengths:

- **Rallying people and resources:** bringing people together around a shared cause and pooling local money, time, and skills to make things happen.
- **Growing long-term resilience:** true capacity focuses on the future. It builds lasting relationships, local knowledge, strong community leadership, and the foundations of a vibrant society, the kind of deep-rooted strength that short-term projects cannot duplicate.

Ultimately, strengthening capacity is about raising citizen voices and increasing local participation. It ensures that community organisations can adapt to changing conditions, handle new local priorities, and step confidently into emerging opportunities.

In practice: *When a community health committee trains five young volunteers as health educators and builds this role into its annual plan, rather than treating it as a one-off project, it builds capacity that outlasts the initial funding.*

Practitioner tip: *Ask which decisions are currently made by staff alone that could involve community members. Shifting even one decision builds capacity faster than any training programme*

iii. Trust: How We Connect

Trust is the invisible bond that holds a community together. It is the social glue that unites communities, heals divisions, and creates a safe space for true cooperation. When a community trusts its own people and systems, it can work in harmony towards long-term peace, cooperation, and shared success. Without it, even the most well-funded projects cannot survive.

In community philanthropy, building and nurturing this trust means focusing on four vital areas:

- **Fostering local ownership:** building strong community connections (social capital) so that everyone has a genuine opportunity to engage, speak up, and feel real responsibility for local projects.
- **Creating homegrown governance:** trust grows when a community establishes its own local leadership and transparent, open decision-making systems. When people see exactly how choices are made, confidence deepens.
- **Strengthening belief in one another:** community philanthropy actively builds residents' trust in their local institutions and, most importantly, in each other. It replaces scepticism with mutual reliance.
- **Unlocking unique community power:** this deep-rooted trust gives local organisations a unique advantage. It enables them to bring people together, share vital information, and organise residents in deeply impactful ways that outside organisations cannot replicate.

In practice: *The Tumaini Foundation (case study within the toolkit) requires its local partners to engage with their communities before submitting any reports to the funding partner. By ensuring community members know what funds were received and how they were spent, trust is established. This transparency turns community giving and oversight into valuable assets.*

Practitioner tip: *Trust is built in small, consistent acts: a public thank-you to a contributor, a brief financial update after a project closes, and a community meeting where difficult questions are genuinely welcomed.*

These three pillars lean on one another to create lasting local ownership:

- i Trust allows a community to safely pool its assets.
- ii Managing those assets locally builds the community’s capacity and confidence.
- iii Proving the community can achieve its own goals loops back to deepen trust.

The table below turns each pillar into a single practical question you can ask of your own initiative.

Pillar	What It Means	Practical Question to Ask
Assets: What We Have	The collective resources a community already owns: money, land, skills, time, networks, and cultural knowledge.	<i>What do we already have that we are not yet using?</i>
Capacity: What We Can Do	The community's power, confidence, and systems for taking collective action and sustaining it over time.	<i>Who else could be involved in making this decision?</i>
Trust: How We Connect	The relationships, accountability systems, and shared identity that enable cooperation.	<i>How do community members know their contributions are being used well?</i>

1.3. Why Community Philanthropy Matters

i. It drives long-term durability

Organisations relying solely on external aid are fragile and shaped by donor priorities. Community philanthropy addresses this vulnerability by building a local support base that shields communities from sudden changes in international funding.

In practice: A community group that has built a small endowment can keep operating, paying its coordinator and making grants during a funding gap. Without that base, the same group shuts down.

ii. Co-investment changes accountability

When community members contribute their own resources, accountability flows downward and inward to the community as owners, rather than only upward to a distant funder. This is the practical reversal of the upward-accountability default that mainstream aid inherited.

In practice: When every household in a ward contributes to a school renovation, even a small amount, every household feels entitled to ask questions about quality, timelines, and cost. That scrutiny protects the project.

iii. Endowments and asset development buy independence

Local endowments generate flexible funds that protect projects when donor interests shift. For example, KCDF in East Africa helped 20 communities build \$1.3 million in endowments, moving them from dependency towards the mobilisation of local resources.

In practice: *A community foundation with even a modest endowment can issue a small grant at short notice, for emergency food, a youth event, or a community meeting, without writing a proposal or waiting for external approval.*

iv. It compounds trust and social capital

Unlike short-term projects, place-based community philanthropy initiatives slowly accumulate deep social capital. This growing trust allows them to devolve resources and power directly to the most systemically excluded groups during crises.

In practice: *When a community fund has operated transparently for five years, issuing small grants, publishing its accounts, and convening open meetings, people trust it with larger contributions and more sensitive decisions than they would give to a new external NGO.*

v. It adapts to an unpredictable resourcing landscape

The collapse of major aid agencies (such as USAID) showed that increasing funding for local actors without building local asset bases leaves them exposed. Community philanthropy provides the independent financial durability that a shifting global financing agenda cannot destroy.

In practice: *Community philanthropy entities that had cultivated local giving, membership fees, and small endowments were better able to continue their work when external funding stopped. Their survival was not luck; it was architecture.*

Featured Case Story: Community Philanthropy in Action

Community kitchens and market women.

“When conflict erupted in the country, international agencies withdrew, and formal services collapsed, leaving women and girls vulnerable to widespread sexual violence.” Amina, the network leader, shared, “From the very first day of the conflict, we began receiving distressing calls: ‘We have experienced sexual violence.’ We quickly recognised that sexual violence was being used as a tactic of war.”

In the face of these challenges, women took immediate action. Those who reached safer areas first opened their homes to others and organised community kitchens, pooling food and labour to nourish entire neighbourhoods. “Women gathered, cooked, and shared. They were all displaced, but they still fed the community,” Amina recalled.

Student doctors and community health workers established informal emergency rooms to treat victims and survivors when no other options were available. Recognising the urgent need, the network chose to support these efforts by providing basic utensils and staple foods, and linking kitchens to nearby women’s centres staffed by local psychologists and caseworkers. “We didn’t create the kitchens,” Amina emphasised. “They were already there.”

We simply supported what the community had initiated and connected it to protection services." Food distribution days transformed into opportunities for rights awareness and confidential referrals to medical care.

Moreover, the network advocated for donors to recognise the vital contributions of women's labour. "These women had jobs before; they lost everything," Amina stated. "Paying them is not about 'enticing' them. It allows them to rebuild their lives and restore their dignity." This case study underscores the resilience and agency of women in the face of crisis, highlighting their critical role in community support and recovery.

Community Philanthropy Principles Demonstrated

- **Build on Community Assets:** Initiatives should leverage existing community resources, such as kitchens, emergency rooms, and market associations. "We are building on current structures, not creating new ones."
- **Value Time and Labour:** The contributions of women in cooking, outreach, and organising should be acknowledged as integral to community giving. "African values are not an excuse to keep women's time unpaid."
- **Share Power and Decision-Making:** Community members should define priorities, while organisations facilitate and provide resources. "Our role is to help women articulate what they want and take it to the duty-bearers."
- **Strengthen Local Governance Relationships:** community advocacy transforms philanthropy into a tool for long-term accountability and partnerships with local government. "We don't align our priorities to government plans; we support women to take their priorities to government."
- **Do no harm - Centre Safety and Dignity:** Women's centres and redesigned emergency services must prioritise privacy and survivor-centred care. "In some emergency rooms, there was no privacy. In the centres, we worked to ensure they were truly safe spaces."

1.4. Evidence of Community Philanthropy in East Africa

Community philanthropy in East Africa is not new. It is rooted in practices that have existed for generations, long before the term was coined. What is new is the effort to recognise, document, and strengthen those practices so they can serve as a permanent base for locally led development.

Practice	Description	Resource Types Mobilised
Harambee (Kenya)	A Kiswahili word meaning 'all pull together'. Harambees are community fundraising events used to build schools, pay hospital bills, fund funerals, and support local causes. Digital platforms have extended harambee beyond geographic boundaries, enabling diaspora participation in real time.	<i>Traditional fundraising; diaspora giving; digital giving</i>
Bulungi bwansi (Uganda)	A Luganda phrase meaning 'for the good of the nation'. It describes voluntary communal labour and contributions for shared infrastructure, including road clearing, school building, and community gardens.	<i>Collective labour; in-kind contributions; community infrastructure</i>
Iddir (Ethiopia)	A mutual aid association originally organised around funeral expenses, now expanded in many communities to cover medical costs, property loss, and social welfare. Members contribute regular dues and receive support in times of need.	<i>Mutual aid; rotating funds; social safety net</i>
Ekimeeza (Western Uganda)	A traditional gathering for communal debate, decision-making, and collective action. It combines social capital with resource pooling and is used for community projects and local governance.	<i>Collective decision-making; community gatherings; local governance</i>
Burial societies (regional)	Widespread across East Africa, burial societies pool small regular contributions to cover funeral costs and support bereaved families. They often expand into savings, welfare, and community investment functions over time.	<i>Mutual aid; rotating funds; welfare support</i>
Women's savings groups	Found across all five East African countries under various names (chama, ROSCAs, VSLA's table banking groups), these member-based groups pool money, provide emergency loans, and fund community initiatives.	<i>Savings and credit; collective investment; welfare support</i>
Faith-based giving (zakat and tithe)	Islamic zakat and Christian tithe systems mobilise significant resources through faith networks. Faith institutions are among the most trusted channels for giving in East Africa and often serve as informal community foundations for their congregations.	<i>Faith-based giving; community welfare; education and health</i>
Hometown associations	Networks of people connected to a shared place of origin who organise to support that community from wherever they now live. They fund schools, clinics, boreholes, and emergency relief.	<i>Diaspora giving; local development; infrastructure</i>

Notice that most of these practices mobilise far more than cash. They draw on labour, social networks, and trust as primary resources, which is part of what makes them so resilient.

Practitioner tip: *These practices are your starting point, not the limit of what you can achieve. What matters is the principle: community members identifying needs, contributing resources, making decisions, and owning solutions.*

Evidence gap: *Verified data on East Africa's community philanthropy is limited. Informal giving, such as harambee or giving circles, goes uncounted, and figures like KCDF's \$1.3 million endowment cannot be generalised. Community philanthropy champions can document their own giving and turn these invisible assets into evidence they own, which other development actors cannot ignore.*

1.5. Practical tools

Community philanthropy is easier to recognise than to define, which is why this section offers self-assessment tools rather than a single fixed definition. The checklists work best when completed as a group, with board members, community volunteers, and staff together in one room. Allow time to discuss the items where people disagree; those disagreements, rather than the points of consensus, are usually the most useful part of the exercise.

You will find three tools here. Use Checklist A to assess your current practice, Checklist B to weigh whether to formalise as a community foundation, and the ACT reflection exercise to decide where to focus next.

1.5.1. A self-assessment tool - Are We Practising Community Philanthropy?

Instructions: Tick each item that is true of your initiative right now. Do not tick what you intend to do, only what you are currently doing. Count your ticks and use the scoring guide to gauge your progress and spot areas for improvement.

#	Practice Indicator	✓ if true now
1	Giving is practised as a community tradition, not only as a formal programme.	
2	People pool resources, such as money, time, labour, and in-kind support, for a common or mutually beneficial cause.	
3	The practice is locally rooted and reflects local custom, culture, solidarity, or mutual aid.	
4	Community members have a voice, agency, and a say in deciding priorities and actions.	
5	The practice builds trust, reciprocity, accountability, and social cohesion.	
6	There is a deliberate effort to use local assets and not rely solely on external funding.	
7	The work is embedded in the community's daily life, relationships, and identity.	
8	Solutions are co-produced with community members rather than delivered to them.	
9	Attention goes to root causes and longer-term strength, not only immediate relief.	
10	There are feedback loops and downward accountability back to the community.	
11	Non-financial contributions, such as volunteering, land, space, transport, and expertise, are recognised and valued.	
12	The initiative actively tries to shift power towards local people and local decision-making.	

Scoring guide

Score	What It Suggests
10–12	You are actively engaging in community philanthropy. Use this toolkit to document, strengthen, and expand your efforts.
6–9	You have a solid foundation. Treat the unticked items as opportunities for growth rather than deficits.
3–5	You are on the right track. Begin by using Chapters 2 to 4 of this toolkit to build systematically.
0–2	Your work shows commitment to your community, with room to grow towards community ownership. This is a strong place to start; use this chapter to explore that shift together.

1.5.2. Self Assessment Tool: Do We Function Like a Community Foundation?

Use this checklist if you are considering whether to formalise your initiative as a community foundation, or to assess how close you already are to that model. A community foundation does not have to be large; it needs to be locally governed, locally resourced, and locally accountable. If your answers point towards formalising, Chapter 2 sets out the spectrum from informal to formal and the legal steps involved.

Instructions: Tick each item that currently describes your organisation. Unticked items are not failures; they are a development agenda. As a group, discuss which unticked items matter most to your community right now.

#	Feature	Description	✓ if true now
1	Locally governed	You are a locally established, locally governed institution, with leadership drawn from the community.	
2	Defined community	You serve a defined geographic area or a clearly defined community of interest.	
3	Structured giving platform	You provide a structured platform for community giving and can receive and manage both financial and non-financial support.	
4	Local resource mobilisation	You mobilise local resources, not just external grants.	
5	Community investment	You practise grantmaking, service support, or community investment that benefits the locality.	
6	Long-term orientation	You build long-term programmes, not only short projects, and have systems for governance, reporting, and accountability.	
7	Local reinvestment	You reinvest in the community through local hiring, local procurement, or local partnerships.	
8	Asset development	You are developing or managing assets, endowments, or income-generating activities for sustainability.	
9	Collective action	You connect local groups and individuals into collective action and offer some capacity-building.	
10	Legal identity	You have, or are moving towards, a more formal legal identity (trust, NGO/PBO, or similar), even if you began as a CBO.	

Scoring guide

Score	What It Suggests
8–10	You are functioning like a community foundation. Refer to Chapters 3 to 6 of this toolkit to strengthen governance and operations.
5–7	You are on the right path. Identify two or three features that are most important for your community's stage of development.
3–4	You are a community-based organisation moving towards a foundation model. Chapters 1 to 3 of this toolkit are your immediate resource.
0–2	You may be a newer or less formalised initiative. Use this toolkit from the beginning.

In practice: A community health fund in rural Tanzania that has operated for eight years, pooling contributions, making small grants, and holding annual public meetings, may score higher on Checklist B than a well-funded NGO that is externally governed and donor-led. Longevity, local legitimacy, and accountability to the community matter more than budget size.

Practitioner tip: You do not need to work on everything at once. Pick the two or three areas that matter most right now, and focus on those. The checklist is a guide, not a race to tick every box.

1.5.3. Reflection Exercise: Assessing Our Practice using the ACT Framework

This reflection exercise is adapted from the Global Fund for Community Foundations' study on evaluating community foundations through the ACT framework, which rests on three pillars: Assets, Capacity, and Trust.

As a team, take time to assess the assets within your community, the capacities of the people you serve, and the depth of trust you have built. For each pillar, rate your current position honestly on the scale provided, and note one specific action that could strengthen it.

Assets: What We Have	
Question	How well does your initiative identify and mobilise the community's own resources, including non-cash contributions?
Rating scale (1–5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We rely mainly on external grants. 2. We know our assets but rarely activate them. 3. We regularly use local assets alongside external funding. 4. Local assets are central to our model. 5. We have a documented asset base and strategy.
Our rating: ____	One action we could take:

Capacity: What We Can Do	
Question	How confident and equipped is your community to lead, sustain, and adapt its own initiatives without outside direction?
Rating scale (1–5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity is fragile; projects depend on a few individuals. 2. Some community leadership, but not systematically built. 3. Active community leadership with some training and succession. 4. Strong local leadership and documented systems. 5. The community can run full programmes independently.
Our rating: ____	One action we could take:

Trust: How We Connect	
Question	How strong is mutual trust between community members, between the community and your organisation, and between your organisation and its funders?
Rating scale (1–5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited trust; financial transparency is weak. 2. Some trust, but accountability gaps exist. 3. The community knows how decisions are made and money is spent. 4. Regular downward accountability; the community has a real say. 5. Community members are fully informed owners of the initiative.
Our rating: ____	One action we could take:

Practitioner tip: After the ACT reflection, ask as a team: which pillar, Assets, Capacity, or Trust, is strongest, and which needs the most attention? Use your strengths as the foundation for growth, then decide together where to focus over the next six months to make the biggest difference to your community.

CHAPTER TWO: ESTABLISHING VIBRANT COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY ENTITIES

From Readiness to Reality

This chapter helps community philanthropy practitioners move from being ready to taking action. It guides you in setting up sustainable entities that fit your context, using approaches that shift power to the community while addressing the practical realities of legal structures and day-to-day systems. The chapter follows a simple path. First, you assess whether you are ready. Then you look at the legal options for formalising. Finally, you consider how to keep the community at the center of decision-making.

Purpose and Framework

Chapter 1 defined community philanthropy, made the case for it, and provided tools to assess whether you are already practising it. The tools in this chapter turn to the next question. If you are ready to give that practice a more durable form, what kind of entity should you build, and how?

Community philanthropy takes many forms, from grassroots groups to cooperatives to formal foundations. This section helps you assess what your community needs and choose the model that fits best. Many groups want to formalise, but far fewer pause to ask whether they are ready, and that readiness question is where we begin. We open the next section with a story of how one organisation in southern Kenya came to see the resources its community had offered all along.

Statutory requirements across the spectrum of community philanthropy initiatives

The table below summarises the governance and statutory expectations as an initiative moves from informal to formal.

Governance Element	Informal	Semi-formal	Formal
Legal Status	Not registered; operates through relationships and community trust	Partially registered, or registered under an umbrella or host organisation	Fully registered legal entity (NGO, trust, or company limited by guarantee)
Decision-Making	Consensus or majority vote among members; undocumented	Mix of community consensus and some documented procedures	Board resolutions; documented minutes; quorum rules
Financial Management	Shared cash management; verbal accountability to group members	Basic written records; community treasurer; informal auditing	Bank accounts in the organisation's name; dual signatories; annual audit
Membership/board	No formal board; founding members or leaders guide the group	Informal leadership committee or advisory group	Formal board with defined roles, terms of reference, and term limits
Documents Required	Community agreement or pledge document (optional but useful)	Basic constitution or charter; meeting minutes	Articles of Association or Trust Deed; bylaws; conflict of interest policy; financial policies
Accountability	Direct and personal: members account to each other	Regular member meetings; written reports to the community	Annual reports; external audit; regulatory filings; community accountability forums
Typical Examples	Neighbourhood giving circles, chama groups, faith-based collections	Community savings fund with a bank account; CBO under an NGO	Registered community foundation or community development fund
Transition Trigger	Growing fund pool; desire to access formal grants; need to hold assets	Growing programme scope; staff hiring; need for formal donor relationships	Already formal; focus on strengthening existing systems

Understanding the regulatory frameworks for community philanthropy

Country	Key Laws	Registration Process	Tax Incentives	Notes
Ethiopia	The main law is the Organisations of Civil Societies Proclamation No. 1113/2019, which liberalised the operating environment for civil society.	Registration certificates are issued within 30 days for local civil society organisations (CSOs) and 45 days for foreign charities, with registration cancellations requiring a court order.	CSOs are exempt from income tax on grants and membership fees, individuals/companies can deduct up to 10% of taxable income for donations, and foreign grants are exempt from the standard 15% VAT.	There is a strict 80/20 rule restricting administrative costs to 20% of income, and an evidence gap exists as no specific community philanthropy case studies could be verified.
Kenya	The primary laws include the Public Benefit Organisations (PBO) Act, operationalised in 2024, and the Trustees (Perpetual Succession) Act, which governs public and charitable trusts.	Organisations can register as a Trust, a Public Benefit Organisation through the PBO Regulatory Authority (PBORA), a Company Limited by Guarantee, or an Association.	Income tax exemptions require passing a four-step operational test with the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) via a 60-day certificate process, while donor deductions and VAT breaks are conditional and non-automatic.	Practitioners should note that the PBO Act was newly operationalised in 2024, meaning organisations registered under older frameworks must confirm their compliance with PBORA's transition requirements.
Rwanda	Both national and international NGOs are governed by a unified framework under Law No. 058/2024, which is overseen by the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB).	National NGOs must submit notarised statutes, minutes, district collaboration letters, and a fee of RWF 300,000 to the RGB, which takes up to 90 days to process.	Limited incentives for foundations and philanthropies	Law No. 058/2024 enforces strict financial controls, annual compliance reporting, the RGB's ability to revoke legal personality, and a minimum requirement of 10 NGOs to form an umbrella organisation.
				Laws encourage NGO participation in policy development.
Tanzania	Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act (2019) Societies Act (Zanzibar) The legal environment is fragmented across the Non-Governmental Organisations Act of 2002, the Trustees' Incorporation Act, the Companies Act, and the Societies Act.	Different laws for mainland and Zanzibar NGOs must adopt standard constitutions Organizations must register based on their chosen legal form, which includes registering NGOs with the NGO Registrar, trusts through the Administrator General, or companies through the Business Registrations and Licensing Authority (BRELA).	Dedicated tax benefits and automatic tax relief for philanthropic donations are not well established in current law, requiring conservative planning and direct consultation with the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA). Partial income tax exemption for charitable or religious status	There is a beneficial-ownership disclosure obligation for trusts since 2020, and an evidence gap exists due to a lack of primary TRA documentation confirming donor tax-relief provisions.
Uganda	NGO Registration Act (1989 and amendments) NGOs Act (2016) Regulation is split across the Non-Governmental Organisations Act, the Companies Act, and the Income Tax Act.	Form the entity through the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), register with the NGO Bureau for a certificate, and obtain a Permit of Operation; local groups can use a lighter district-level track for Community-Based Organisations (CBOs). Lengthy process requiring work plans and recommendations from local authorities	Tax exemption is not automatic and strictly requires a formal application and an explicit, written ruling from the Commissioner General of the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA). Exempt organisation status available for religious and charitable organisations	Additional registration for specific NGO types (e.g., legal aid) Foreign NGOs face stricter regulatory requirements, including endorsement letters from their embassies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and specific line ministries.

Featured case story - Indicators for Readiness for Community Philanthropy

“We’d just never asked”: How one community discovered their readiness for community philanthropy.

Deep in East Africa’s pastoralist lands, a twenty-five-year-old local organisation discovered that the answer to long-term sustainability wasn’t across the ocean, but right under their feet. For decades, this Trust operated holistically, weaving education, healthcare, clean water, and community farming into a unified lifeline for children. While the community originally provided communal land, labour, and materials, ninety-five per cent of the organisation’s cash funding travelled from individual supporters thousands of miles away.

The turning point arrived when a simple boardroom question collided with shifting global funding trends: could they find financial resources at home? To test their readiness, the Trust skipped complex strategies and launched a simple pilot. They invited their countrymen and women to pay for weekend visits to experience their projects firsthand. To leadership’s surprise, visitors did not just show up; they transformed temporary curiosity into long-term financial commitments.

The pilot exposed a profound truth: local generosity was never lacking; it had simply never been invited through a formal structure. The Trust’s absolute readiness to transition into a community foundation rested on three pillars built over a quarter of a century:

- ✓ **Radical transparency:** Sharing financial progress face-to-face during annual gatherings.
- ✓ **Unwavering independence:** Consistently refusing restrictive funding to keep decisions anchored to community priorities.
- ✓ **Deep relational trust:** Viewing supporters as co-creators rather than mere beneficiaries.

The transition was not without friction. A glamorous, urban fundraising event flopped completely, and navigating slippery government relationships proved difficult. Yet, by embracing these failures, the Trust shed its old donor-dependent identity. They stepped into their true skin as a genuine community foundation, proving that local giving flourishes the moment you finally find the courage to ask.

Key takeaways:

- Readiness did not appear as a finalised plan; instead, it manifested as changes in behaviour. Leaders began to ask questions rather than make assumptions. They tested ideas instead of engaging in endless debates.
- Supporters who initially participated began to make long-term commitments. For instance, in a powerful act of planned succession, one long-standing donor intentionally introduced the next generation to the work, transforming a single family’s passing interest into a profound, long-term commitment.
- Annual gatherings evolved from mere reporting sessions into opportunities for people to learn about the upcoming year’s priorities early enough to mobilise their own resources. “You cannot say you have nothing to offer. There’s always something you excel at, and that is what you should build upon.” Readiness was becoming a habit rather than just an event. The Trust has not reached its destination; it has begun to move forward.

Practical Tools

How to use this section: The assessment tools are designed to help practitioners evaluate their readiness to establish vibrant community philanthropy practices that can thrive. By utilising these frameworks, they can make informed decisions about the types of entities that will best serve the unique needs and aspirations of the communities they are part of.

2.1. Are we ready to lead?

Instructions: This toolkit helps assess community readiness and interest in undertaking a community philanthropy initiative. Please mark your response or fill in the blanks as requested.

Section 1: Community Engagement		
#	Survey Question	Response Options
1.1	Are you aware of any existing community philanthropy initiatives in your area?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.2	Have you participated in any local community giving or mutual aid activities in the past year?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1.3	Would you be interested in joining or supporting a new community philanthropy initiative?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Section 2: Resources & Support		
#	Survey Question	Response Options
2.1	Do you believe there are sufficient local resources (people, spaces, organisations) to back this initiative?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.2	Would you personally be willing to contribute your time, skills, or assets to support it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Section 3: Barriers & Challenges		
#	Survey Question	Response Options
3.1	What do you see as the primary barriers to participating in community philanthropy? (Check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of clear information <input type="checkbox"/> Limited time / competing priorities <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertainty about how or what to contribute <input type="checkbox"/> Low interest or trust from the broader community <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Section 4: Ideas & Suggestions		
#	Survey Question	Response Options
4.1	What types of community-led activities interest you the most? (Check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Local fundraising and resource mobilization events <input type="checkbox"/> Hands-on volunteering opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Community skill-sharing and mentoring workshops <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness and advocacy campaigns <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
4.2	Please share any additional thoughts, cultural practices, or suggestions to guide this initiative:	

2.2. Who Decides? The Community Decision-making matrix

This tool helps you assess your community's decision-making. Review each statement as a group or an independent stakeholder. Check the box if the statement accurately reflects your current organisational practices.

Pillar / Level	Assessment Indicator (Statement)	Response (Yes / No / Unsure)	Score (Yes = 1 No/Unsure = 0)	Notes / Action Required
Level 1: Strategic	Major shifts in mission, strategy, or legal form require a community vote or town-hall consensus.			
	Decisions to buy, lease, or transfer major community assets require explicit permission from the assembly.			
	Regular community members have a clear mechanism to voice objections to or veto outside partnerships.			
	Meeting agendas and financial information are shared publicly in local languages at least one week before votes.			
Level 2: Allocation	The committee deciding project or grant funding is entirely elected by the community, not appointed by staff.			
	Paid staff, founders, or advisors sit on the allocation committee strictly as non-voting facilitators.			
	Written conflict-of-interest rules exist and are enforced to prevent nepotism or favoritism in funding.			
	Project selection criteria are simple, transparent, and co-designed to be understood by non-literate members.			
Level 3: Operational	Daily financial ledgers, bank balances, and expense receipts are open and accessible to any member upon request.			

Scoring Card

- **10-12 Points:** Strong Community Control Power sits firmly with the community. Your initiative is genuinely owned and led by regular members.
- **6-9 Points:** Mixed Governance Participatory elements are there, but decision-making is hitting a bottleneck around a few staff members or leaders.
- **0-5 Points:** Centralized Leadership Decisions are concentrated at the top. The community is acting more like an audience than the actual owners of the initiative.



Reflection Exercise: Assessing our readiness to integrate community philanthropy in our work.

Where Chapter 1's Checklist A asked whether you are practising community philanthropy, this self-check asks whether you are ready to formalise it. Once the myths are set aside, a short self-check can show where you stand.

An honest “yes” signals readiness, while a “no” indicates room for growth.

- Can we name at least five assets our community already has, not needs?
- Are we willing to let the community help decide how resources are used?
- Do we have a basic, honest way to keep records and show where money goes?
- Are we trusted by the people we want to work with?
- Can we commit to this for several years, not just one project?
- Do we see local giving, such as harambee, chamas, or in-kind support, as genuine philanthropy?

A “no” is not a roadblock. It simply points to where you can build trust and the right mindset before turning to financial systems.

PART 2: ADVANCING PRACTICE

Building Resilient Community Philanthropy Initiatives

CHAPTER THREE: RESOURCE MOBILISATION: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE DOMESTIC RESOURCE BASE

This chapter offers practical guidance on domestic resource mobilisation for community philanthropy entities in East Africa. At its centre is a featured case study of the Tumaini Foundation, drawn from an interview and published materials. Evidence gaps are marked throughout.

Purpose and framing

Chapters 1 and 2 established what community philanthropy is and how to give it a durable form. This chapter actively equips you to ensure your organisation lasts. It provides the practical tools needed to understand where your resources come from and to build a resilient financial base that the community itself truly owns.

Sustainable resourcing in East Africa is usually hybrid. Local giving and external finance tend to coexist rather than replace one another. The aim here is to strengthen local financing capacity, not to suggest that external funding is unnecessary or unwelcome.

Local resource mobilisation in the region is rooted in culturally embedded forms of collective support, including faith-based giving, community fundraising, and place-based mutual aid such as Iddir in Ethiopia. These flows are often informal, socially embedded, and shaped by relationships and trusted networks. The goal is not to replace them with imported models, but to strengthen them through better coordination, clearer systems, and a steady increase in locally generated income.

As the ACT framework in Chapter 1 sets out, the value a community holds is not only money. It is also trust, legitimacy, community ownership, volunteer time, in-kind support, and relationships that make sustained action possible. A sound mobilisation system, therefore, starts with what the community already has.

Practitioner tip: *Before launching a fundraising campaign, ask three questions. What do we already have? Who trusts us? Who gives informally, and how can we build on that? The answers usually produce a more grounded strategy than any external template.*

Featured case story - Trust-based resourcing

“You don’t find us, we find you”

Trust-based, community-led grantmaking at the Tumaini Foundation

The organisation at a glance

Feature	Details
What it is	An intermediary funder that pools donor capital and channels it to community-based organisations
Where it works	Four countries across East and Southern Africa
Reach	More than 60 community-based organisations supported; thousands of children, youth, and caregivers reached
Focus areas	Child rights and protection; early childhood development; youth resiliency and belonging
Founded	Late 1990s as a private family foundation; re-registered as a public charity around 2010
Leadership	African-led, following a deliberate leadership transition
Cost structure	Roughly three-quarters of spending goes directly to programmes
Signature method	The Community-Led Change approach: listen, strengthen, shift systems, expand impact

The story

Tumaini began with a simple yet contrarian conviction: children affected by difficult circumstances should remain within their families and communities rather than being placed in group homes. This belief, that those closest to a problem often hold the key to its solution, became the guiding compass for the organisation.

“We don’t believe children should be raised in group homes. They should be integrated back into their communities if you want them to become better citizens,” explains Mr Community, the Director of Programs at Tumaini Foundation.

Over time, this conviction evolved into a robust initiative. Rather than simply publishing open calls for proposals and waiting for responses, Tumaini proactively scouts potential partners.

They begin by mapping the region, collaborating with government and local networks, and conducting visits to observe how organisations operate before discussing any funding.

Among their local partners, Tumaini has cultivated a reputation that Mr Community proudly shares.

“A lot of people say you don’t find us; we find you,” he notes with a smile.

What Tumaini seeks is not a polished compliance entity, but those deep-rooted connections within the community. They ask critical questions: Did the organisation emerge from its community? Does it possess genuine legitimacy and agency? On one scoping visit, an elder approached the team unprompted, urging them to support a local community-based organisation. This kind of unscripted endorsement is something no due diligence checklist can capture.

The relationship that follows is characterised by transparency and candidness and long-term partnership, including discussions about its eventual conclusion. Tumaini openly communicates the total funding available for the entire period, allowing partners the

autonomy to decide how to allocate resources over the years. Their goal is to strengthen these organisations so that they can thrive independently.

“We are one of many stakeholders who came into their lives at a particular point in time. When we leave, they are much stronger,” Mr Community emphasises.

Why this story matters

Chapter 1 briefly mentioned the Tumaini Foundation, but now we will explore it in detail. The foundation’s model exemplifies what trust-based resourcing looks like in action. While many funders claim they trust the communities they serve, significantly fewer structure their operating model around this principle.

Tumaini is an intermediary funder that pools donations and, for a modest fee, routes them to more than sixty community-based organisations across several African countries. It is not large. What sets it apart is a set of choices that invert the usual power dynamics of grantmaking.

- ✓ It seeks out local partners rather than issuing open calls.
- ✓ It selects them for community legitimacy rather than compliance capacity,
- ✓ It funds them for five to seven years rather than one or two years,
- ✓ It hands them a budget to allocate themselves and asks them to answer to their own communities before they answer to the funder.

As the global aid funding crisis puts pressure on African civil society, resources are increasingly concentrated among a few well-resourced organisations. In contrast, Tumaini presents a viable alternative: it provides patient, trust-based, locally led funding that delivers impactful results without incurring high overhead costs. While many organisations struggle to make a meaningful difference due to limited resources, Tumaini’s partners have successfully removed hundreds of girls from child marriage, established early childhood systems in collaboration with the government and empowered young people to secure economic opportunities and gain a voice in decision-making processes.

This approach not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters sustainable development within communities, showcasing a model that prioritises trust and local leadership over traditional funding methods. For funders wondering whether trust is too risky to operationalise, Tumaini’s answer is practical rather than rhetorical. The pages that follow set out five practices that define the model, how they differ from convention, and what any funder, large or small, can borrow.

Conventional grantmaking	The Tumaini model
Funder sets priorities	Communities shape priorities
Open calls; grantees apply	Funder seeks out rooted organisations
Screens for compliance capacity first	Screens for community legitimacy first
Short-term (2–3 year) relationships	Long-term (5–7 year) partnerships
Funder controls how money is spent	Grantees allocate a transparent multi-year envelope
Reporting points upward to the funder	Reporting flows to communities first
Reporting for accountability	Reporting for learning and ownership
Funder speaks on grantees' behalf	Grantees speak for themselves
Funder seeks to sustain itself	Funder plans to work itself out of a job

What you can borrow

1

Lead with legitimacy. Ask how an organisation came into being before asking about its finance systems. Rootedness predicts impact; capacity can be strengthened.

2

Lengthen the horizon and hand over the budget. Multi-year, transparent funding that grantees allocate themselves signals genuine trust and frees partners from short-cycle survival

3

Flip the reporting arrow. Build community dialogue and downward reporting into your templates so accountability reaches communities first.

4

Co-create your method with grantees. Include former grantees, who have no reason to flatter.

5

Spend your power, then step back. Open doors and stages for grantees, but let them speak.

6

Build infrastructure others can borrow. A low-fee pipeline and openly shared tools multiply impact beyond your own grant budget.

7

Design for resilience and for your own exit. Run lean, treat funding shocks as opportunities for locally led financing, and measure success in part by how unnecessary you become.

A note on the evidence: the results cited in this case study are the organisation's reported outputs and reach, drawn from a published annual report and one interview. Several are activity and access measures rather than independently evaluated long-term outcomes. Funders adapting this model should pair such figures with independent grantee and community evidence over time.

Practical tools

How to use this section: This section provides ready-to-use tools to enable you to map your resources, strategise, and initiate resource mobilisation. Each may be adapted to its respective context in which it is applied.

3.1. Mapping our Strengths

This community asset mapping guide supports participatory identification of both tangible and intangible assets/resources. It is in five sections:

Section 1: Community Profile

Section 2: Asset mapping matrix

Section 3: Contribution Mapping

Section 4: Relationship Strength Score

Section 5: Asset Activation Plan

Instructions: Gather a diverse group that includes women, youth, elders, and local leaders. Brainstorm assets in each category, validate them with community members, prioritise the key assets, develop engagement action steps, and review the map every six months.

The following guide includes various examples to help you through the process.

Section 1: Community profile

Field	Details
Community/area	
Organisation name	
Date updated	
Next review date	
Owner	

Section 2: Asset mapping matrix

A. People and skills assets. What capabilities already exist in the community, and who holds them?

Person / group	Skills / contribution	Available (hrs/month)	Contact	Influence (1–5)
Retired teacher	Mentoring, training	4 hrs/month		4
Doctor	Medical skills	8 hrs/month		5
Carpenter	Construction skills	Every quarter		3

B. Trusted connectors and mobilisers. Who in the community can influence, connect, and mobilise other people?

Name	Why trusted?	Networks reached	Can mobilise? (y/n)	Notes
Religious leader	Community trust	500 households	Y	
Youth leader	Youth groups	300 youth	Y	

C) Existing contribution systems. How are people already giving, sharing, or pooling resources locally?

Group	Contribution type	Frequency	Approx. value	Contact
Savings group	Money	Monthly		
Women's association	Food support	Quarterly		
Farmer cooperative	Labour	Seasonal		

D) Institutional and business assets. Which local businesses or institutions can we realistically partner with?

Institution / business	Relationship to community	Potential support	Priority level
Local supermarket	Customers from community	Food donations	High
Health clinic	Serves residents	Meeting space	Medium

E. Diaspora assets. Who outside the community still has strong ties and can contribute resources, influence, or connections?

Person / group	Location	Type of connection	Possible contribution
Alumni group	UK	School support	Fundraising
Family network	USA	Community roots	Awareness campaigns

F. Physical and infrastructure assets. What physical spaces, systems, and infrastructure exist that can support community activities?

Asset	Owner	Availability	Possible use
Church hall	Church	Weekdays	Events
School grounds	School	Weekends	Community gatherings
Community radio	Local station	Monthly	Campaign promotion

Section 3: Contribution mapping

What can each identified asset actually contribute to the initiative?

Asset	Gives money	Gives time	Gives materials	Gives expertise	Opens doors
Women's group	✓	✓			
Business owner	✓		✓		✓
Retired accountant		✓		✓	

Section 4: Relationship strength score

How strong is our existing relationship with each asset? Rate 1 to 5, where 1 is weak, 3 is moderate, and 5 is very strong.

Asset	Type of asset	Relationship (1–5)	Evidence of relationship	Engagement implication
Local church leader	Connector / faith	5 (very strong)	Regular meetings, past events	Engage immediately
Savings group	Contribution system	4 (strong)	Monthly contributions	Use for fundraising pilot
Local supermarket	Business asset	3 (moderate)	Occasional sponsorship	Build relationship first
Youth leader	Mobiliser	2 (limited)	Met once at event	Schedule follow-up
Diaspora contact	Diaspora asset	1 (weak)	Old contact list only	Reconnect before ask

Section 5: Asset activation plan

How do we turn identified assets into actual support? Who will do what, by when?

Asset	Opportunity	Action required	Responsible person	Timeline
Local business network	Event sponsorship	Arrange meeting	Chairperson	30 days
Diaspora WhatsApp group	Monthly giving campaign	Create appeal	Fundraising lead	14 days

3.2.Funding our Future

A practical mobilisation plan should be short, specific, and easy to follow. It should state the goal, the amount needed, the target supporters, the timeline, the message, the channels, the responsibilities, and the accountability arrangements.

Planning element	Details
Goal	Raise funds and in-kind support for [project or activity]
Target amount	[amount]
Timeframe	[start date] to [end date]
Supporters to approach	Members, local businesses, faith groups, diaspora, community leaders
Methods	Meetings, calls, WhatsApp, social media, mobile money, bank transfer, community events
Roles	Who asks, who receives, who records, who reports
Accountability	Receipts, contribution register, public update after campaign, final report
Milestones	What we have raised, what we are learning from our efforts.

CHAPTER FOUR: GOVERNANCE FOR CONTINUITY

Foundational Governance, Accountability, and Continuity

This chapter discusses how to ensure that community philanthropy initiatives are safe, honest, and properly directed, with accountability primarily focused on the community and its givers.

Purpose and framing

Chapters 1 through 3 explored the concept of community philanthropy, examining how it works, how to build it to last, and how to effectively fuel it with resources. Now that those foundations are in place, this chapter focuses on how to protect and nurture the trustworthiness and energy of community philanthropy initiatives over the long haul.

True continuity means ensuring that our shared work is resilient enough to outlast any single challenge. The tools in this chapter are designed to retool and equip your organisation with the practical skills needed to build open, fair governance, stay deeply accountable to both the community and your givers, and create actionable contingency and backup plans.

By utilising these tools, practitioners will be fully equipped to keep community philanthropy initiatives steady and thriving, even when facing major operational shifts, such as losing a key leader, adapting to sudden funding changes, or navigating unexpected turning points in the community.

Comparison of institutional forms

Feature	Trust	Association	NGO	Company Ltd by Guarantee	Initiative
Purpose	Hold and manage assets for charitable or public benefit.	Bring members together around a shared interest or activity.	Carry out public-benefit work; eligible for diverse donor funding.	Formal non-profit membership entity; can hold assets and employ staff.	Mobilise community action around a shared cause, place, or moment without forming a registered entity.
Advantages	Strong asset protection; perpetual succession; clear fiduciary duties.	Simple and flexible; low-cost to form; community-rooted.	Diverse donor credibility; can access formal grants.	Legal personality, limited liability, and a strong governance structure.	Highly flexible; no registration costs; rooted in local agency and reciprocity; quick to convene and dissolve; preserves community ownership.
Limitations	More complex and costly to establish; requires legal drafting.	Limited asset-holding capacity; informal in some countries.	Regulatory burden; operating permit requirements; reporting obligations.	Compliance-heavy; annual reporting; requires a formal board and records.	No legal personality; cannot hold assets or contracts in its own name; limited access to formal donor funding; may need a fiscal host; sustainability depends on the convenor's continuity.
Governance implications	Trustees hold fiduciary responsibilities; the deed governs all decisions; changes are complex.	Member-led governance, highly adaptable, may have limited accountability structures.	Board required; constitution or bylaws mandatory; external accountability	Board of directors required; Articles of Association govern; audits often required	Governed by social contract, custom, or convenor agreement; accountability is relational and community-based rather than legal; decisions are often consensus-driven
Best for	Endowment funds, community land trusts, asset-holding foundations	Giving circles, savings groups, early-stage community initiatives	Programme-based work; organisations seeking international donor funding	Formal community foundations; organisations with staff and annual programmes	Harambees, mutual-aid efforts, place-based campaigns, cultural or solidarity movements, pilot or exploratory work before formalisation

Featured Case Story: Governing community structures

Active for over thirty years across several countries with 250 grassroots organisations, a resilient women’s network offers a profound lesson in community-centred governance. Its leader, Amina, defines it as “a network before it was an organisation.” To maintain local ownership, member groups in each nation elect representatives to a regional governing body, ensuring decisions are driven by women on the ground, rather than by centralised office staff.

This decentralised governance model was severely tested when war escalated in one of its member countries. Rejecting top-down, branded centres, the regional board integrated pre-existing, informal community kitchens and emergency rooms directly into their official structure. By treating local actors as primary decision-makers instead of casual helpers, the network efficiently channelled utensils and staple foods while linking kitchens to specialised women’s protection centres.

A second governance challenge emerged regarding resource recognition. While external funders categorised the women’s labour as unpaid volunteerism, the network’s leadership asserted that local time and expertise constitute formal institutional contributions. They successfully leveraged this stance to negotiate mandatory stipends and expense reimbursements into all external project designs.

In a peaceful neighbouring country, this same governance philosophy empowered market women to audit municipal budgets and negotiate directly with city officials. Ultimately, they secured a new bridge and dedicated free stalls for gender desks. Here, community governance achieved its ultimate goal: transforming informal grassroots actors into recognised, permanent fixtures in municipal decision-making.

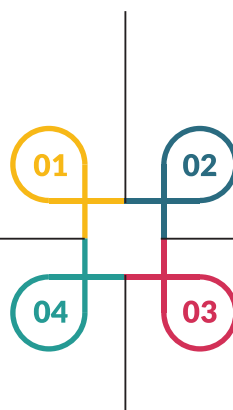
Governance takeaways

Keep governance rooted in context. Ensure communities from each place you work are part of your main decision-making structure, not only advisory roles.

Name labour as a governance issue. Decide, at the leadership level, how far you will rely on unpaid work and when you will insist on stipends or reimbursements in budgets.

Govern through community-owned structures. When kitchens, centres, or emergency rooms already exist, recognise them as part of your response architecture instead of building parallel structures.

Support community actors as governance players. Equip organised groups, such as market women, to understand public budgets and engage officials so they become recognised participants in local decision-making, not only programme beneficiaries



Featured Case Story: Risk Mitigation and Governance

Case Story: The borehole that pays its own way

In a dry, dust-swept region of Kenya where water is as precious as currency, a small indigenous-led organisation, mostly run by a board of local women, decided to rewrite a tragic, familiar script. For years, they watched the same cycle repeat: a well-meaning international donor would arrive with heavy machinery, drill a borehole, cut a ceremonial ribbon, and leave.

For a few months, the community celebrated. Then, a pump would break, or a pipe would crack. With no pooled funds and no clear ownership, the infrastructure would sit frozen and silent, a generous gift turned into a useless monument of dependency. The local organisation, operating on a shoestring budget, faced its own structural hurdle. Because they were small and lacked formal, well-written documentation, big donors bypassed them entirely, preferring to fund large, famous NGOs.

The local women, however, possessed something the donors lacked: an intimate understanding of community dynamics and a deep-seated determination to protect their community's future. Instead of waiting for a

grant that might never come, they chose to design a system where sustainability was baked directly into the governance structure.

They secured funding to drill a borehole, but they did not hand it out as charity. Instead, they structured the project as a soft loan to be paid back by the community itself through the very water it used. The organisation provided technical plumbing, but local families bought their own pipes and connection materials, literally investing their hard-earned money in the dirt.

To ensure transparency, prepaid meters were installed. Community members loaded credit onto digital keys and paid only for the water they drew. Every single shilling fed a secure, central pool managed by an elected water committee of residents. Accountability was made highly visible. The organisation's staff sat on the committee purely as advisors with no voting power.

Every month, the financial ledgers were cross-checked against loan repayments. Once a year, the entire village gathered under the shade of a tree for a spoken financial report, ensuring that even community members who could not read or write were fully included in the audit.

The true test of this governance model came when residents complained that the water tariffs were too high. The committee listened and lowered the price. But when the next monthly ledgers were read aloud, the community realised the math didn't add up, the lower price would cause the maintenance fund to dry up, leaving them vulnerable to the next mechanical breakdown. Remarkably, the community voted to raise the price back to its sustainable level. They had looked at the data and chosen to protect their collective asset.

Today, the water is still running. When parts inevitably break, the community does not wait for external support; they dip into their own structural savings and fix it within hours. The revenue pool grew so resilient that they successfully saved enough capital to drill a second borehole entirely on their own terms. By shifting from passive beneficiaries to active co-owners, this small grassroots initiative demonstrated that community-driven governance can endure beyond the financial might of large corporations. They remain a small organization, but their impact is no longer fragile.

The local women, however, possessed something the donors lacked: an intimate understanding of community dynamics and a deep-seated determination to protect their community's future. Instead of waiting for a grant that might never come, they chose to design a system where sustainability was baked directly into the governance structure.

Key takeaways


- **Sustainability is an Intentional Design:** True financial continuity comes from structures that earn their own keep, rather than initiatives that live in perpetual hope of the next external grant.
- **Investment Breeds Protection:** When community members contribute their own land, cash, and labour, they transition from consumers to protectors of the collective resource.
- **Visible Governance Enforces Trust:** When financial realities are made radically simple and transparent, communities gain the confidence to make incredibly difficult decisions together.
- **The Small-Organisation Squeeze:** Systemic funder bias favours large, well-documented NGOs, creating artificial visibility and funding barriers for highly skilled, indigenous-led groups.
- **Designing for Life Beyond the Donor:** Long-term sustainability requires engineering community resources into self-sustaining services that generate local maintenance revenue from day one.
- **Visible and Participatory Accountability:** Robust community trust is sustained through independent elected oversight, accessible verbal auditing, and giving residents genuine power to alter strategic decisions.
- **Building Ownership Through Contribution:** True collective ownership is established when community members invest their own land, labour, and capital directly into the infrastructure.
- **Shifting from Recipients to Strategic Partners:** Achieving grassroots resilience requires a shift toward direct, flexible, long-term funding partnerships that value local social enterprise and community-generated solutions.

Reflection on the case

1. For a project you support or run, what income or contribution will keep it alive after the funding ends, and is that built into the design now?

2. How does your community contribute (land, cash, labour, decisions), and does that contribution translate into real ownership and authority?

3. If your organisation is small or under-documented, which single barrier, visibility, documentation, or proposal capacity, most limits you, and who could help close it directly?



Practical tools

This section contains four ready-to-use tools. Each can be adapted to your organisation's context, size, and stage, and each comes with instructions. Tools may be printed or adapted freely.

4.1. Governance readiness assessment

This assessment tool helps your organisation understand its current governance strengths and gaps.

Instructions: Complete this as a team, ideally including both leadership and community members. For each item, tick the response that most honestly describes your situation. Aim for an honest answer, not the right one, and use the results to identify your top three governance priorities for the next 12 months.

Governance area	We don't have this	We have something informal	We have this and it works
Written mission and values statement			
The decision-making process all members understand			
Written community charter or constitution			
Named governing group (board, committee, council)			
Term limits for leadership positions			
Conflict-of-interest policy			
Two authorised signatories for all payments			
Bank account in the organisation's name			
Written financial management procedures			
Regular financial reporting to community members			
Annual community accountability meeting			
Documented succession plan for key leaders			
Archive of key documents and agreements			
Legal registration appropriate to our stage			
Knowledge of which laws and regulators apply			

Scoring guide: items in the “we have this and it works” column are your governance assets. Items in “we don't have this” are your priority action areas. Focus on one or two at a time.

4.2. Community accountability scorecard

This scorecard assesses how effectively your organisation is accountable to its community, not only to funders and regulators.

Instructions: Ideally, completed by governing members and community members separately, then compared. Score each item from 1 to 4 (1 = not at all, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = consistently). A score of 3 or 4 indicates strong practice; any item scored 1 or 2 is a priority.

A. Information and communication

Practice	1	2	3	4
Community members know what our organisation does and why.				
Community members can access information about how funds are used.				
We share results in a language and format the community understands.				
We communicate when programmes or plans change.				

B. Participation and voice

Practice	1	2	3	4
Community members have real opportunities to shape our priorities.				
We collect feedback from the community and act on it.				
We hold regular open meetings, at minimum annually, where the community can ask questions.				
Marginalised groups (women, youth, people with disabilities) have visible voice in decisions.				

C. Financial accountability

Practice	1	2	3	4
Community members can ask questions about how funds are managed.				
We report our finances to the community, not just to donors.				
We have processes to prevent misuse of funds.				
We acknowledge and respond when financial concerns are raised.				

D. Responsiveness

Practice	1	2	3	4
When community members raise concerns, we respond within a reasonable time.				
We have a visible process for handling complaints.				
We adjust programmes based on community feedback.				
Leadership is accessible to community members who want to ask questions.				

After scoring, add up your total (maximum 64). 50 to 64: strong community accountability culture. 35 to 49: moderate, identify gaps and set 90-day targets. Below 35: significant work needed, consider a community accountability action plan as a governance priority.

4.3. Risk Assessment Matrix

This diagnostic matrix assists community initiatives in identifying indicators of unequal power dynamics, specifically when decision-making and resource allocation are dominated by a select few rather than being distributed for broader community benefit.

Instructions: This tool is best completed by someone outside the leadership group, such as an ordinary community member or a peer stakeholder. Tick yes, no, or unsure for each item. Three or more yes responses in any section indicate a significant risk.

Section 1: Power concentration

Warning sign	Yes	No	Unsure
The same individuals have held leadership for more than five years without competitive re-election.			
Major decisions are made before formal meetings; meetings ratify rather than make decisions.			
The founder or a small inner circle controls access to funding relationships and donor contacts.			
Board or committee members are predominantly from the same family, social network, or professional circle.			
There are no term limits for any leadership position.			

Section 2: Financial control

Warning sign	Yes	No	Unsure
Only one or two people have access to financial information.			
Financial reports are shared with donors but not with the broader community.			
Procurement decisions are made without competitive processes or documentation.			
Leadership members or their associates benefit financially from the organisation's work.			
There is no independent review of the organisation's finances.			

Section 3: Exclusion and silencing

Warning sign	Yes	No	Unsure
Community members who ask questions about finances or decisions are discouraged or marginalised.			
Certain groups (women, youth, minority communities) are consistently absent from decision-making.			
There is no safe or anonymous channel for community members to raise concerns.			
People who raised concerns in the past were removed or penalised.			
Meeting minutes or decisions are not shared with all members after meetings.			

Note: *Elite capture is frequently unintentional. This tool is not an instrument for accusation; rather, it is designed to facilitate honest conversations that safeguard the integrity of both the organisation and its community.*

Results review: What to Do Based on Your Risk Level

- **If the risk is Low:**
 - ✓ *Maintain and document:* Continue current practices and ensure governance procedures are clearly written down so they survive leadership transitions.
 - ✓ *Proactive sharing:* Routinely share basic updates on decisions and finances at community meetings to keep trust high and prevent future drift.
- **If the risk is Medium (2 “Yes” responses):**
 - ✓ *Internal health check:* Hold an internal leadership reflection session to discuss why these specific warning signs are appearing.
 - ✓ *Increase transparency:* Proactively open up meeting minutes or basic financial summaries to regular members to clear up ambiguities.
 - ✓ *Clarify boundaries:* Review and re-state the rules regarding who makes decisions about money and community assets to prevent minor issues from escalating.
- **If the risk is High (3 or more “Yes” responses):**
 - ✓ *Independent review:* Initiate a formal governance review led by an objective party outside current leadership.
 - ✓ *Structural reform:* Introduce or enforce strict term limits for leadership positions.
 - ✓ *Radical transparency:* Open all financial ledgers and resource allocation tracking to the entire community membership.
 - ✓ *Safeguard feedback:* Establish a highly visible, safe, and anonymous complaints and feedback mechanism.
 - ✓ *Community dialogue:* Facilitate an open town-hall dialogue regarding collective governance expectations.
 - ✓ *External counsel:* Seek mediation or technical support from a trusted civil society support organization or a legal adviser.

4.4. Governance continuity checklist

The checklist is designed to help your organisation maintain operations and thrive even if one or more key personnel leave unexpectedly. By following this guide, you can ensure that essential functions are preserved, knowledge is transferred, and the transition is as smooth as possible. This proactive approach will support your organisation’s resilience and long-term success.

Instructions: Mark each item’s status. Items marked not in place are continuity risks; aim to complete the high-priority items within 90 days. This may not apply to informal, unstructured initiatives.

Documents and records

Continuity item	In place	Not in place	Action needed
Founding document (charter, constitution, trust deed, or Articles of Association) is filed and accessible.			
All governance meeting minutes from the last three years are documented and stored.			
A list of all active bank accounts and authorised signatories.			
A register of all assets held by the organisation.			
Current copies of all registration certificates and operating permits.			
Key contacts: lawyers, auditors, regulators, major donors.			

Financial systems

Continuity item	In place	Not in place	Action needed
At least two people understand the financial management system.			
All financial passwords and access credentials are documented securely, not held by one person only.			
A financial policy document exists and is known to the finance team.			
The last two years of financial records can be accessed without the current treasurer.			

Leadership and succession

Continuity item	In place	Not in place	Action needed
A written succession plan exists for the executive leader or equivalent.			
At least one other person could act as interim leader if the current leader left tomorrow.			
The board has genuine capacity to govern independently of the founder or leader.			
An emergency leadership transition plan is in place.			

Institutional knowledge

Continuity item	In place	Not in place	Action needed
Key community relationships and stakeholder contacts are documented, not held in one person's phone.			
Major programme experiences, lessons learned, and community agreements are documented.			
Organisational history is documented in a format accessible to future leaders.			
Staff or volunteers can describe the organisation's mission and governance structure accurately.			

Institutional knowledge

Legal and regulatory

Continuity item	In place	Not in place	Action needed
Someone on the team knows which laws apply and their deadlines.			
All permits and registrations are current and renewal dates are tracked.			
Tax status, if applicable, is documented and the basis for any exemption is on file.			
A legal-support contact is established for regulatory questions.			

Review this checklist at least once a year, ideally at a board or governing-group retreat. A continuity-strong organisation is one where any team member could answer "if our director left next week, would we be able to carry on?" with yes.

CONCLUSION

From Learning to Action: Carrying Community Philanthropy Forward

You have reached the end of the toolkit, but not the end of the work. The chapters behind you set out a practice: understanding what community philanthropy is, giving it a durable form, resourcing it from within, and governing it so that it lasts. This closing chapter does not add to that. It draws the threads together, so that what you have read becomes something you can carry into your own community and act on.

Understanding all of this is not the same as putting it into practice. The most useful next step is to take an honest look at where you stand, choose the few things that matter most, and move forward with your community over the next three months.

A simple sequence works well, and each step points back to tools you have already met in the toolkit.

A practical pathway

6. Review and adjust.

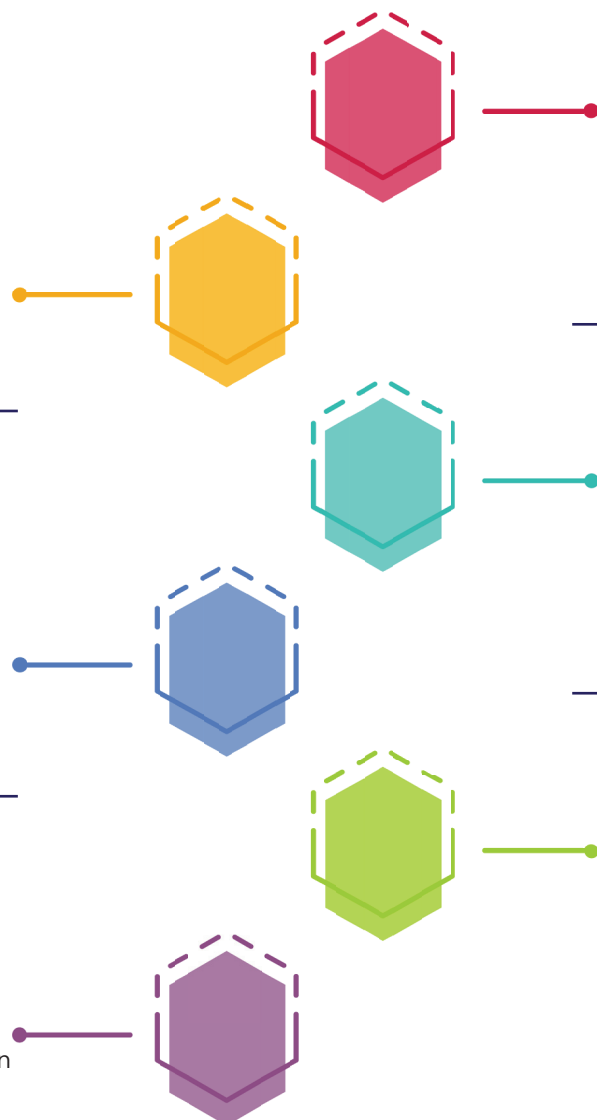
Come back to the toolkit as a companion. Reassess periodically, mark what has changed, and choose your next priorities.

5. Write it down.

Document your agreements, roles, records, and decisions, so that your work can survive a change of leadership and your community can see how it is run.

4. Strengthen one resource and one safeguard.

Identify one local resource you can grow and one governance gap you can close, such as a succession plan, a conflict-of-interest rule, or a first annual accountability meeting.



1. Take stock.

Use the self-assessment and governance tools from earlier chapters to look honestly at where your organisation is strong and where it is fragile. Aim for an honest picture, not a flattering one.

2. Choose two or three priorities.

Resist the urge to fix everything. Pick the few changes that would most strengthen your community's trust or your organisation's survival, and set a 90-day plan for them.

3. Act with the community, not only for it.

Share your plan, invite people to shape priorities, and put in place at least one simple way for the community to give feedback and hold you to account.



A call to action

Community philanthropy is never just a project with a start and end date. It is a shared practice, a continuous loop of coming together, listening, and building. It deepens naturally as your community grows in confidence, and your relationships grow in trust.

This toolkit can offer frameworks, checklists, and inspiring stories. What it cannot do is sit in a circle with your community, voice a shared dream, or take that first brave, small risk. That spark belongs entirely to you.

So begin where you are, with what you have.

Choose one action from your pathway and a date to take it. Name the people who should be in the room. Then have the conversation, however modest, that starts the work.

The organisations whose stories appear in this toolkit did not begin as polished institutions. They began with a group of people who decided that their community's assets, voice, and trust were worth building on, and who took the next step.

You are part of a living movement

Across the region, communities are reclaiming the right to resource and govern their own development, and you are part of that wider movement. The work you do, at whatever scale, adds to it.

At its heart, community philanthropy is about a shift in who holds power and who is trusted to act. It is the belief that communities are not problems to be solved by others, but capable actors with the assets, the knowledge, and the right to shape their own future. When people contribute what they have and decide together how it is used, something changes that no outside grant can create on its own. They stop being recipients and become, in their own words, the real owners.

That is the thread that has run through every chapter, and it is the one to carry forward. Build from your community's strengths. Protect its trust. Share power with the people you serve. Design for the long term. And keep the community at the centre of every decision, because in the end the community is not the audience for this work. It is the author of it.

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