



African Philanthropy in Action: Adopt, Advance, Amplify

"The beauty of the peacock is in the diversity of its feathers" - African proverb.

Concept Note

1.0 Introduction

The biennial Assembly is the flagship event of the African Philanthropy Network (APN). The next Assembly is scheduled to take place on November 2nd-6th, 2026, in Accra, Ghana. Once again, we will gather several hundreds of practitioners including philanthropists, like-minded funders and service providers, media personnel and artists.

This Concept Note marks the beginning of a conversation with friends and sponsors. It is a call for partnership and a request for your support in convening and engaging the philanthropic community on the African continent and in the diaspora. The Assembly will be a safe space for diverse communities to share their experiences and speak to shared values and collective approaches to promote the voice and action of African philanthropy.

APN's mission is to reclaim and elevate the power of African philanthropic practices as a form and driver of social and systems change. We aim to influence national states and societal actors (governments and donors, both institutions and individuals) to support the development of African philanthropy by creating favorable conditions for philanthropy to thrive as a durable strategy for community-led development, democratization, and people's empowerment. The goal is for the Assembly to feel like a snapshot of this mission at work.

2.0 Background

"A family tie is like a baobab tree; it can bend, but it cannot break"- African proverb.

APN is the only network well-placed to serve as a platform for diverse philanthropic actors and institutions to interact for the advancement of the continent. The network was launched in July 2009 in Accra, Ghana, as the network of African Grantmakers (AGN), and rebranded to APN in July 2015, with a commitment to building a family of broad people in solidarity with each other. It was built with a multi-stakeholder understanding and recognition of philanthropy as a field that bridges equitable development and community ownership.

APN promotes the voice and actions of African philanthropy practices, and recognises its power in social and systems change. The Biennial Assembly brings thought leaders and innovative practitioners together to discuss Africa's agency and reflect on the role of different forms of philanthropic giving. The first Assembly was held in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2010, to set an agenda for African philanthropy; the second was in Johannesburg, South Africa in November 2012. The third was to be held in Accra, Ghana in November 2014, but was organized in Arusha, Tanzania in July 2015 instead, due to the Ebola Outbreak in West

Africa. The fourth took place in Port Louis, Mauritius in November 2018. In November 2020, APN planned to co-host the WINGS Forum in Nairobi, Kenya, but it was rescheduled to October 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent travel restrictions. After that, the Assembly took place from 8th-10th November, 2022 in Entebbe, Uganda.

The most recent Assembly took place from 4th-8th November, 2024 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The 2024 Assembly was themed: “Collective Freedom from Collective Struggle.” More than 300 participants from different parts of the continent and globe converged to reflect on how Africans can become relevant change agents, commit to building an even more effective philanthropy ecosystem, and engage young people as a pathway to growing innovative and responsive philanthropic approaches on the continent.

After four days of peer learning, knowledge sharing, and networking, delegates reached a unanimous realization of our shared values and agency, and identified a number of collective approaches to adopt toward more effective development for more just African communities.

3.0 Assembly Theme

“A home without a mother is like a soup without salt.” – African proverb.

The overarching theme of the 2026 Assembly, “African Philanthropy in Action: Adopt, Advance, Amplify,” is promoted through hashtags: #GivingAndPower, #ShiftThePower, #GivingForChange

In an era defined by rapid technological evolution, shifting societal expectations, and the urgent need for sustainable solutions, philanthropy support organizations and communities are increasingly called upon to adapt and innovate. The theme for this year’s Assembly, “African Philanthropy in Action: Adopt, Advance, Amplify,” captures the dynamic process of embracing change, driving progress, and expanding impact across sectors and disciplines.

“African Philanthropy in Action” seeks to move beyond discussing theory to showcasing real-world African giving. The theme emphasizes the diversity of philanthropic models, the unique challenges faced on the continent, and the innovative solutions and partnerships emerging from within Africa. It also seeks to highlight how philanthropy supports sustainable development, drives social change, and empowers communities at all levels.

The “Adopt, Advance, Amplify” Assembly sub-themes are a call to action for leaders, practitioners, and changemakers to move beyond passive acceptance and actively drive transformation. Through shared learning and collaboration, the Assembly aims to equip participants with the tools and inspiration to adopt innovation, advance their work, and amplify their positive influence in the world.

- a. **Adopt:** Emphasizes openness to new ideas, technologies, and approaches. It focuses on recognizing opportunities, overcoming resistance, and integrating innovations into existing systems. “Adopt” challenges participants to reflect on what needs to change in their organizations or fields and how to embrace those changes effectively.
- b. **Advance:** Moving beyond adoption, “Advance” focuses on deepening and scaling innovations. This stage emphasizes capacity building, continuous improvement, and the pursuit of excellence. It underscores the need for ongoing learning, strategic investment, and fostering environments that support progress.
- c. **Amplify:** Focuses on broadening the reach and impact of successful initiatives. This includes sharing best practices, leveraging partnerships, and using platforms and networks to inspire broader change. “Amplify” invites participants to consider how their advances can benefit broader communities and contribute to systemic transformation.

The 2026 Assembly will be designed to offer participants a multidimensional, experiential approach, where each session provides an opportunity to connect with others, learn about practices and policies that enable philanthropy to thrive, and harness innovative solutions to catalyze collective intelligence into transformation and development on the continent.

4.0 Purpose and Objectives

The 2026 APN Assembly intends to provide a platform for sharing effective strategies for communities to promote the mobilization and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, and to foster safe and just African communities.

Participants will use the Assembly as a safe space to celebrate ideas, share practical solutions rooted in African values, and make recommendations for concrete actions to adopt, advance, and amplify African philanthropy. Specifically, the Assembly participants will focus on the following objectives:

- a. Facilitate dialogue on best practices and challenges in adopting new approaches.
- b. Showcase strategies and tools to advance innovation within organizations and communities.
- c. Explore methods to amplify impact at the local, national, and global levels.
- d. Foster collaborations that accelerate the transition from adoption to amplification.

5.0 Assembly Program

The program will be co-created by members, and all sessions will align with the Assembly's objectives, addressing questions such as: What approaches have you found most useful for embracing indigenous giving traditions, whilst accounting for global shifts? What are the effective ways to move toward strategic, impact-driven philanthropy that addresses systemic change? What has worked well to enhance capacity and infrastructure to support African-led philanthropic organizations in driving social change? What are the collaborative approaches for scaling successful African philanthropy practices, both locally and globally? What are the effective tools for advocating supportive policies and frameworks that enable dignified philanthropy to thrive in Africa? Recognizing the need for balancing crisis response with institutional resilience and long-term sustainability, centering voices and meaningful engagement, LGBTQIA+ rights, disability politics, climate justice, the intersection of African development and technology, the safety and prosperity of future generations, and lifelong learning opportunities, to mention a few.

We must all play a role, share our expertise & experiences in different fields, and reassess which actions are useful in addressing our complex challenges, while embracing solidarity. This Assembly will shift away from defining philanthropy, and move towards *how* we execute philanthropy on the continent, prioritizing contextual, specific, and relevant actions. It will be rooted in the collective goal of realizing the potential of African philanthropy as a driver of a stronger, legitimate, and democratic movements for a dignified people-led development built on shared values, collective intelligence and evidence, trust, and respect for diversity.

The Assembly is structured to provide safe spaces for networking and for participants to engage, creating an inter-generational and inter-sectoral movement of solidarity based on shared expertise and a drive for collective action, dignity, trust, and respect for all. This will be achieved through various learning techniques, including community dialogues, thematic workshops, ignite talks, intergenerational talks, skills sharing, coaching & mentorship, a marketplace, exhibitions, networking spaces, field visits, food & health breaks, and arts and culture.

6.0 Key Guiding Questions

Here are some questions to help shape our analysis and thinking as we develop session proposals related to the Assembly theme. These questions will also guide deeper exploration, planning, and impactful dialogue within each sub-theme.

Adopt African Philanthropy

- a. What are the traditional and contemporary models of philanthropy practiced across Africa?
- b. Which approaches, values, or structures distinguish African philanthropy from global models? How suitable are these models to the modern world?
- c. How can African communities, institutions, and governments increase the uptake of homegrown philanthropic practices?
- d. What barriers or misconceptions hinder the wider adoption of African philanthropic models?
- e. How can new generations be engaged to adopt and sustain African philanthropy?

Advance African Philanthropy

- a. What innovations or strategies can propel African philanthropy to greater impact and scale?
- b. How can technology, policy, or partnerships help advance philanthropic ecosystems in Africa?
- c. What are the gaps in research, capacity, or infrastructure that need to be addressed?
- d. How can African philanthropy adapt to changing social, economic, and environmental contexts?
- e. What role do local, regional, and continental networks play in advancing the field?

Amplify African Philanthropy

- a. How can the visibility and narrative about African philanthropy be strengthened locally and globally?
- b. What strategies are effective in documenting and sharing African philanthropic stories and successes?
- c. How can African philanthropic voices, knowledge, and leadership be elevated in global discourse?
- d. What communication platforms or tools are most effective for amplifying impact?
- e. How can collaborations with media practitioners, public intellectuals, and cultural leaders help amplify African philanthropy?

7.0 Expected Participants

APN seeks to mobilize about 300 participants representing different forms of African philanthropy, civil society, media practitioners, governments, donors (individuals and institutional), and the private sector from all African countries and the diaspora. Of the 300, we wish to mobilize more than 100 participants from within Ghana, 60-70 from other West African countries, and the remainder from other African regions, the diaspora, and elsewhere in the world. The former will be achieved through collaboration with our founding and anchor members in Ghana and West Africa: STAR Ghana, West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), Africa Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Ghana Philanthropy Forum (GPF), TrustAfrica, and Youth Hub Africa, to name a few. We will also collaborate closely with our pan-African members and partners.

The APN philosophy and values of solidarity, inclusivity, innovation, and accountability will apply. Participants will therefore represent individual and institutional practices, including those serving underserved populations. We would like to ensure no one is left behind at this flagship event. As is tradition, our community of members and friends, headquartered in 42 African countries and working with communities in 51 African nations, plays a key role in mobilizing participants to attend the Assembly.

8.0 Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the Assembly discussions will yield a list of actionable recommendations to guide the execution of our philanthropic initiatives beyond the convening. The APN Assembly is an action-oriented space that must produce tangible results that take into consideration the interconnectedness of our struggles. The following are the expected outcomes:

- a. Actionable insights on integrating change within various contexts.
- b. Enhanced capacity for organizational and sectoral advancement.
- c. Strengthened networks for sharing and scaling impact.

9.0 Resource Mobilization and Fundraising

This Concept Note provides a snapshot of the APN's ambition and invites partners and sponsors to support us in realizing this goal. The estimated budget for the Assembly is **USD 300,000** (Three hundred thousand US dollars only).

We are seeking support from other donors on the continent and globally to enable a diverse range of people to attend and to sponsor women, people with disabilities, young leaders, and other change-makers in the field of philanthropy from underserved population groups. APN members are encouraged not only to participate in a cost-sharing mechanism but also to sponsor partners and actors among their constituency and to mobilize relevant actors to attend.