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Keynote Address

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Keynote Address Topic:

Local Resources for Local Needs: Common Challenges and Trends in Uganda

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Protocol observed

1. Introduction

I am honored to be speaking at this Philanthropy Symposium codenamed ‘Give for Good’. I have been asked to speak to the topic of local resources for local needs: common challenges and trends in Uganda. While the topic is broad and we can speak about anything, I have decided to speak directly to the changes that we have seen in the recent two years across the globe and how they have influenced how we view local resources and philanthropy generally and indeed how we view local needs as well as what actions we need to take as we leverage the advantages that we envisage.

Ladies and Gentlemen, when Covid 19 struck the world in early 2020 and with the first lockdown in Uganda in March 2020 - all of us were taken aback. The first thing that happened for those who were lucky to be home, was to lock ourselves in our localities. Private homes became public offices with work shifting online (for those who could afford) or with work completely disappearing for those who did not have the luxury to work online. As a people -

across the world - we were forced to look inside, to focus on the local in order to survive the global pandemic. Workers who were invisible in everyday life became visible. The garbage collectors, lorry drivers became the essential workers while for most of the white-collar jobs – we became non-essential. The last two years have therefore been instrumental in attaching value to local resources. In everyday terminology that word ‘local’ has in most cases evoked feelings of inferiority, sub-standard and in some way something to avoid. But the pandemic and the attendant societal restructuring have now given value to the local. Now we can hold a symposium on local giving and philanthropy and not be talking about money from Bill Gates or Ford Foundation whose names have for long been household names in the world of philanthropy. So what does this mean for all of us? – as a people – as a country and as a civil society sector:

2. Making Meaning of the Local

This new ‘recentering’ of the local, places significant responsibility on all of us in how we discuss local resources and local needs. In this pandemic-stricken world, the local is no longer about solving local problems. While we locked ourselves up in our localities around the world, our war was against a global pandemic that was redefining both the local community and global community in which we live. An important development that came from this experience is the upsurge of local resources to build resilience at community level and even national level.

In Uganda generosity at community level has been at an all-time high during the pandemic. CivSource Africa – a philanthropy support organization here in Uganda wrote four volumes of research into the local generosity during the pandemic that engulfed the whole of Uganda as communities came together to support all kind of cases. The stories as moving as they are telling. In one of the reports - a woman due to deliver a baby and whose husband was locked down in Kampala, was rescued by her community as they brought food and other essentials to help her through the lockdown. A young man decided to ride his bicycle and deliver ARVs to HIV patients in the local community who could not travel because of lack of public transport closures. Ugandan companies and individuals rose to the occasion and handed over billions of shillings to the National Covid Taskforce and several District Taskforces across the country. In many ways through this local generosity - giving in crisis became visible. Communities saw the value of working together, of turning to local resources to solve local needs and global

challenges. We certainly can no longer return to the world where the local can be ghettoized and seen as insignificant. This is because the local has sustained communities and created new types of relationships – with the state, with giving and with receiving.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me remind you that this is not a new phenomenon – the African experience of giving and gifting has always been present. That indeed there is a spirit that moves in communities and makes people take action to help each other selflessly – is not new. As Moyo (2011) puts it; ‘African philanthropy is in fact the foundation on which an African’s life and his or her development revolve. It is the foundation upon which modern institutions are built or from which they get their inspiration and identity’.¹ The stories of generosity speak to a spirit that has also been captured in many societies in Africa - that is the spirit of *Ubuntu*.

For the Zulu it is expressed in the epistemological idea that says; *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, literally meaning “a person is a person because of people or through other people”. The same spirit is described by CivSource (2019) report on *Giving for Public Good* when it describes what giving for public good entails and quotes Uganda’s languages that describe this act of humanity like; in Baganda - “Obwa Sselunganda”, in Iteso - “eitunganane” and in Lugbar Ba oa’ baa si.² The spirit of Ubuntu therefore engenders reciprocity and envelopes a communalism of interdependency, sharing, oneness, loving, giving, and a sense of a continuum of relationships. For example, the stories in Bushenyi and Kinkizi where residents woke up to find food and other essentials at their doorsteps³ or people who chose to give anonymously to the National COVID Taskforce⁴ - all these are insightful and compelling examples. As renown Bishop Desmond Tutu writes;

A person with Ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share.

Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of

¹ See Moyo, B. (2011) **Transformative Innovations in African Philanthropy**, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University, Brighton for The Bellagio Initiative. Accessed June 20, 2020. <http://www.bellagioinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Bellagio-Moyo.pdf>

² CivSource Africa (2020) **Finding Philanthropy: Exploring the Practice of Giving for Public Good in Uganda**, CivSource Africa and Robert Bosch Stiftung, Kampala, p.11

³ Generosity Report Vol.1, p.53

⁴Generosity Report, Vol.3, p.75

*others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole.*⁵

The stories in the generosity volumes also affirm the idea that; philanthropy in African societies is embedded in the life cycle of birth, life and death of many (Moyo, 2011) – as the stories are not limited by any life experience. The stories in the generosity volumes also illustrate this through the diversity of practices that are cross generational. For example, there are stories of young people like the 15 year old young girl in Kitgum who donated fifty thousand shillings to the District COVID 19 Taskforce⁶ or the youth calling themselves Generation 7 in Kasese who came together and donated sanitary pad to fellow youth in Kasese.⁷ In both cases the young people did not wait to become adults to realize that the act of giving was a human virtue.

3. Giving Trends around the world and the Oxymoron Uganda

One interesting trend that we should take cognizance of comes from research the Charities Aid Foundation World Giving Index. This Index offers a unique glimpse of global trends in generosity. As the authors say it enables ‘us to provide answers to questions about where people are most likely to engage in social activities for the benefit of their communities and to champion the growth of global giving’. The 2020 report indicates that in the top 10 countries that give most in philanthropic activities in the world, Africa has four countries represented. These include Kenya in 2nd place, Nigeria in 3rd place, Ghana in 6th place and Uganda in 8th place⁸: So Ladies and Gentlemen – Uganda is the 8th country in the world that gives most – let that sink in!

At the same time data of countries that receive most philanthropic giving, Africa also leads the way. A survey by the OECD shows that Africa received the largest share of philanthropic giving (USD 6.6 billion, 28%), followed by Asia (USD 4.1 billion, 17%), Latin America (8%), Europe (2%) and Oceania (0.12%). Of this over two-thirds of agriculture giving (69%) was allocated to African countries, predominantly with Uganda (5%), Ethiopia (8%), Tanzania (8%),

⁵ Tutu, Desmond (2005) **God Has A Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Times**. Image Books, Doubleday, New York

⁶ See Generosity Report, Vol.2, p.57

⁷ See Generosity Report, Vol.3, p.26

⁸ Charities Aid Foundation (2021) **CAF World Giving Index 2020: A Global Pandemic Special Report**, CAF, London

Nigeria (6%), and Rwanda (5%).⁹ The biggest philanthropic funders are led by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's whose giving constitutes a significant share of giving to Africa (49% of the Africa total).

These contradictions relating to trends in 'giving' and 'receiving' are instructive in as far as they indicate differences in how aid and philanthropy live together in the same world. On the one hand we see Uganda being one of the countries that 'give' most in the world – among the top 10 and is also among the top 10 recipients of aid in Africa and with significant volumes being given to Uganda. Uganda today is in 6th position globally as a recipient of ODA. It is apparent that there are significant aid flows to Africa as well as large amounts of philanthropic flows especially by foundations from the global north and yet we also see significant levels of generosity happening within Africa. These contradictions are not accidental. They are rooted in a long history of foreign aid and the realities that emerged from the post-colonial development models and choices that Uganda decided to embrace – but that will be a story for another day.

What common challenges should Uganda as a country tackle as we work towards addressing this 'oxymoronic identity' – of a country with the highest giving and highest receiving. The exploitation of the motivations of philanthropy through practices that pollute philanthropy with patronage systems is a key challenge to contend with. It is now clear from everyday experience that not all giving is altruistic. For instance, in the history of independent Africa, authors have documented various ways in which African communalism and giving have been exploited. These instances and practices do point to the fact that giving is deeply embedded in the politics of patronage and while it can be wished away, we know that it is a reality that scholarship and policy making on philanthropy should engage with. Indeed, when the first Covid 19 lockdown happened in Uganda, the first people to start distributing food publicly were politicians who were interested in the 'political capital' that comes with giving. This led to serious and brutal crackdown on politicians who were distributing food during the lockdown by the government security agencies. Giving will always have to contend with the

⁹ OECD (2018), **Private Philanthropy for Development, The Development Dimension**, OECD Publishing, Paris, p.57

politically strategic and perverse patron–client political economy relationships responsible for much of Uganda and Africa’s governance excesses. The connection between giving and political calculation by politicians and state officials who donate part of their loot to constituents as a way of buying loyalty and patronage is something that has been variously documented. The discussion on the sometimes outright selfish and “dark” motivations of individuals as well as private and corporate foundations to engage in philanthropy further accentuates this view. Research needs to be done in this area as a way of opening doors to the broader questions of the politics of giving in Uganda and provide an opportunity to bring into conversation the estranged epistemological standpoints on giving and politics in Africa.

4. Recommendations for the Future

I would contend that the following areas need our undivided attention:

a) Defining Philanthropy and Giving for Good in Policy and Legislation: The term philanthropy is not one that sits comfortably in any societal discourse. It is a fluid term. It is imbued with images that make it deceptive, yet it is also a powerful term that can encapsulate several important generosity gestures. It will therefore be important for a public policy discussion to be initiated so that philanthropy can arrive at a local definition or definitions that are discussed and negotiated. This is very important in the Ugandan policy context considering the ongoing debates around registration of non-profit and non-state organizations including NGOs, companies limited by guarantee and other such formations. As a country we need to put in place legislation and policies that will give a distinct identity to giving, incentivize giving and regulate giving.

b) Investing in philanthropy leadership development, innovation, and capacity-building: Local philanthropy is a growing field of practice. It does therefore need a policy and regulatory framework coupled with a community or ecosystem of practitioners that play a diverse number of roles in the building of philanthropic practice in Uganda. Developing a robust national capacity development initiative that focuses on building knowledge about the diverse forms of meaning and practice in philanthropy is critical. Further investing in leadership development, innovation, and other associated capacity-building efforts is critical for the growth of the sector in terms of persons that give and also the growth of the sector in terms of the quality of giving practices that will embody local philanthropy. This capacity

development will not only focus on practitioners but also regulators in government who play a crucial role in instituting an enabling environment for giving and philanthropy at country level to thrive.

c) Developing a culture of community philanthropy, local gifting and local resource mobilization to escape the 'starvation cycle' for organizations: Philanthropy infrastructure support organizations are experiencing challenging times. While giving has expanded during the Covid 19 pandemic across Uganda and around the world, institutional giving has also dwindled. Many nonprofits are increasingly being asked by donors and governments to do more with less. The call for organizations to cut costs and build sustainable models may lead, at least in the short term, to exacerbating the "starvation cycle," in which funders only pay for program costs and not for administrative costs. To overcome this starvation cycle will require innovations in local giving and local resource mobilization. The expansion of avenues of local giving and the building of strong financing models is critical. Developing capacity and influencing and expanding the 'generosity mindset' will be critical for the growth of local resource mobilization and philanthropy as a whole.

d) Creating a Nexus between Local Economic Development and Community Philanthropy: Uganda is a highly decentralized country. Uganda currently has 135 Local Governments. The Government is working on implementing an innovative National Local Economic Development Policy to support Local Governments to identify own local investment opportunities that can generate revenue, create employment and make Local Governments less dependent on the central government. While this is a welcome policy innovation, its success rests on the capabilities at the local community level. It will therefore be imperative that innovations that link these processes together are explored so that local economic development is augmented by community philanthropy.

e) Exploiting the potential of the Parish Development Model and Community Philanthropy: The Government of Uganda is also rolling out the Parish Development Model from 2021. This model is a vehicle through which household incomes and the quality of life of Ugandans will be improved, where the Parish is developed as a wealth creating unit responsible for taking services closer to the people. The Parish will play a key role in the coordination, monitoring, supervision, reporting and oversight for Production, Marketing, Social Services and Financial and other services in their localities. The Parish Model will lay emphasis on agro-

industrialization initiatives. One of the key objectives of the Parish Development Model will be supporting initiatives focusing on mindset change. This is where the synergies between community philanthropy, giving for good and parish development will have to be explored to ensure the best for citizens across Uganda.

f) Create learning communities and build robust knowledge production processes on philanthropy: Patterns of giving, policy intervention strategies, structural issues, programmatic opportunities and constraints need to be constantly studied and understood. This year I have been honored to have been part of the development of 5 Sensemaking papers for UNNGOF, 2 research projects for CivSource and 2 Sensemaking research papers for the African Philanthropy Network. There is a lot more work that is being produced by these and other organization and we need to build this community of knowledge producers. It is therefore critical that the philanthropy ecosystem [that includes; support organizations, community foundations, private sector foundations, local giving groups, NGOs, CBOs and much more) operate as a true ecosystem – seeing and exploring the interdependence and opportunities for action. Communities need to desist from reinventing the wheel — or worse, trying out failed strategies. In the same breath, when something promising is invented, it needs to be publicized so that others can apply and adapt it.

h) Building Philanthropy Leadership Policies that are Gender Sensitive: If leadership is critical in getting things done, then it will be critical to look for those who demonstrate both exceptional self-leadership and community leadership in promoting the agenda for community philanthropy. To develop a truly social-justice-rooted and gender sensitive approach to philanthropy and giving of all forms will require envisaging a world that is just and free from patriarchy through processes that enable leaders to enable others to lead and building power with them instead of over them. It is critical that promoters of community philanthropy and local giving align with the gender sensitive view that patriarchal ideology enables and legitimizes the structuring of every aspect of our lives by establishing the framework within which society defines and views women and men and constructs male supremacy. Through community philanthropy and local giving it will be important to promote intentional actions that focus on fighting patriarchy within the systems of philanthropic practice.

i) Philanthropy Resources should complement and not backfill Government Resources:

Philanthropic resources at community and local level cannot match government resources shilling for shilling, nor can they make up for them as funds are reduced during budget cuts. In all cases where funds are mobilized, the objective should be to identify high-impact opportunities and make investments that will leverage or increase the effectiveness of much larger sums of government funding. This will always mean that when resource mobilization is undertaken, philanthropy resources should not lead in any way to less government resources at community level.

j) Recognize, Amplify and Expand ‘Value Driven’ Philanthropy as the ‘New Normal’

Uganda like most parts of Africa has got a burgeoning population of young people. Nearly three quarters of Uganda’s population are millennials. Studies show that millennials are embracing philanthropy in new and different ways. When millennials participate in philanthropy, they are more attached to their values than they are to specific institutions. One study notes that ‘righteous actions’ are becoming increasingly important as a form of giving. Young people are making purchases from socially conscious firms, investing funds in philanthropic organizations that support equality and environment causes and supporting organizations that promote economic or social justice – this type of local giving is gaining traction. This is what has been called the “next wave” form of philanthropy. These new forms of giving are being embraced by young people. The evidence shows that while 7 in 10 philanthropists, overall, believe it is important to work for an organization that engages in socially responsible actions, Millennials, at 87%, outpace other cohorts. This generational mindset shift in philanthropy needs to be embraced. For Africa it is not a luxury anymore to embrace and work with this new mindset - as millennials outstrip all population categories.

5. Conclusion

Let me end by calling for a shift in our giving and philanthropy mindsets. We all need to move from fixed giving mindsets to a growth philanthropy and giving mindset that builds opportunities for transformation at the local level. However, it is important to note that we should not expect everyone to magically embrace this new mindset. There will be a need to continue providing policy and practice opportunities, policy and practice incentives and social pressure for philanthropists and those giving for good to embrace the transformation

necessary to reshape systems of giving in Uganda. Surfacing the issues raised in this keynote is a first step towards ensuring that philanthropy continues to expand and to engage in a manner that promotes the growth of the sector and the expansion of a progressive mindsets so that giving for good becomes a reality for all.

I thank you for listening!